

1 John

Book Study

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The unconventional punctuation styles you will see are related to the way these studies were originally intended for the e-mail audience, using plain text to keep file sizes smaller for bulk mailing; creatively 'formatting' with punctuation, for various kinds of emphases, in the absence of formatting the actual type. You may find occasional misspellings, and the more rare cases of a Scripture reference going to a wrong passage; those will be 'typos', not intentional. With this type of POD (Print On Demand) publishing, it seems simplest, and the most prudent use of time, to not completely go through and revamp everything, but to just leave things as they are. Please accept this book, warts and all; but rather, please pay attention to, and receive God's Truth presented herein.

1 John

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The Word of Life: manifested to us - (1 John 1:1-5)

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life..."(vs1)

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God...And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."(Jn1:1-2,14)

Such simple words. And yet, the enormity of their impact. The inadequacy of man to consider, let alone write about for the purpose of imparting knowledge! So awesome the subject that John did not even attach his own name to the writing as others did to theirs.

The God of all eternity, come to earth in human form. God cannot be countenanced by man. "No one has seen God at any time."(Jn1:18) God told Moses, "You cannot see My face; for no man shall see Me and live."(Ex33:20) And so God made arrangements for Moses to see God's "back" as He passed by.(vs23) Jesus explained to the woman of Samaria that "God is spirit"(Jn4:24), and to Nicodemus that the spiritual is like the "wind" which one cannot see, but can only perceive what it does.(Jn3:8)

So, how can finite man perceive God? How can he know Who God is? ...man being a visual, tactile creature. He can see "what" God did in creation. "...what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it...for since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead.."(Rom1:19-20) Man can see the "creation" and if he studies it honestly, he understands that there is a "creator" of that creation. And seeing all that, man comes to realize that God is powerful and awesome.

But just like the young robin who has become "trapped" in the garage, beating his beak against the glass trying to get out, and tries desperately to flutter away from the human coming along to take him and set him free outside because of fear, not realizing that the human cares for his welfare, even though he is SO MUCH LARGER and seemingly could easily crush the little robin...the robin does not "understand" the human's "compassion" because he seems so comparatively "awesome." If the human were to make the robin have understanding, he would need to look like another robin, and chirp in robin language. And they could converse, and the trapped robin would understand that the human wanted to simply lead and direct the robin outside the garage where he was "free" again. Without this understanding, the human ultimately traps the robin into a corner, forcibly

grabs him gently, brings him outside, speaking cooing words to attempt to sooth the frightened bird..perhaps stroking him gently. And then, opens his hands to free him into the company of the nervously chirping parents up in the trees.

When Israel saw God's glory at Sinai, "the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking..they trembled and stood afar off."(Ex20:18) And asked Moses to intercede on their behalf. God's word was so awesome that they feared death.

Throughout the whole period of "Law" there was always a "distance" between God and man. While people could pray in their hearts, their access to God was through the priests(Heb10:1) through continual sacrifices. So, how was there to be "fellowship" between God and man?

"..by His Son..who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.."(Heb1:2-3) Philip asked Jesus, "Lord, show us the Father.."(Jn14:8) And Jesus' response, "He who has seen Me has seen the Father.." Jesus is God "manifested to us."(1Jn1:2)

Jesus was a "person" Who could be seen, touched, handled. He could speak "words" and people could understand Him. He is a person that when a person is in need, that person can feel His empathy towards them, "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses."(Mt8:17) For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.(Heb4:15) For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted. (Heb2:18)

And while appearing in human form (Phil2:7-8), He was actually God Almighty. "He is the image of the invisible God."(Col1:15)

So, why did God become in human form? To give us "eternal life"(vs2) (Jn3:16) and for "fellowship."(vs3)

John expresses periodically throughout the book his "purpose" in writing the book.(vs4,2:7,13,14,26,5:13,etc.) The writing of it was not an idle exercise in scholarship. After all, John was one of those whom the intellectual elite called, "uneducated and untrained."(Acts4:13) His training had been as a fisherman.(Lk5:10)

First of all, John was a "witness" of Jesus' ministry. He saw, touched, looked upon, etc. When Jesus commissioned the Apostles with the gospel message, He said, "you are witnesses of these things."(Lk24:48)

And now, with the writing of this book, he is "declaring."(vs2) Telling forth. Making it plain to understand. What? That which he had seen and witnessed. This book is an eyewitness account of Who Jesus is. And as a result, what a Christian is and should be. And from the one "whom Jesus

loved"(Jn13:23) an intimate understanding of what is involved in loving Christ.

He declares:

1) The Eternal Life which God manifested through Jesus Christ.(vs2) Jesus was sent by God to the world for salvation(Jn3:16) and is the propitiation for our sins."(1Jn2:2)

2) Invitation to join us in fellowship with the Father and Son.(vs3) Jesus said, "..but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you."(Jn15:15) Earlier He had said, "Abide in Me and I in you.."(vs4) And His work on the cross when He had cried out "it is finished"(Jn19:30), His prayer for "oneness" (Jn17:21) was fulfilled. And now John is inviting the reader to join that fellowship, which Jesus had also prayed about, "..those who will believe in Me through their word."(Jn17:20)

3) That your joy may be full.(vs4) When a person is in Christ, Peter expresses it thusly, "whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory" (1 Pet 1:8)

4) God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all.(vs5) This, the primary topic of the book. What it is to "walk in the light."(vs7) The concept is apparent here that something which purports to follow Christ cannot contain both "good AND bad." The expression many use to excuse modern movements..."Well, they're MOSTLY good. If you weed out the bad, and keep the good..."

No! Sorry! If a thing is of God, there is "NO DARKNESS AT ALL."

Walking in the Light: confession - (1 John 1:6-10)

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth." (vs6)

Many are the organizations and movements a-foot today that call themselves "Christian." Many, claiming a "mighty move of God" for our generation. And yet, they LIE! They have a "form of godliness"(2Tm3:5) but deny "its power."

What is the "power" of Godliness? Paul said, "I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."(1Cor2:2) And in another way, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory. (1Tm3:16) ... JESUS CHRIST!

What is the modus operandi today? "...false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even DENYING THE LORD who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction. (2Pt2:1) "...For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into lewdness and DENY THE ONLY LORD GOD and our LORD JESUS CHRIST (Jude 1:4)

Denying the Lord Jesus Christ. (1Jn2:22) How is this being done? A recent issue of Luis Palau's E-Zine contained this quote from a "scripture" citation, "I am proud of the Gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes" (Rom1:16). (When queried, an LP spokesman said translated "from Spanish!" ed. apparently Spanish has many PerVersions, too.) But, the only thing Scripture has to say about "pride" is in condemnation of it. "Pride goes before destruction, And a haughty spirit before a fall. (Pr16:18) And the citation omits the "object" of that claimed "gospel." ...Jesus Christ. Rom1:16 ACTUALLY says, "..I am not ashamed of the gospel of CHRIST..."

To deny Christ, Who is the "light of the world"(Jn8:12), (and dwells in "unapproachable light" -1Tm6:16) in this manner is to "walk in darkness." Any subsequent claims to godliness, to being a "Christian" are LIES! (vs6) To be thusly "ashamed" of Christ so as to delete mention of Him... "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. (Lk9:26)

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another..."(vs7)

Here again, in stark contrast to the current movements, is God's Word. These people are seeking for "fellowship." Unity. Getting together in brotherhood and "love." The fact that they are "seeking" it... trying to make it so... means THEY DON'T HAVE IT. And thus, if we work our way backwards in this verse, using simple logic which God endowed us with, the simple "cause-and-effect" relationship; we understand that they are NOT "walk[ing] in the light." It is quite clear from this verse that the natural outcome of "walking in the light" is to "HAVE fellowship with one another." If there is no fellowship, there is also no light. They are not "in [the] Christ" (2Cor5:17) Who "is" that Light.

The Christian who walks in the light is "cleansed" from all sin. How are we cleansed? By the "blood of Jesus Christ."(vs7) This is the very thing Jesus came to earth to do. God "sent"(Jn3:17) Jesus, Who "loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood"(Rev1:5) so that anybody who "believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."(Jn3:16)

Why do we need "cleansing?" Because, even our "righteousnesses are as filthy rags"(Isa64:6) If we try to claim that we are "worth so much" to God; that we are of utmost "value" to God (remembering that God cannot countenance sin-Isa59:2) thus, claiming perfection; we not only lie... we make "Him a liar."(vs10) God has recorded in Scripture, "There is none righteous, no, not one..."(Rom3:10)

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."(vs8) ..His Word is not in us.(vs10) In other words, if we follow along with the current "love-and-grace" generation, who believe that "God accepts us JUST AS WE ARE" ...which must, again, mean that we are already "sinless" because God does not accept sin; knowing that the "soul who sins shall die"(Ez18:4)... we are "deceived." And, if the person does not possess "truth" he does not possess Christ, Who "is..truth." (Jn14:6) Again...he is NOT a True Believing Christian.

However, if we humble ourselves (Jas4:10) and "confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."(vs9)

The sinner "...would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' [Jesus said], 'I tell you, this man went down to his house justified...' (Lk18:13-14)

Christ our Advocate: that we not sin - (1 John 2:1-2)

"My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous."(vs1)

"When they sin against You (for there is no one who does not sin), and You become angry with them...yet when they come to themselves...when they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul...then hear in heaven...and maintain their cause...and forgive Your people who have sinned against You." (~1Kg8:46-50)

The apostle of "love" explains his purpose in writing the book. "..so that you may not sin."(vs1) In later sections he gets into loving and knowing God, loving the brethren, and what's involved. But here, to begin the whole discourse, his primary expressed concern is that we "don't sin." Love does not "accept" a person "just as they are" ...IN their sin, to remain there. The concern is ...that we NOT sin.

However, as he said in (1:8) "if we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves," he expresses God's provision for when we do sin. Solomon prayed with realization, that "there is no one who does not sin."

If anyone sins, we have an Advocate. What is an "advocate?" "One who pleads on another's behalf, an intercessor." Why is intercession necessary? Because "the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience." (Eph5:6) The "soul who sins..shall die."(Ez18:4) And, even though a person may be "in Christ" (2Cor5:17), there is still the "body of this death"(Rom7:24) And with it, we sin. We disobey our Father. We do not lose are salvation, but He is not pleased; and often "disciplines" us.(Heb12:5-7)

So, what keeps us from being destroyed? The advocacy of Christ. When Jesus died, and then rose again, He went and "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high."(Heb1:3) ...where He makes "intercession for us."(Rom8:34) As a result there is "now no condemnation" (8:1) against us.

On what basis does Christ provide this advocacy? He HIMSELF, is the PROPITIATION for our sins.(vs2) What does it mean to "propitiate?" "To conciliate someone who is offended, to appease, to bring satisfaction, to make peace." With whom does peace need to be made? With the Father. God is a "jealous God"(Ex20:5) and has no mercy on sin. He exacts punishment for rebellion against Himself.

"The wages of sin is death." (Rom6:23) But Jesus, "was offered once to bear the sins of many" (Heb9:28) and thus, "made peace through the blood of His cross." (Col1:20)

Thus, as God would see sin in a Believer, or as the "accuser of [the] brethren"(Rev12:10,Job1:9,2:4) would make sure God sees our failings, Jesus is sitting right there at the Father's right hand and immediately says "...objection Your Honor!! ...I paid that debt with My blood. This person is justified [declared righteous] and is at peace with Us. So he now stands by grace."(Rom5:1-2)

Now...this propitiation is also available for the "whole world."(vs2) Since Jesus was sent because of God's love for the world, anyone who believes in Him can become part of this advocacy program.(Jn3:16)

However, let's not be deceived. Let us not say, "Jesus is my Advocate; it doesn't matter. I can sin all I want, because Jesus will plead my case before God." No! No! No! "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? CERTAINLY NOT! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?" (Rom6:1-2)

"..these things I write to you, so that you may not sin."(vs1)

Knowing Christ: and His commands - (1 John 2:3-6)

"Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.(vs3)

"..that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, (Phil3:10)

"..till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;" (Eph4:13)

First of all, we find this passage in contradistinction to the norm of today. John is ASSUMING the discussion is about "knowing" Christ. Paul's personal desire was to "know" Christ; and taught that the purpose of the Church Body growing and being equipped was for the goal...the "knowledge" of Christ...becoming "like" Christ.

Today we find people wanting love, SELF-esteem, power, miracles; and rather than spending their time In Christ, in their prayers they "pray" so that they might "bind" the demons, talking TO the demons; hoping they can "release God's power" to that end, through their prayers. They want to be "spirit-filled"..but say next-to-nothing of "Christ"(Jn16:14)

However, if we "know" Christ, what is the characteristic of a person thus occupied? They will "keep His commandments."(vs3)

What are His commandments? Are they like the "Ten Commandments"; whereby if a person disobeys, they are stoned? Are they the pharisaical "Lists?" For the pharisees it was "don't carry your bed on the Sabbath;"(Jn5:10) "You shall not husk out grain in your hand to eat on the Sabbath." (Lk6:1-2) For modern-day pharisees it is the "List of Don'ts." Don't do this. Don't do that. Paul had words for that, "these things indeed have an [appearance](1Ths5:23-kjv) of wisdom in self- imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh."(Col2:23)(1Th5:23-nkjv)

No. Keeping "His word"(vs5) and "walk[ing] just as He walked."(vs6) Many claim to follow the "sermon on the mount."(Mt5) If we follow His word, we come to realize that "self" has no place as we follow Him in humility.."poor in spirit." We have come in self-abdication, mourning our past in sin.(Jas4:9) We are pure in heart. As we are "persecuted for righteousness" we become "conformed to His death"(Phil3:10) As we fellowship in His sufferings; rejoicing that we are allowed to take part.(Col1:24, Acts5:41) And rather than nit-picking the "Law" to see how

much we "have to" do ...or, how much we can "get away with" ...we have "hearts" that seek to be pleasing to Him. (Dt5:29, 2Cor5:9)

"Whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in Him.(vs5)

Remembering that the relationship between Christ and the Church is like Husband and Wife (Eph5:32); we can take an example from a current TV commercial. The young couple walks up to the store window with wedding plans on their minds. "House or apartment? ..house. Kids or no kids? Kids! (and by now they have a strong hand clasp..with "love" sparkling in their faces to each other) Tartar control or whitening...?" ...and DISMAY... because each wants something "different." Well, in the commercial, the brand being promoted has "both" ...so the wedding is still "on."

But, the idea is obvious. The couple "in love" wants to be "like" each other. With similar interests. They want to know as much about each other as possible, and feel wonderful when they are "alike." And also, typically, each "wants to" do those things which please the other. But then, after the "honeymoon wears off" and one or the other starts becoming "independent" the whining and moaning, "You don't LOVE ME anymore!" Or... "I thought I KNEW YOU! I guess I was wrong!" Stomp and slam the door, and "go out" for a while.

Eventually, some marriages end up as failures. In divorce. And one (or both) eventually come to the realization that they "never really knew" the other person. That the "whole marriage" was a "lie." That the "other person" didn't really love them like they thought...that they apparently had self-seeking motives.

In similar fashion, a person claiming to be In Christ, but does not keep His word "is a liar, and the truth is not in him."(vs4) A true Christian is one who is "in Christ."(2Cor5:17) It is a special bond of oneness.(Jn17:21-23) And we are "not our own"(1Cor6:19) but are characterized by "Christ in you." (Col1:27) Having Christ "in" us is to have the "Truth" in us, because Jesus is "...the Truth."(Jn14:6) Thus, if a person is continually characterized by living and acting like the world, and self-seeking (Jas3:16), they are full of "every evil thing" and obviously not a Christian. Jesus said, "by their fruits" you will know them.(Mt7:20) They have been pretending to be Christ's "bride" but it is a false relationship.

We have a generation of people wanting TO BE "little christs" by praying down God's "power" at their beck-and-call, to do "their" will. But a True Christian is one who "walk[s] just as He walked."(vs6) Jesus prayed, "...not My will, but Yours, be done."(Lk22:42) ...and as a result, went to the cross.

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross ["die"..Col3:3,Rom6:2-4,1Cor15:31] daily, and follow Me. "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also,

[in other words.. "detesting" the things of this world -1Jn2:15] he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. (Lk9:23,14:26-27)

And so... "whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him."(vs5)

In the Light:

no new commandment - (1 John 2:7-11)

Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning."(vs7)

A year-or-so ago I had occasion to meet for lunch with a person from my childhood. And in the course of conversation about the ol' times in Japan ?? years ago, and talking about ministry, an expression I hadn't heard in a long time. Talk about learning "NEW TRUTHS" from God's Word.

But what does John say? "..[NO] new commandment." Jude expresses that the "faith" [doctrine] was "once for all delivered to the saints. (Jude3) Paul warns against introduction of something other than what had already been given. (Gal1:8-9) Both Jesus and John spoke often about "truth." Something doesn't "all of a sudden" BECOME "truth." God's Law and Truth have ALWAYS BEEN since the "beginning" ...whenever "that" was. Jesus, Who IS the Truth (Jn14:6) was from the beginning (Jn1:1,1Jn1:1) And He does not change (Mal3:6), is the same "yesterday, today and forever" (Heb13:8) and does not fail.(Zep3:5)

What is the basis for the "old commandment?" The "word" which you heard. While John actually heard Jesus' words (1:3), we have them in printed form. The Scriptures. When Jesus went to prepare a place for us (Jn14:2) He sent the Holy Spirit, Who taught that which was written down (Jn16:13) as Scriptures were given "by inspiration of God." (2Tm3:16)

On the other hand, as a person receives the enlightenment of God's Word, it comes in, fresh in newness (vs8) to the person thus "BEING transformed by the renewing of [the] mind."(Rom12:2) As we are "BEING transformed into the same image" as Christ (2Cor3:18) as we await the "adoption" of our bodies (Rom8:23) when we will be "like Him."(1Jn3:2)

This happens as we "like newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word"(1Pt2:2) unto growth. We are not remaining stagnant in our walk. We do not rest, but we "press toward the goal."(Phil3:14) Ever striving onward and upward in our walk with Christ. As any Spiritual Believer can attest, even to one who has read God's Word over many times; each time a familiar passage is read, the Holy Spirit opens up more of God's wisdom than was received the previous time.

As a Believer is thus engaged in growth, the darkness of the old life passes away as the light of Christ, which is already shining, is given free reign to shine forth in us. Christ, Who is light (Jn8:12), is already at "full strength." But, based on how we conduct ourselves in the world, we can let the indwelling Holy Spirit shine through us, or we can "quench"

Him.(1Ths5:19) Sin is darkness. But we are exhorted to "put to death" the old things.(Col3:5)

How do we know if we are "in the light"(vs9) or not? Our works will prove us, or disprove us. One of the ways we know is the nature of our love for the "brother." If a person loves his brother, he is in the light. Conversely, if he hates his brother, he is in darkness. Jesus said, "by this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."(Jn13:34)

Here we see another plumb-line for the new ecumenical movements which have as one of their primary goals to "create love" for one another. They discard doctrine (Rom16:17), and go about to "love one another" WITHOUT doctrine.

Two things we see with that scenario:

1) If they are without doctrine, they are without Christ, because Christ IS doctrine (Truth & Faith --Eph4:5) He spoke of "My doctrine"(Jn7:16) and at His pre-crucifixion mock-trial He replied to their questions about His doctrine, "I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. "Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard Me what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said." (John 18:20-21) Of these words He had "said" Peter called them the "words of eternal life."(Jn6:68) Again..."doctrine"...by definition.

2) The fact that they are attempting to "create" love and unity, by implication means that "they don't have it"...the fact that they don't have it, means that they are "in darkness."(vs9) Because, the fact is, a Believer, by definition (Jn13:35) "loves his brother." If you are an unbeliever reading this, you will likely not even understand this last statement; and won't, until you know Him.

A person thus afflicted, being in darkness, stumbles around and "does not know where he is going."(vs11)

While we who do know the Lord must be separate from those who are "called a brother" (1Cor5:11) who are in such darkness and leading others astray by the millions, we must truly pity them. They are blind! They are in darkness! Many of them are ignorant!

But Jesus the "Light" Who is "in you" (Col1:27,1Cor6:19) taught...

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.(Mat5:16)

I Write you because: spiritual growth - (1 John 2:12-14)

"I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake...you have known the Father"(vs12,13b)

Here we have a little song or poem, with repeating refrains. A few basic elements of spiritual development and growth. Things to remind ourselves as we consider living the Christian life. What kinds of people make up the Body of Christ, the Church. The stages of spiritual growth in Christ.

As a person first comes to Christ, they are likened unto "children." The very first thing that happens when a person is "born again"(Jn3:3) is that his sins are forgiven.(vs12) We come to God crying "Abba, Father."(Rom8:15) "Daddy, Daddy!!" These are the "elementary" teachings of Christ (Heb6:1), "repentance from dead works and faith toward God." And "as newborn babes" they drink the "pure milk of the word" and grow.(1Pt2:2) ...tasting the "Grace" of Jesus Christ.(Eph2:8)

Such a person typically, if he is emotionally inclined, will be all euphoric, bubbling over with excitement. Feeling "happy" because he is, at last, FREE from the burden of SIN. He is cleansed. He is new. Everything is a "wonder" to him as he explores and discovers what it is to be a Christian. To be loved by God. And as a child watches eagerly for "daddy to come home" from work, and when the car comes in the driveway, goes running outside to meet him, looking forward to being scooped up in his daddy's arms for big hugs and kisses; so, too, the new "baby in Christ" is all full of excitement and that "first love" for God.(vs13b)(Rev2:4)

I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. (vs13a)

As children grow and explore they fall and get cuts and bruises. Wounds are nursed back to health. Bad influences come from neighborhood children...enticements to do questionable things, and often they are lured-in to steal, lie, go places the parents warn them against. After a few times, the child begins to recognize the enticements, and learns to say "No" to the wicked one. They find out that the reason Daddy said to not go across the creek was because He knew there was poison ivy on the other side. As they learn to "feed" on Jesus Christ (Jn6:48) who is the "Bread of Life" through His Word (Ps119:9) they also learn that cleansing for error comes from being in His Word, too.(Eph5:26) And after awhile the growing youth becomes "strong" in God's Word.(vs14b)

He learns that when enticements come from various places, he knows to get rid of the various hindrances and look steadfast to Jesus. (Heb12:1-2) He's no longer just on milk, as he becomes experienced, "solid food

belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Heb 5:14)

Eventually, he grows up. "...that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ; (Eph4:14-15) A sure sign of spiritual immaturity and/or deformity is the tendency to follow every whim of doctrine that comes along. No absolutes. No "thus says the Lord."

But ultimately the Christian grows up to maturity. "I write to you, fathers [older ones, advanced in years, mature ones], because you have known Him who is from the beginning."(vs13,14) You notice, while the children and young men have slight variations as their descriptions are repeated; the place of maturity is settled. There is only one description for a fully mature Believer in Christ.

Remember what the young men are "growing up" INTO? (Eph4:15) "That which was from the beginning...the Word of life"(1:1) Into "CHRIST." Paul's desire was "that I many KNOW HIM..."(Phil3:10) "...till we all come to the unity of the faith [doctrine] (1Cor1:10) and of the KNOWLEDGE of the SON of GOD, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (Eph4:13)

Notice how the Scriptural definition of maturity is opposite of the modern "unity/revivalist" movements whose ultimate goal is to be MINUS doctrine, and prefer experience over God's Word. Where they cater to and concentrate on man's efforts and various "spirits", true maturity comes when one has fully "known" Christ.

Also, do we understand "why" a new convert, no matter how humanly sophisticated and educated they may be, is not in a position for spiritual leadership until they've gone through a spiritual maturing process, as Paul specifies. (1Tm3:6,5:22) And, related to that, "why" the current "church" is in such trouble because it allowed immature "babies" to lead it into various "winds of doctrine."(Eph4:14,Jas1:6)

But, what we have seen here is the "natural" growth process. One cannot start out as a "baby" and be expected to be fully mature immediately. But the growth leads to the "adolescent" stages of learning, becoming strong, developing the skills necessary to overcome the wicked one. And ultimately, maturity results. And the one who is mature understands...

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, And the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding. (Pr9:10)

Don't Love the World: passing away - (1 John 2:15-17)

"Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."(vs15)

These are rather striking words. Rather clearly defined. Not given to "gray areas" of compromise and "tolerance." Typically the pretend christians will lambaste a Believer who tries to guide his life by verses such as this, by labelling him as "judgmental" and "unloving."

Jesus was quite clear however, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.(Mt6:24) There is no room for fence sitting. If a person claims to love God, then by definition, he MUST "hate" the world, because everything that is of the world is contrary to God. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Rom 8:7-8) The psalmist said, "Do I not hate them, O LORD, who hate You? And do I not loathe those who rise up against You? I hate them with perfect hatred; I count them my enemies. (Ps139:21-22) Pretty "unloving" and "judgmental" ...don't you think!

The Bible school I attended years ago used to have a school song with words something like, "..we are in the world, but not of the world, we're ambassadors for Christ. Our citizenship is in heav'n above, we're ambassadors for the King..." Paul writes, "for our citizenship is in heaven."(Phil3:20) And that "we are ambassadors for Christ."(2Cor5:20)

What is involved in citizenship? There is loyalty to one's "own" country. If nations are at war, one gives his life for his "own" country. An ambassador goes to a foreign country to negotiate on behalf of his "own" country, out of loyalty, love and respect for it. If either of these people do everything in their power to better the cause of the enemy, they are called traitor/s. Traitors used to be shot in this country; and in most other countries of the world, they still are.

This word "love" is what most "christians" do to the world, however. "To love dearly, be fond of, well pleased with, contented with." That new boat is more important than being at Bible study. If the Super-bowl or some other big event is on TV during church time, where do you find many? For that matter, in many cases, where do you find the pastor?! Often the pastor will cut things short, so everybody can rush home to watch the football game. Yes, these are periferal things.

What about the status and prestige? The glamor? The rock music? Lusts? Anything to "blend in" and not be an odd ball. But Paul writes, "come out from among them and be separate...touch not the unclean thing.." (2Cor6:17) All these things (and there are many more that could be mentioned) are NOT of the Father, but of the world.(vs16) And as we learned from James, these things are a mere "vapor."(4:14) Are reserved for destruction by "fervent heat"(2Pt3:10) in which everything will be "burned up."

John is rather point-blank. If anyone is SO enamored with the world, he does not belong to God. If he belonged to God, he would have the Father's love. But if he is busy loving the world, he is showing by his preferences that he doesn't really love God. Jesus spoke of treasures in heaven (Mt6:19-20) which are lasting. And He says, "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

There is no such thing as a worldly Christian. Just as there is no such thing as "Christian" rock. The terms are mutually exclusive. If one is "of" the world, He is not a Christian. If he is truly "in Christ" (2Cor5:17) he utterly loathes the filth and corruption that "is" the world.

Yes, we are "in" the world.(1Cor5:10) We cannot physically escape up to heaven before the Lord comes for us.(Jn14:3) He left us here to be "witnesses." (Lk24:48) Just as Jesus came to "call..sinners."(Mt9:13) And yes, as long as we are in these "tents"(2Pt1:13) we are subject to this "body of death"(Rom7:24) and we slip up occasionally, disobeying our Father and lean upon Christ's advocacy for us (1Jn2:1-2)

But a Christian does not "long for" and "nurture" the things of the world, because his eyes are fixed upon Jesus.(Heb12:2) His gaze is fixed upon the "goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."(Phil3:14) His life is "CHARACTERIZED BY" the things of Christ.

While the things of the world are reserved for fiery judgment, the one "who does the will of God abides forever."(vs17) That is the fruition of "everlasting life."(Jn3:16) As Jesus prayed, "Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me..." (Jn17:24) They shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads... And they shall reign forever and ever. (~Rev 22:4-5)

The Last Hour: apostasy - (1 John 2:18-19)

Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but that they might be manifest, that none of them were of us.(vs18-19)

What is the "last hour?" Some call it the "eleventh" hour. The last hour to "what?" "And at midnight a cry was heard: 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' (Mt25:6) This, an excerpt from one of Jesus' "Kingdom of Heaven" narratives. Figuratively, the Bridegroom is Jesus (Eph5:25,32), and He is coming for His bride, the Church.(Jn14:3,1Ths4:17)

How do we know it is the "last hour?" Well, we can look at all the prophecies involving a period of time variously called, God's Wrath (Rev14:19), Great Tribulation (Mt24:21,Rev2:22), the Day of the Lord (Joel1:15), Time of Jacob's Trouble (Jer30:7), etc., and see how close the world is RIGHT NOW to be able to fulfill those prophecies. While Christians have been expectant of Christ's "imminent" return for almost 2000 years, at no other time in history have ALL the conditions existed simultaneously in such a way that they could be fulfilled. For most of that time Israel did not even exist as a nation. And it is necessary for her to "exist" in order for all the nations to surround her to try to annihilate her as prophesied; as we see today. Not to mention all the technology that is practically "in place" for things like the "mark" of the beast, and for the "whole world" to see (simultaneously via TV/internet) events occur.(Rev11:9)

Scripture prophesies the Antichrist.(vs18) The "lawless one"(2Ths2:8), the beast (Rev13:11). (Notice that the PerVersions omit the word "the." Very important that it be there, because THE Antichrist is a very SPECIFIC person...not just an anti-God "tendency or principle." Just as Jesus is "THE" Christ(vs22), there will also be "THE" Antichrist.)

Do we yet know "who" THE Antichrist is? No. He will not be revealed until the Holy Spirit and Church are taken out of the way.(2Ths2:7-8) There are many, who believe we are "now in" the Tribulation, who think they know who he is. Maitraya, Moon, the Pope, etc. However, many in the past thought of Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, etc. But that revelation will not be made until after the Holy Spirit is taken out with the Church, at the Rapture.

So, what about all these aforementioned people? They are part of the "many antichrists" John speaks of. And their proliferation is one of the signs that it is, in fact, the "last hour." Jesus said of these days, "Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe it.

"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. (Mt24:23-24)

Now...John mentions another interesting thing about these "antichrists." That they "WENT out from us." Let's come back to this in a moment.

First of all, an antichrist is not only a person claiming to be "Christ" ...but can also be one claiming to be in the "service of" Christ...but actually be a false prophet; a wolf in sheep's clothing. Paul warned, "savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock. Also from among yourselves men will rise up, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after themselves."(Acts20:29-30)

These antichrists will be IN the "church." They will both, come IN TO the church, and will also arise from OUT OF the church. These are wolves. NOT True Believers. But for everything, they will "look like" Christians. (2Cor11:13-15) They are pastors and church leaders. They are "big name" well-know "men-of-god." They draw away disciples "after THEMSELVES."

Eventually, their true colors become more readily apparent. They will be seen accepting Templeton Prizes in harmony with all sorts of humanist religions. They will chummy up to the Pope. After a life-time of preaching "The Bible Sezzz" they will be heard to say that it is not necessary to believe in Christ. Millions of people flock to crusades and conferences called by "their" name/s. They will openly refuse to talk about "hell." And on and on...

Recently, in correspondence with friends, and a couple dreams I've had over the past year, it dawned on me that there is NOT ONE BIG NAME PREACHER LEFT that I know of, to whom I can point with assurance and say, "he is a man of God." They have ALL either "changed their doctrines" to be more ecumenical, or they make "bed-fellows" with those who are. And, sadly, I must also say this about the one who led me to the Lord when I was 5 years old, who is now dead.

So, what about all the "rarin' back and preaching" with words, "The Bible says!?" Notice that Satan also quoted to Christ, "It is written."(Mt4:6) John says, "if they had been of us [True Believing Christians..the Church] they would have continued with us." But the fact that they "now" are showing their True Colors means that they NEVER WERE OF US IN THE FIRST PLACE!! All those decades of crusades, meetings, productions...all of Satan!!!

This realization sends a chilling shudder down my spine! In the aforementioned dreams, I was in church "buildings" (a couple different scenarios) ...but there were either no services going on at regular meeting times, or necessary leaders could not be found. The sense of "desolation" to these places. Words do not convey adequately. Not even, that "they had

died." Less-than "nonexistent." As though they had never existed. Haunting!

All this we have just mentioned, while going on for the past several decades, just now in recent years has been MUSHROOMING. Much like the exponential increase in knowledge.(Dan12:4) As the increase in number and severity of contractions just before birth, "For when they say, "Peace and safety!" then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape. But you, brethren, are not in darkness, so that this Day should overtake you as a thief.(1Th5:3-4)

John says it "is" the last hour because they "went" out from us. As we look "now" (today) they HAVE GONE out. The "church" IS empty/desolate. The leaders are "nowhere to be found." It "IS" the last hour!

"So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near -- at the doors!" ...therefore you also be ready... (Mt24:33,44)

An Anointing: knowing the truth - (1 John 2:20-29)

"But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things...but the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him." (vs20,27)

"..when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. (Jn16:13-14)

It should be obvious from this that "anointing" has nothing to do with ecstatic utterances, bodily twitchings, being "slain" or being thrown across a room. Things of the "flesh." It has to do with God's Holy Spirit, taking from Jesus Christ and imparting TRUTH to the Believer.

One characteristic of a True Believer is that he has the Holy Spirit. A True Christian is "NOT IN THE FLESH but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His." (Rom8:9)

As a result a True Christian knows "all things." What does this mean? That he will know the date and hour Christ will return? No, Jesus said, "it is not for you to know the times or seasons.."(Acts1:7) Rather, as Paul teaches in 1Cor2, "wisdom..which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual."(vs13) Just as a Japanese person "understands" many Japanese customs as being "Shinto", or an American feels certain patriotism on 4th of July, or a motorcycle rider the concept/feel of countersteering...a "Christian" understands the things of the Holy Spirit. "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."(Rom8:16) In the most simplistic terms, it's like a reader wrote a while back, "you know, that you know, that you know."

Thus, when a Christian reads Scripture, and the Holy Spirit impresses a Truth upon him, he KNOWS that truth. If you are not "in Christ" (2Cor5:17) you have never experienced this, and you never will understand the "conviction" with which a True Believer shares God's Truth with you. "The natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God, NOR CAN he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges (knows) all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one."(1Cor2:14-15) The unbeliever simply cannot fathom the spiritual concept the Believer "knows."

Why is it so important to firmly establish this concept? Because, if the Holy Spirit is the author of Truth, there must also be a "lie" to contend with. If a

person KNOWS "Truth," and sees a "lie," he knows it is not from the Holy Spirit. It is from antichrist.

You see, there is a deception and those who would try to deceive you. (vs26) Many new Christians, or those coming out of cults, are fearful. Afraid of being led down the wrong path...since there are so many "presentations" out there to lure a person away from God. How can we know we are on the right path? God's Holy Spirit. The "anointing" we have received. If you have received it, it "abides IN you, and you do not need that anyone teach you...the anointing teaches you all things.. and is true, and is not a lie.."(vs27) He will guide you.(Jn16:13) Trust Him...not some human. What the Holy Spirit prompts in your heart will ALWAYS AGREE with scripture. Compare with God's Word (2Tim3:16-17)

So, if the Holy Spirit represents Truth, what is THE lie? Denying Christ. Jesus said "...whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. (Lk12:8-9)

Well, other than the "God is dead" crowd, who would be so bold as to deny Christ? Wouldn't it be obvious that they were of Satan? It wouldn't be much of a "deception" would it.

The primary "statement of faith" of the current "pretend church" is to "Name the name of Christ."(2Tm2:19) They will claim to be of God by referencing, "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God."(1Jn4:2) And they will proclaim that they believe this. But do not be deceived by this; remember that demons also believe that Jesus Christ exists and came to earth..(Jas2:19)..and tremble.

Trouble is, once you get into the nitty gritty of their beliefs, they seek to appropriate God's power and authority for themselves. When I suggested to one person recently that they were trying to be "little Christs" he replied, "tickled pink" that I had understood what he was saying, and agreed, and was quite proud of the fact. Years ago I conversed one evening with the national cult leader of the "No Names" church, and after he was through impressing me with his knowledge of Scripture, he made the statement that "we are ALL christ." This is Lucifer's old lie, "I will be like the Most High"(Isa14:14) as he deceived Eve, "You will be like God.."(Gen3:5)

What is Truth? "Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is [THE] Christ?"(vs22) Notice my emphasis of the word "the." Jesus is THE "Anointed" One. Please make clear distinction between this and vs20, where the Believer has "[AN] anointing." We do not have God's power; God's power is "toward" us. (Eph1:19) Christ is "in you" (Col1:27) and it is His workings through you. (Phil2:13) On our own we are "without strength."(Rom5:6) But He strengthens us.(Phil4:13) As we are yielded to Him, He does the work through us. "...for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Phil2:13) We do not claim "THE

anointing" (as the pretenders do), make decisions, and then command God to cater to our little "christ-ness"

Jesus is THE Christ. He is the One Who has all authority.(Mt28:18) It is at His name that "EVERY knee shall bow" (Phil2:10) The only ones who will bow to the Believers are those pretend "christians" who will receive quick understand that Christ loves the True Believers, the ones whom they persecuted and rejected. (Rev3:9)

Many ecumenists say that we all worship the "same" Creator. That Jehovah equates with Allah, or the great "life force" or ??? That, as 12-step says, "whatever you conceive him to be," we all worship "GOD."

Any belief that does not recognize Jesus as THE Christ is not of Jehovah God, The Most High. If a person denies Jesus, they also deny the Father. If a person acknowledges the Son, he has the Father also.(vs23)

If a person has an "anointing" from the Holy Spirit, he knows these things in his heart. He then, also "will abide in the Son and in the Father."(vs24) There is, then, that "oneness" which Jesus prayed about.(Jn17:21) As we are "in Christ"(2Cor5:17) we abide in Him (Jn15:4) and then bear much fruit.(Jn15:5)

If a person abides in Christ, when He appears there will be confidence and no shame.(vs28) A person who has been abiding, will have been bearing fruit, and the Master will come and say, "well done, good and faithful servant."(Mt25:21)

A person thus engaged will be living a life of righteousness.(vs29) His life will be "characterized by" being distinct and unique from the world, because we are being "like Christ" who is holy. "but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." (1Pet1:15-16)

This... is true "anointing."

What is God's promise to us? ..."Eternal Life." (vs25)

Children of God: like Jesus Christ - (1 John 3:1-3)

"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!(vs1)

What an amazing thing! To be transformed from the category of being all "together..unprofitable"(Rom3:12)..to.."adoption as sons." (Gal4:5) As Paul writes, we have "received" it as a "gift" (Eph2:8) through the redemption in Christ, "And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" (Gal4:6) We are no longer in "bondage" and "fear" but have been "adopted." And we know this is the case because "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs-heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together." (Rom8:15-17)

Another amazing part of this is that we are "joint-heirs" with Christ. "He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son."(Rev21:7) To Christ was given "all things in subjection under His feet."(Heb2:8) And thus, we will "reign with Him."(2Tm2:12) And so it says "He is not ashamed to call them brethren..here am I and the children whom God has given Me."(Heb2:11,13) As He confesses us before His Father and the angels.(Rev3:5)

We are children of God. We are brethren with Christ. We are the "bride" of Christ.(Eph5:32) And as "two become one flesh"(vs31) we are "one" with Christ.(Jn17:21) As it is "Christ in you."(Col1:27) As we are "in Christ."(2Cor5:17)

Right now, however, until Jesus returns to "receive [us]" to Himself (Jn14:3) we are still in these earthly bodies "of death"(Rom7:24) which cannot appear before God.(1Cor15:50) So, we don't quite appear like Christ yet.

But we will. When? When He is "revealed".(vs2) When is that? The last book of the Bible is called "The Revelation of Jesus Christ." For good reason. People often think of it as a book MERELY of "prophecy." But it is more than that. In those prophecies, as God's wrath is poured out upon the earth, the Son of God, the Lamb Who "loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood"(1:5) is "REVEALED" for Who He truly is, The "King of Kings and Lord of Lords."(19:16)

These days of judgement which are "imminent" upon the world are the days Jesus spoke of as "...but on the day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even so will it be in the day when the Son of Man is [REVEALED]."(Lk17:29-30) In other words, at the time Jesus is "revealed" we will be "like Him."

For you astute ones, another little reminder of the "pre-trib" Rapture. Along these lines, another "type" or "picture" I read not long ago... When a nation is about to attack or invade another militarily, one of the final things done just prior to invasion is the removal of ambassadors and embassy officials from that country. We are "ambassadors" for Christ.(2Cor5:20) The "Tribulation" is a time of God's "judgment" on the world.(Ps110:4-6,Is2:4,Mic4:3) A time of His wrath.(Rev6:17) He is going "to war" with Satan to overcome him. (Rev12:9,20:2,10) to make the "kingdoms of this world the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ."(Rev11:15) He will be pulling His "ambassadors" out of the world "prior" to the "invasion." As Paul writes, "God did not appoint us to wrath"(1Ths5:9) And Jesus exhorts the Believers to "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man." (Lk21:36) ...to become "like Him" when He is revealed.

When the Church is Raptured, and the dead in Christ have been resurrected (1Th4:16b-17), John tells us that we will "be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is."(vs2) I don't know about you, but to me that is almost too glorious a thought to even contemplate. Being in this world, and knowing how much my heart is still "like" the world in this body, it is well-nigh impossible to fathom what will be. The best possible, most glorious thing I can imagine, is NOTHING compared to what will be. Paul speaks of the seed.(1Cor15:37) We are presently in the "seed" stage.(1Jn3:9) But when the seed dies and the actual plant emerges...well, just think about it. The plant is so much more than the seed, one forgets what the seed even looked like when the plant is grown and in full-bloom. That is what the Believer in Christ has to look forward to! Praise be to God!

Thus, is it any wonder that the world does not accept us.(vs1b) The world crucified Jesus. They mocked Him. Even today, after the fact, they reject His essence as Deity. They reject His humanity. And they reject those who are His. Some of them do so openly scoffing and ridiculing the Believer. Others, are more subtle, pretending to be Christians. Trying to engage the Believer in "dialogue" so that they might "learn from each other" ...all the while, planting seeds of dischord and false doctrine, and labelling the Believer who desires to stand firm, as "judgmental" and "unloving" for not being willing to wishy-wash down the same gully they are headed.

Not only this; the world is NOT CAPABLE of knowing and understanding us. The Lord Jesus Christ Whom we are of is so much higher. "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways," says the LORD. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts. (Is55:8-9) The "natural man" is totally incapable of understanding the things of the Spirit of God."(1Cor2:14) And so, that which he doesn't understand, he rejects and vilifies. So, "do not think it strange" when the "fiery trials" come along. "...but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings,

that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy.
(1Pt4:12-13)

This study is written, assuming the reader is a Believing Christian. As we anticipate the Lord's return to take us to be with Him, to get our new bodies, and become "like Him" ...we experience trials. We are not to become complacent. This "blessed hope" that we have of Christ's "glorious appearing" (Tit2:13) should spawn within us the drive to purity.(vs3) We should not be lulled into thinking our "Master is delaying His coming"(Mt24:48) and partake of the world's debauchery.

"..but as He Who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, 'Be holy, for I am holy.'"(1Pt1:15-16)

Sinner or Righteous: His seed - (1 John 3:4-12)

"Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness...whoever abides in Him does not sin. Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him...he who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous...he who sins is of the devil... whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God."(~vs4-9)

This passage has real potential for being misunderstood. For you who know my preference for NKJV; I was almost tempted to quote this from KJV because it is a little closer in "feel" to what is being said here.

Essentially, John is starting out by informing us that "when we sin, we break the Law." Because as Paul writes, "by the law is the knowledge of sin."(Rom3:20) Moreover the law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more,(Rom5:20) As John says, "..He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin."(vs5)

The primary topic of the passage, however, is to understand what the makeup of a true Christian is, and how to tell him apart from one who is unregenerate.

We should first of all understand some words. "Whoever [COMMITTS] sin" (vs4), "he who [PRACTICES] righteousness"(vs7) and "he who [SINS]"(vs8) These words capitlized and in brackets all come from the same word. (here the KJV is more accurate in vs8 when it says, "he who committeth sin.") The person "is the author of, produces, appoint or ordain, to declare, to designate or institute." Here the word "commit" is fitting, because the person is "COMMITTED TO" doing and being intimately associated with...sin or righteousness.

Thus, the person who "commits" sin is one whose life is characterized by sin. Just as a true "artist" eats, drinks, sleeps..."art" A person who is "of the devil" is one who continually thinks, behaves, chooses..."sin." "Every intent of the thought of his heart is only evil continually."(Gen6:5) He may do things that appear "nice and good" to people around him. He may fool people in the "church" as being an "angel of light."(2Cor11:14) But when Jesus, who knows the "intents of the heart"(Heb4:12) sees him, He sees "sin." And like the changeling, eventually his true colors come forth.

However, the one who truly abides in Christ(vs6) is not "committed to" sin. In his heart there is a true desire to be pleasing to the One Who saved him from his sin.(Rev1:5) If he slips up, and due to his "body of death" (Rom7:24) does a disobedient act, he comes in confession (1:9) and rests on Jesus' advocacy before the Father.(2:1) But his life is CHARACTERIZED BY righteousness.

If you see a person characterized by sin, you know he is of the devil. He is doing what he "wants to do" of the devil.(Jn8:44) But a person abiding in Christ is incapable of desiring to please satan. He, simply, does not commit himself to sin. It is not in his (spiritual) character to do so. He has been "born of God"(vs9). He has been "born again" (Jn3:3) of the Holy Spirit.(Jn3:8,Rom8:9) This new birth implants him with Christ's "seed."(vs9)

What is a seed? "The grain or kernel which contains within itself the germ of the future plant." What is this "future plant?" It is the incorruptible body (1Cor15:53) which is given to us at the resurrection/rapture. It is the "Christ-likeness" which we become when we "see Him as He is."(3:2) But you see, the "seed" of that future glorious incorruption is contained within us, because Christ put it there when He saved us. It is our spiritual "genetic makeup" and as such, we are "incapable" of committing ourselves to satan.

So, he reiterates. This is how you tell a Christian apart from "children of the devil."(vs10) Whoever is not committed to practicing "righteousness is not of God." James said, "faith without works is dead."(Jas2:26)

What is one of the works of "righteousness?" Loving "his brother." (vs10) Jesus gave the commandment, "by this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."(vs11)(Jn13:35) If a person is in Christ, the love for the brother [IS] there. It is part of the "seed" ..the genetic makeup.. of a Christian.

Thus, anybody who is "seeking to create" this love apart from the Sound Doctrine of Christ, is unwittingly admitting to "not having it." (like Promise Keepers and other one-world religions) If they don't have it, by John's definition, they are "children of the devil."(vs10) They may tout the "name of Christ", but John says they have "neither seen Him nor known Him."(vs6)

When these, today, are shown for what they are, they vilify the messenger with words of hate. I have even read things that make me believe they (the proponents of "love and unity") will soon be beginning campaigns to "get rid of" people who don't agree with them. Like Cain? "...who was of the wicked one and murdered his brother... because his works were evil and his brother's righteous."(vs12)

As they deceive their followers and begin their campaigns to "cleanse" and "purify" the "church" (of those who preach against them and hinder their progress and agenda) to set up their one-world "church of unity," Jesus words will be further fulfilled, "They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service. "And these things they will do to you because they have not

known the Father nor Me. "But these things I have told you, that when the time comes, you may remember that I told you of them...(Jn16:2-4)

Hate from the world: abiding in death - (1Jn3:13-15)

"Do not marvel, my brethren, if the world hates you. We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death."(vs13-14)

The word "marvel" invokes a sense of "surprise, astonishment or wonder" and a person so engaged may feel "amazement or bewilderment."

Peter wrote, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; (1Pt4:12) However, while we might expect persecution from the primitive "heathen" world, we would not expect it from the "church" would we. After all, lip service is paid to the "Bible" and the claim is to the "name of Jesus Christ." If persecution came from a "brother" it would cause surprise and dismay wouldn't it.

Well, that is PRECISELY what we are to expect. There are forces in the world uniting into a religion claiming the "name of Christ." But they are not of Him. Jesus does not know them.(Mt7:23) They claim to be "seeking Christ." But a True Believer is not "seek[ING]" because he ALREADY HAS Christ in him. (Col1:27) They claim to be seeking to unite their "brothers" in love; essentially admitting they don't presently have it. According to John, they "abide in death."(vs14) They are not True Christians.

So, John says, "do not marvel." Don't be surprised. When it happens, it is precisely what to expect. They will claim to be seeking that ever-elusive "love" ...all the while gnashing their teeth at the True Believers who already possess it. While claiming to seek love, they will be hating, and "revil[ing] and persecut[ing] you, and say[ing] all kinds of evil against you falsely for [Christ's] sake."(Mt5:11) So, rather than marvel at it, Jesus says, "rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."(vs12)

The True Believer has passed from "death to life."(vs14) The one who doesn't have this love "abides in death." He is a "murderer." He does not have "eternal life abiding in him."(vs15)

Love manifested: Spirit in our hearts - (1Jn3:16-24)

"By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."(vs16)

There is no greater love than that a person gives their own life for the sake of another. Jesus said, "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. (Jn15:13) And He "demonstrated His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."(Rom5:8) Paul makes the argument that people might die for someone they love, or out of loyalty to a good person. But how many people would lay down their life for a gutter bum or an addict? When God's righteousness and man's sinfulness is compared, the drug addict is not "low enough" an example for the comparison. And yet, Jesus died for us.

Jesus said, "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. (Jn13:15) In this example He had performed a servant's duties in washing the disciples' feet. John takes this a step further. Just as Jesus laid down His life for us, we in turn should lay down our lives for the brethren.

OK, so, the Lord may not call "all" of us to give our lives. So, how do we show love? Does a brother have needs? Are you able to give assistance and relieve his destitution? Then, your Christian love compels you to put your love into action. Help him out. If you don't, how can you wave "ta ta" out the window of your fancy new car, and call out, "I love you!" if you do not put your check book or personal aid where your mouth is? This is the same "faith & works" argument James gave, isn't it. (Jas2:15-17) If you neglect your brother you do not have love. You do not have faith.

"My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."(vs18)

"And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him."(vs19)

Here we get into the area of "conscience." Paul was able to say, "I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day."(Acts23:1) And he teaches, "Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith," (1Tm1:5)

If we are "of the truth," in other words, True Believers; and we are demonstrating our faith and love by manifestations of good deeds; our conscience before God will be clear. Our heart will not condemn us.

I lived with a person for 15 years who had the facade as though being a Christian. This "unequal yoke" had all the right words and knew correct doctrine. Was even baptized in a Baptist church. She was a "nice person" as she wanted people to perceive her. 'Was well-liked by pretty much everybody who came in contact with her. So, I could never understand her continual comments throughout those years of "feeling dirty" inside. Within her innermost being there was something which nagged at her. Back then I just thought she had a simple case of lack of "self-esteem" and tried to "build her up." But you see, her CONSCIENCE knew that the image she presented to others was a fraud. Her "heart condemn[ed]" her. (vs20) And she ultimately proved it when she proclaimed a few days before she left with a male companion, "My god and yours are different" ...knowing that my God is the "Most High."

The place we need to be is a place of a clear conscience before God. If our heart does not condemn us (vs21) then we can come "boldly" to God. (Heb4:16) Knowing that we are washed and clean (Rev1:5,7:14). And that the Lord who knows us and discerns the "thoughts and intents of the heart"(Heb4:12) sees that we are pure before Him.

If our heart is pure in this manner, then we have "confidence." Not like "Maria" (Sound of Music) who had "confidence in confidence alone..." But when we look through the gate and see the "Mansion" our confidence is that we "belong." We can go to our Lord with the desires of our heart, knowing that He will hear us. "Delight yourself also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. (Ps37:4)

Interesting thing, though. If we are delighting in Him, doing those things that are "pleasing in His sight"(vs22) our desires will be conforming to His will. "Lord, What do You want me to do?"(Acts9:6) As Jesus, in turn, had responded to the Father, "Not My will, but Yours be done."(Lk22:42) As we have forsaken all to follow Him,(Lk14:33) having laid down our life for Christ and the brethren.(vs16) We are not on the "Golden Medal Journey" where we are calling the shots, and commanding God to fulfill our desires and demanding, "You promised, if I ask anything, You would answer...so here we are...I'm demanding; You've gotta respond. In the name of Jeeeeezus!" And they wonder why God did not cater to their lusts.(Jas4:3) They do not know Christ.

So John summarizes. How do we keep His commandments? "That we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ"(vs23)(Jn6:29) And prove out that love by "lov[ing] one another."

And then we come full circle. If we are keeping His commandments, we are "abid[ing] in Him."(vs24) As Jesus had said, "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. (Jn15:10)

And finally, at the level of the conscience is the Holy Spirit.(vs24) How do we know that we have a "good conscience?"(vs21) This is the Holy Spirit's ministry. Jesus said, "I will send Him [Helper-Holy Spirit] to you. And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment."(Jn16:7-8) The unregenerate are convicted of sin and judgment. But the Believer has the "Spirit of God" dwelling "in you."(Rom8:9) And this same Spirit is the One who allows us to not have "bondage again to fear" but of "adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father." It is this Holy Spirit that "bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."(Rom8:15-16) This is how we know that we "Abide in Him."

Test the spirits: don't believe everything - (1 John 4:1-3)

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world."(vs1)

In the TV commercial, the lady's chewing gum has "gone flat," and while she is searching another piece, she misses the wales that came up and spouted, as somebody in the group is heard to say, "Wow, it was so SPIRITUAL!" On PBS a multinational trio is combined, performing pagan music that is billed as "SPIRITUAL." Practically everything about the recent winter Olympics was labelled "SPIRITUAL." ...from opening ceremonies, to specials about sumo wrestlers, drumming, and the mental "SPIRITUAL" preparations of the athletes prior to their events.

Western cultures have been experiencing a resurgence of things "spiritual" which had been abandoned, but are just recently being embraced again as what was once called a "Christian" nation reverts to paganism, as "they are filled with eastern ways..." the ways of "soothsayers." (Is2:6) And just as Israel did, the "church" has been seeking after "spirit-filled" experiences as they have forsaken "walk[ing] in the light of the Lord."(vs5)

John says "do not believe every spirit.." From this it is obvious that there are spirits that CAN BE believed, and some that CANNOT. A lot of people say, "don't knock it if you haven't EXPERIENCED it! I experienced it! It happened to me. I know what I'm talking about!" To be sure, the "experience" of many is a REAL EXPERIENCE. It is a "spiritual" experience. It does involved the realm of spirits. Christian, let us not misunderstand this! The spirits the unregenerate fellowship with are REAL spirits. They DO exist. The people so engaged are not merely "imagining" what they report and testify to. It is VERY REAL! They are "spirit-filled" and do make utterances with their mouths, and do become stiff on the floor as they are "slain." Not all of it is "pretend."

But we are not to believe them. They claim to be of God, but are not. They are lying spirits. They are very clever and practiced in the art of appearing like God. (2Cor11:14-15) After all, Lucifer (Satan) himself had the goal, to be "like the Most High."(Is14:14) Satan is a "liar and the father of [lies]." (Jn8:44) His desire is to deceive, if possible, even Believers.(Mt24:24) We know that God allows the lie to fester for a time, as the false spirits and prophets are part of His purpose; as with the incident with Ahab, Micaiah, and the 400 lying spirits/prophets.(1Kgs22:22-23) He allows false prophets to exist.

Thus, John says, don't believe everything that is presented to you. But test the spirits. Purveyors of false doctrine encourage you to simply "have faith." "Blind faith." Just "trust." If you question them, they retort back that

you are LACKING "faith." Just believe what they are telling you; after all, don't they have the "signs and wonders" to prove it? Well, Satan's workers also have "power, signs, and lying wonders."(2Ths2:9) Don't forget, when Moses started performing signs before Pharaoh, Pharaoh's sorcerers also duplicated many of the signs.(Ex7:11)

God wants us to test Him, so that we are sure we are hearing His voice. Gideon wanted to be sure he was hearing God's command, and not some false spirit, and thus, the famous incident of the "fleece."(Jdg6) If we are truly seeking His face, He will reveal Himself to us. "Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know." (Jer33:3)

So...what criteria can be used to ferret out a false prophet? One test is the given spirit's acknowledgment of Jesus Christ. The Spirit of God will testify that Jesus was truly, FULLY HUMAN. That "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh."(vs2) (Specifics on this were covered in 5:6-13 and Mat4:1-11)

Many today do not acknowledge that Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit (Lk1:35) in a virgin.(Is7:14) They do not believe that He is "THE" [only] Christ.(1Jn2:22) They believe that Jesus was part of a "christ principle" and that all "God's children" are "part of" that christ principle. Still others, believe they are "little christs" with all His "power." That they are one and equal with Jesus Christ. Still others believe that Jesus was "Deity;" but deny that He was FULLY human, with all the inherent frailties of humanity.

But Jesus partook of "flesh and blood."(Heb2:14) He is the "last Adam." (1Cor15:45) While we believe He is the "Son of God" we must also believe that the "Word became flesh"(Jn1:14)

To what extent is the deception? The deceiver has even removed this proof text in vs3 from the per-Versions which modern scholars prefer. As I prepare this study, I notice in the margin for vs3 it says, "NU-Text omits "that" and "Christ has come in the flesh." (NU having its origins in the Alexandrian apostasy; upon which most of the modern perversions are based) The NASB says, "every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God" and NIV says, "but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God." And thus, you will notice the "antichrist" websites will parade their "statement of faith" with the concept that they "acknowledge Jesus Christ." But when you start delving into what they are all about, they promote "self" and all the various "little christ" principles, denying Biblical doctrine. They name the name of Christ, but do not recognize, truly, Who He is. Full Deity, and full humanity.

As the deceiver has removed the very proof text from what he has persuaded people to embrace as "the Scriptures" he wants us to believe the lie, and he also wants to remove our means of knowing what the truth might be, even for those who are interested in knowing. (i.e. if you don't

find it in what you consider to be "God's Word" you won't know how to recognize a "false prophet" vs1) As Jesus said, "Woe to you lawyers! (or educated ones..those who compile the translations) For you have taken away the key of knowledge. You did not enter in yourselves, and those who were entering in you hindered." (Lk11:52) (This is why your choice of Scripture translation is so important. In some cases, like this, the differences are not so subtle.)

But you notice John emphasizes this matter. It cannot be overemphasized. Not only is the "Spirit of God" characterized by a "confession" of Jesus as Christ, and His humanity.(vs2) But to make sure we clearly see who is "not of God" he repeats it back the other way, just so it is not misunderstood. The one who "does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh IS NOT OF GOD."(vs3)

This is the spirit of the Antichrist.(vs3)

We are of God: by this we know - (1 John 4:4-6)

"You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world."(vs4)

This task of "test[ing] the spirits"(vs1) may seem a bit formidable at times. But undaunted, we have the victory "through our Lord Jesus Christ."(1Cor15:57) You notice John says we "have overcome" (past tense). This task is not accomplished alone. We have "Christ in you."(Col1:27) The Holy Spirit "Whom [we] have from God" (1Cor6:19) is "in you." One of His responsibilities is to make judgments and declare to us the things of Christ.(Jn16:14) And John says that this indwelling Holy Spirit is "greater than he who is in the world."(vs4)

Thus, the very fact that a person is in Christ assures victory. The fact that a person is a Christian ("C" not "c") assures the ability to ferret out the false from the true.

The false prophets speak as of the world.(vs5) They are of the world, and the world hears them. What a false prophet proclaims makes perfect sense to an unbeliever, because they both have the same "father." And the world "loves its own."(Jn15:19)

But, if you are a Believing Christian, you are a child of God.(Rom8:16) Another child of God will "hear" what a child of God proclaims.(vs6) They will understand. There will be a "witness" of the Spirit between them.(Rom8:16) The "one Spirit" (Eph4:4) will proclaim "one faith"(vs5) as True Believers already possess the fellowship of "the same mind and..the same judgment."(1Cor1:10)

But the world will not accept the teaching of the Believer, which was received through the Holy Spirit. Thus, you easily know the false prophet. The lying spirits. They will either purposely refute what you say, or will simply not understand it. They are not capable of doing so. "The natural man does not understand the things of the Spirit of God..neither CAN he know them."(1Cor2:14)

John says, "by this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error."(vs6b) In a very real sense, the retort of the unregenerate is true. They say it seeking to "humiliate" the Believer into submission to their falsehood when they say, "Just because you're a 'Christian' you think you're the only one with Truth" ..or, "you think your way is right, and mine is wrong."

In a very real sense, the answer to those retorts is, "YES! That's correct!"

Let's illustrate: There's a fellow who lives down the street from me. A few years ago he was in and out of prison. But occasionally I would stop to chat, and he would brag about this and that that his life had supposedly

consisted of. These boasts included his alleged involvement with "biker" gangs as he was supposedly experienced in riding Harleys. He was in and out of prison a few more times. But then along the way I noticed he had gotten a "little" Japanese bike. He eventually got the thing started, and "wobbled" his way around, waving to me "proudly" ...I suppose thinking he was "proving" to me his stories of his "biker" past. Well, as some of you know, I've been riding bikes for over 30 years, and have also helped out with safety classes. I "know how to" ride a motorcycle. And can "spot" within the first couple seconds whether a person really knows what he's doing on a motorcycle. This fellow wasn't even a good pretender.

I truly "am" a "motorcyclist" and thus, can easily discern a person who is "not" one. The same is true of music, skiing, sewing...you name it. A person who "truly is" something-or-other easily discerns a pretender.

And so, we have it by John's definition. Let's try this from a slightly different angle to make sure we understand it. If a Christian is specifically taught Truth by the Holy Spirit through God's Word and is firmly convinced of that teaching; and somebody comes along, just as firmly convinced, disagreeing with that teaching...by John's definition...that person is a "false prophet" representing the "spirit of error."(vs6) Because we know that "he who knows God hears us." This word "hear" means to "comprehend, perceive, receive, understand." And implied with that is "agreement."

All this, simply based on the fact that "we" ARE Believers in Christ? Yes. Because of the "anointing" we have from the Holy Spirit we "know all things."(2:20) We have "truth."(vs21) So, this is how we know truth from error. That which agrees with us is "truth" and that which doesn't is "error."(vs6b)

Love one another: love is of God - (1 John 4:7-21)

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God."(vs7)

One of the "fruits of the Spirit" is "love."(Gal5:22) What is "fruit?" Something which comes about from within a being due to its nature. A thistle produces stickers. A grape vine, grapes. A Christian, love. It's as simple as that. Because he is "of" God.

On the contrary, a person who simply cannot find it in himself to love, is NOT of God. Because God "IS" Love.(vs8) "Oh" you might say, "you don't know what this person did to me! You just have no idea!"

What kind of love does God have? He "manifested" it ..showed and demonstrated it.. by sending His "only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him."(vs9)(Jn3:16) What was involved in making it so we "might live?" He came to die. He did not die for an "equal" or a "friend" of His. "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still SINNERS, Christ died for us." (Rom5:8) What was the nature of this state of being "sinners?" There was nothing good in us. We were rebellious, and were turning away from God.(Rom3:10-18) Anything "good" that we thought we had was putrid rotting rags.(Is64:6)

And so, as God had compassion on us, our love for one another should be in same measure, "Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?"(Mt18:33)

Now, here we have an interesting observation. "No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us."(vs12)

Have you ever noticed with animals...a kitten is separated from its mother and siblings to become the "only cat" in a family. This happens to many kittens. And yet, have you noticed how they "all" groom themselves in similar manner, even though they grow up away from other felines? Why? When little robins are hatched, and grow up during a season, how do they know "where" to go when winter comes? ...or even "that they are supposed to go" anywhere as winter approaches? These are things which God has "designed into" these creatures.

In similar fashion, when a person comes to God in faith, they acquire the ability and "nature" to love. They become "like" the God whom they have not seen, "because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us." (Rom5:5) It becomes part of the "nature" of a Christian to love. This is how we know we are True Believing Christians, that we "abide in Him", because of His gift of the Holy Spirit.(vs13)(Rom8:16)

And because of this abiding in love with God, there is no fear.(vs18) One who fully abides in God's love, is made perfect.(vs17) A person who fully knows God in this way has no need to fear. He understands God's fullness. When the "day of judgment" comes, there is perfect confidence at His presence; because we are "as He is" in this world.(vs17)

A couple of "telling features" of one who abides in God's love. First of all, he will "confess that Jesus is the Son of God."(vs15) When the Ethiopian eunuch wanted to be baptized, and Philip said, "If you believe with all your heart, you may" what was the response? "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."(Acts8:37)

All of Scripture, all of history, heaven and earth, focuses on this One Person. Jesus Christ. Only the "lamb" was able to open the seals.(Rev5:6) He was the Only One "in heaven or on the earth or under the earth"(vs3) who could do so. The old song asks, "what will you do with Jesus, neutral you cannot be.." Jesus said, "I say to you, whoever confesses Me before men, him the Son of Man also will confess before the angels of God. "But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God. (Lk12:8-9) ...as that song ends "some day your heart will be asking, 'what will He do with me?'"

The other telling feature is the Christian's love for his brother. John says, "If someone says, 'I love God' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"(vs20)

Perhaps it seems like we are "harping" on this topic, as it has come up several times in this book. This is one reason I prefer "book studies" because repetition of concepts cannot be blamed "on me." They are God's Word. If He has emphasized something, I will do so, as well. And you notice God, through John, is emphasizing this matter again. Apparently God sees it as a big enough problem that needs repeating. And we can apply this to what we see in the current apostasy.

Various movements today have as one of their rallying cries, "Let us learn to love our brothers." Steve Green and Lyonell Harris (sp?) sing together "Lord, teach me to love." Promise Keepers and the various United Religions speak of putting aside differences and "learning to love" one another.

Are we beginning to understand? The fact that they are asking God to "teach" them to love...that they are seeking to "learn HOW TO" love, proves that they "is a liar"(vs20) They claim to love God, but are liars. The fact that they are "trying to" do it, means they are admitting they don't have it. Just like that kitten doesn't need to "learn how to" groom itself "as a feline" ...a Christian does not need to "learn how to love" because Love is God's gift. If he truly has the Holy Spirit within, he ALREADY HAS God's

love. When a person has experienced God's love, there is nothing BUT to love in return. If he doesn't know "how to" love, he hasn't experienced God's love for him.

Those who are seeking it, don't have it. They are liars. And they further prove it by their open hatred of those who do have it. They are not of God. Because, "by this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."(vs21)(Jn13:35)

See Also Addendum: *"Perfected in Love?"*

Born of God: Jesus is the Christ - (1 John 5:1-5)

"Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him."(vs1)

"See, water. What hinders me from being baptized? ..if you believe with all your heart, you may. ..I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." (Acts8:36-37)

Here we see the basis of faith. The foundation of it. Paul called Jesus the "Foundation" as being the only foundation possible,(1Cor3:11) there being none other. We see Jesus promised clear back in the beginning as the "seed" of the woman.(Gen3:15,Gal3:19,etc.) And He closes up the Scriptures by being the focus of "The Revelation of Jesus Christ."

We also see the "answer" to the questions of those who would seek to reach God by various means; Allah, Confucius, Mass, dead ancestors, animal/spirit guides, etc. It is not enough to simply believe in a "creator." We must also believe in The Creator's Son.(vs1) Jesus said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me."(Jn14:6)

Muslims claim to believe in the "god of Abraham," since Arab peoples have roots back to Abraham via Ishmael.(Gen17:18,20) Isn't that enough? No. Scripture is very clear; God said, "Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his descendants after him. (Gen 17:19) and..."In Isaac your seed shall be called." (Gen21:12) Furthermore, He is the "God of Abraham...Isaac...Jacob."(Ex3:6) Because it is through this line that the Messiah came. He did not come through the descendents of Esau, as it is written, "Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated."(Rom9:13)

There is only "one" Son Whom God "begot."(vs1) Jesus was His "only begotten Son."(Jn3:16) on the day that God proclaimed, "You are My Son, today I have begotten You."(Heb1:5) And He is "THE" Christ.(1Jn2:22) THE "annointed One."

Thus, "faith" is IN a SPECIFIC PERSON. THE Son of God, Jesus Christ. When a person is "born again"(Jn3:3) it is because they have believed on "the Lord Jesus Christ." (Acts16:31)

People who believe THEMSELVES to be "little christs" are Not "born of God." Nor...those who believe that "everyone is part of the christ principle or concept" ...are NOT "born of God." They have the wrong person/s being their "christ." Themselves. They are lost in sin.

Next, we approach a favorite current theme through the "back door." Jesus had commanded, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one

another.."(Jn13:34) Many harp on this theme as "proof" of a person being a "Christian." In other words, if a person is In Christ, he will love his fellow-Christian. And further, there will be "unity." (Jn17:21,1Cor1:10)

John, here, is showing proof of "love for the brethren" as being "lov[ing] God and keep[ing] His commandments"(vs2) In other words, if we claim to love the brethren and to have unity with them, we will be obeying God's word. By definition: following "Doctrine." It's a two-way street. Unity with fellow-Believers, and obeying God are part-n-parcel of the same thing. One cannot exist without the other. So, those who claim to be seeking "love and unity" BY MEANS OF "ignoring, abandoning, tearing walls down, rejecting" ..Doctrine, are NOT of God. They do not "love" God as they claim, because John states, "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments."(vs3) ..Doctrine.

For the Believer who truly loves God, keeping His commandments and being obedient is not difficult.(vs3) The only difficulties come when we, still catering to our fleshly desires, "twist the Scriptures" (2Pt3:16) to see how much we can "get away with" or "how little we can get by with." Again, "by their fruits"(Mt7:20); if a person is characterized by worldly obsessions, "the love of the Father is not in him."(1Jn2:15b)

How do we "overcome the world?"(vs4) "..our faith." Paul wails, "Who will deliver me from this body of death? I thank God--through Jesus Christ our Lord!"(Rom7:24-25) John identifies the one who overcomes as "he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God."(vs5)

Do you struggle with habits and addictions? Have you been "resolving" and "trying harder?" Well, you will never 12-step your way out of them. The only solution is Jesus Christ.

But do not be fooled by the pious, glib "Just turn it over to Jesus" ...as though, then, Jesus will wave some magic wand over it and make it "all better." No. If you still harbor secret desires to continue in sin, Christ is not fooled. "God is not mocked."(Gal6:7) He knows us "to the division of soul and spirit..and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." (Heb4:12) We must "mourn and weep"(Jas4:9) and humble ourselves, and "then He will lift you up."(vs10)

Then, the penitent will experience and understand "He restores my soul."(Ps23:3) ..and can then be classed as an "overcomer." One who is "born of God."(vs1) Not because of his own "worth or value" to God. But because he "believes that Jesus is the Son of God."(vs5)

Witness of the Son: unto eternal life - (1 John 5:6-13)

"..this is He who came by water and blood--Jesus Christ..and it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one." (vs6-7)

In this passage we get into a topic which the unbeliever wrestles with, and twists.(2Pt3:16) Many, in fact, have excluded some of these words from their perVersions. And it is no wonder that they have done so, because the very essence of Deity is involved. The "God is dead" crowd started it years ago, and now, those claiming faith in Christ also defend the exclusions as being more "scholastically correct." But the fact is, these words ARE in God's Word. And they form an "official legal" statement regarding the "humanity" of Christ.

To exclude them, is to deny Christ's deity and humanity; and thus, His ability to save mankind. It would be one thing for God to come to the world to save it. But, mere "deity" could not do so. "Man" had sinned requiring payment by "death."(Rom5:12,6:23) In order for man to be saved, a "man" had to die to pay that debt. If Jesus was merely "deity" He could not fulfill that requirement. "The soul who sins shall die."(Ez18:4) Man had been created as a "living soul."(Gen2:7) And we are told that "God is spirit."(Jn4:24) A "spiritual" being could not pay the debt for a "soul" being.

As we all probably know, our "physical" bodies are made up of something like 97% water. Without getting into details about areas that I am not an expert, at the time of birth, a baby comes into the world via "water." The "water sac", etc. But, the water merely gives us "physical" form. A dead corpse, for instance, can lie there, with no life, and contain "water."

Scripture tells us that "life is in the blood."(Gen9:4,Lev17:11) Are the "soul" and the blood somehow tied together? There are many mysteries that even the best "experts" cannot answer. But when Jesus came to earth, He came with a body (water) and with human soul/life (blood). He came "in the likeness of men" and was "found in appearance as a man."(Phil2:7-8) The word "likeness" means that He was formed just as any other human. He was a "living soul"(Gen2:7) and had "life-blood."(vs6)

This fact is quite important, because Paul teaches us that there is a difference between earthly and heavenly bodies.(1Cor15) One of the aspects of true Faith in Christ, is to believe that He actually became a "real" human man. One of the ways of discerning false prophets and spirits is this matter, "by this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come [IN THE FLESH] is of God"(4:2) The "Word became flesh..."(Jn1:14)

Also, it was necessary for Him to have "real" human blood, because "without the shedding of blood there is no remission" of sin.(Heb9:22) You will recall that when He had died on the cross, and the soldier had speared Him (instead of breaking His legs), it says, "water and blood came out."(Jn19:34) The "life" (blood) and separated from the "body" (water).

Now that the descriptions are given, we need "legal confirmation." In a court of law, if there is no evidence or no witness, the case is dismissed, and no ruling is possible. In the O.T. God required that "two or three" witnesses (Deu17:6,Mt18:16) be available to "establish" a matter. To make it "firm." To cause the matter to "stand."

Since God is presenting the "case" here, who is He going to call upon to testify? "God..because He could swear by no greater, He swore by Himself." (Heb6:13) "There are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word (Jesus), and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one.(vs7) Many people think this passage proves the "trinity/unity" of God. While it certainly references the "Three" ...the "Three" are actually being called upon as "witnesses" to Jesus' humanity. And while it is true that "the Lord is One"(Deu6:4), in this case, the testimony of the three is in "agreement" about the matter at hand. Their testimony is "one" regarding Jesus' humanity.

On the earth there were three Who witnessed Jesus' humanity. "The Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one."(vs8) When Jesus was baptized by John, Jesus went into the water as Physical and Soul, and the "Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him."(Lk3:22) In addition, the Father from heaven spoke forth, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased." Thus, we have the true tripartite human man (body, soul, spirit), Who is also Deity ("My beloved Son"), and thus "sinless" ...Who was seen to be a perfect candidate (spotless lamb -1Pt1:19) for sacrifice for sin.."in Whom I am well pleased." In other words, God was saying, 'this One fits the requirement (is a "good choice") for atonement for man's sin.'

While this discussion talks specifically about Jesus' "humanity" we must never lose sight of the fact of His "Deity." He was true "man." It was necessary. But without His Deity, His humanity would have been ineffective. At the prompting of the Holy Spirit Peter had confessed "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."(Mt16:16) And then, on the Mount of Transfiguration, he sees Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah, and humanly seeks to "equate" them by suggesting a tabernacle be erected for each (17:4)...putting them on equal footing. Even after the Resurrection, the disciples didn't "quite" have a grasp of His Deity. He was still on a par with the old time prophets who were emulated by all. And so God spoke from the cloud to clarify the matter, "This is My beloved Son (Deity), in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"(17:5)

So, how does this witness "reach" us? The Holy Spirit.(vs6) "He who believes in the Son of God has the witness [in himself..]"(vs10) Jesus had promised that the Holy Spirit would "take of what is Mine and declare it to you."(Jn16:14-15) This is something which the "natural man" cannot understand.(1Cor2:14) And no amount of debate will impart it to the intellectually astute if he is not in Christ. The scholars do not fathom "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."(1Cor2:2) But for the one who is truly "in Christ"(2Cor5:17) "...the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you.."(1Jn2:27) You "know that you know that you know" ...because "the Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit..."(Rom8:16)

If a person does not believe God, in effect, he is saying God is a liar.(vs10) The witness is there, to be accepted. If it is rejected, no amount of philosophizing will change the Truth. That which the Holy Spirit imparts is "truth."(vs6)

Thus, when a person believes God, he then understands WHAT "eternal life" is. He understands God's testimony concerning His Son; and he has "life."(vs12) If a person lacks understanding about the Son, he doesn't have life; he lacks the Holy Spirit. And to lack the Holy Spirit in ones life is to lack eternal life, because that means he does not belong to God.(Rom8:9)

Thus, if a person claims that he "doesn't know if" he is born again, or not...most likely, he is not. A person who is truly born again (Jn3:3,8) will "know" he belongs to Christ. It's just the way things are. And if a person is not in Christ, he cannot manufacture the "feeling" of being "saved." This is one reason so many people keep "going forward" time after time. They were never really saved (any of the times), and don't have the assurance of Christ in their lives, so they continually attempt to fill that void they know to be present.

John has written these things so that we can have assurance of our salvation. Just as we know that Scripture is given so that the man of God is "thoroughly equipped"(2Tm3:17), as Jesus' "words" were the "words of eternal life"(Jn6:68); we are not left to emotional whims as to what/who Christ is, nor what eternal life is. God knows that there are deceiving spirits who would try to deceive "even the elect" (Mt24:24) ...so He has graciously spelled this matter out in "black and white." So we can read the actual words and compare them to that "you know that you know" feeling, and know that the "witness within"(vs10) is truly from God.

Even the understanding of these explanations is limited to those who are partakers in Christ. If you are not "in Christ" you will not understand it, because it is not "for" you. You need, first of all, to come in repentance, and "believe in the name of the Son of God."(vs13) As God spoke through Daniel regarding events of Jesus' second coming, "...none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand." (Dan12:10)

Confidence: asking..His will - (1 John 5:14-15)

"Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."(vs14)

In the O.T. the system of "access to God" was through the priests. "Not without blood"(Heb9:7) When the psalmist prays, part of his prayer is that God might "hear" him. "Hear my prayer, O LORD, And give ear to my cry; Do not be silent at my tears..." (Ps39:12) There was this "distance" as God seemed to be "up there" and man was "down here." Prayer was more of a "formal"-seeming situation, where people prayed "towards" the temple in Jerusalem.(1Kg8:42,44, etc.)

But along comes Jesus. And as He prays He says, "I know that You always hear Me."(Jn11:42) He prays, with confidence that His prayer is being heard. Jesus' praying is so different, His disciples ask Him to "teach them how" to pray.(Lk11:1)

Several things changed. First of all, Jesus was sacrificed "once to bear the sins.."(Heb9:28) When He died on the cross, He went into the Holiest place as our High Priest (Heb4:14) with His own blood (Heb13:12), as the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom (Mt27:51) clearing the way for the Believer to have direct access to God through His blood (Heb9:14) and thus we are exhorted, "Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace.." (Heb4:16) We have "access" to the Father, through Jesus. Thus, Jesus said, "If you ask anything IN MY NAME..."(Jn14:13)

Another thing that changed was the "kind of" relationship we have with God. Jesus said, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you. No longer do I call you servants..."(Jn15:14-15) In an "eastern" culture the master was "above"; the servant "beneath". The servant bowed to the master, and in the master's eyes, could claim no personal "rights." Thus, that "distance" we spoke of earlier. There was no friendship or intimacy of relationship between the two. They would not "hang out" together.

So Jesus is closing the gap by calling the Believer His "friends." How does this occur? In the context, Jesus was speaking of "abiding" in Him.(vs4)

And how is abiding to occur? Through the "Helper."(vs26) The "Spirit of Truth."(16:13) We are not left "alone" (orphans)(14:18) but Jesus promised to "come to" us, as the Spirit of truth "dwells with you" (14:17) This was a totally new situation. Until Jesus had taken care of the sin problem, humanity was corrupt. But now, with His death an accomplished fact, there were now pure "temples" the Holy Spirit could dwell in.(1Cor6:19) O.T. saints did not have this. But it is a primary characteristic of a Christian(Rom8:9) as Paul equates the Holy Spirit's indwelling with "Christ is in you."(Rom8:10) As the Believer is "in Christ."(2Cor5:17)

So John says, due to this indwelling Holy Spirit, and intimacy of "friendship" with Christ, we have "confidence" in fellowship and communion. We can know that we are "heard" before God.

As we are in communion of abiding, keeping His commandments, "whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him."(vs15) ...because we asked "according to His will."(vs14) And we know His "will" because we have been in communion. We will not have asked with "doubting"(Jas1:6) nor for selfish lusts(Jas4:3) as our friendship is with Christ (Jn15:14) ...not the world (Jas4:4)

"And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it. If you love Me, keep My commandments." (Jn14:13-15)

Sin unto death: don't pray about it - (1 John 5:16-18)

"If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin not to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not to death."(vs16)

This would appear to be a companion passage to a previous study we've considered from James 5:14-15 regarding prayer for the sick. In this case, not only has sin brought about illness, but also death. In review; Paul chided the Corinthians regarding their abuse of the Lord's Supper; that because of those abuses, some people had become ill, and others had died.(1Cor11:30) And in the case of "gross" sins like the immorality in Corinth, he says to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction [death] of the flesh."(1Cor5:5)

Some people interpret this mysterious "sin-unto-death" as being the rejection of Christ's salvation before they die...thus, being doomed to hell. But you notice Paul says the destruction of the "flesh" is so that "his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus." We are talking about "Christians" here. As John is talking about a "brother." This is not talking about a person's "state of salvation" or of "rejecting one's salvation" due to purposefully "walking away" from God. It is talking about a person who, although a Child of God, is in disobedience; and is experiencing the "chastening of the Lord."(Heb12)

It is very much like physical life. Children are disciplined by their parents. While all "sin" is "sin" ...there are some things which reap greater consequences. For some infractions, parents may "ground" the child; taking away certain privileges. In other cases, the board of education is applied to the seat of learning. As each child and situation warrants.

God is very much aware of the needs of His children, too. Sometimes He will simply bring "leanness of soul" to His child.(Ps106:15) At other times there is illness. And when there's intercession, the person is healed; as Jesus says, "go and sin no more."(Jn5:14) ..sometimes with the added admonition, "lest a worse thing come upon you."

In the extreme, "death" also comes into play. If, in the state of rebellion, for example, the person was drunk and driving like a mad man, and has an accident; he may likely die. God isn't going to necessarily step in and perform a miracle contrary to the natural laws He put in place. In such a case, "prayer" isn't going to do any good. The person is reaping the reward of his actions. In David's case, death came to his baby.(2sam12) And when David realized God's judgment, he stopped pleading the case.(vs22-23) God had spoken.

In the case where Paul told the Corinthians to "not keep company" with an errant brother (1Cor5:9,11), if that person persists in rebellion and ends up on his "death bed" unrepentant; John says, "I do not say that he should pray about that."(vs16b) Just like a sibling cannot intervene on behalf of the one, ear in hand, on his way to the "woodshed" ..so, too, we cannot interfere with God's disciplining of His own, our spiritual "siblings."

How do we know "which" sin is not unto death, and thus should be prayed about? Well, as we understand that prayer is a state of "abiding" in Christ, of being in communion with Him; the Holy Spirit will take care of those details for each situation.(Rom8:26-27)

But the one who "is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself.."(vs18)

This may seem contradictory, somehow; because we have just talked about the extreme case where disobedience results in physical death. In these "bodies" of death(Rom7:24) John has already reminded us that we do "have..sin"(1:8) which needs to be confessed (vs9) and that Christ's advocacy (2:1) propitiates for our sins.(2:2)

But the one who is "born"(Jn3:3) and has the "seed" (1Jn3:9) of God; that "seed" does not sin. As Jesus said, the "spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."(Mt26:41) "For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish." (Gal5:17)

The "seed" who has "been born of God" keeps himself. "Keep" means to "attend to carefully, reserve, guard." As Paul writes, "I discipline my body and bring it into subjection.."(1Cor9:27)

And the one secure in Christ's salvation, the "wicked one does not touch."(vs18b) "Touch" means to "fasten onto, or cling to." He may fling mud at us, but Jesus' blood washes it away.(Rev1:5) He goes about "seeking whom he may devour."(1Pt5:8) But he is not able to "prevail [successfully] against" the True Believer.(Mt16:18)

We know: understanding..Son of God - (1 John 5:19-20)

"We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one."(vs19)

Someone expressed it, "you know that you know that you know." How do we know that we are of God? "The [Holy] Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God."(Rom8:16) Matters of the spirit are seemingly "intangible." As Jesus described to Nicodemus; the wind blows and one can hear it. One can see the work or destruction it causes...the leaves blowing, the windmill turning, the snow drifts it created, the twinkling of the stars. But one cannot actually see the wind, itself. If a scoffer were to come along and ask for "proof" of the wind's existence, one can only point to what the wind does, and suggest that his "shivering" is due to "wind-chill."

In a similar fashion, "so is everyone who is born of the Spirit."(Jn3:8) It is not something anyone can see with the eyes of flesh. And thus, the unregenerate will scoff at things "Christian." They are under the wicked one "...whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them." (2Cor4:4) While he promotes his lie "you will be like God"(Gen3:5) he actually blinds his victims to God's truth. ..to Jesus Christ.

But we, who are in Christ.."know." We know because Jesus Christ, Himself, has made us know. Jesus said, "he who has seen Me has seen the Father."(Jn14:9) He came as the "express image of His [God's] person."(Heb1:3) As He prays He says, "I have declared to them Your name.."(Jn17:26) And He is the One Who promised to send the Comforter, the Spirit of truth.(Jn15:26,16:7) The Holy Spirit teaches us about Jesus (16:14-15)

As an aside here: one reason we don't know that much about the Holy Spirit is because we are not supposed to know. The Holy Spirit does not teach us about Himself (Jn16:13) but glorifies the Son. Who, in turn, glorifies the Father.(Jn17:1,8:29) ..Who is "all in all."(1Co15:28)

Christ came to give us understanding of the Father..."Him who is true."(vs20) "Our fellowship is with the Father(1:3) and with His Son Jesus Christ." You see, we have come full circle from where the book started. As the mature ("fathers") are known for their "knowledge" of "Him who is from the beginning."(2:13-14)

"This is the true God and eternal life."(vs20b)

Keep from idols: Amen! - (1 John 5:21)

"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."(vs21)

Oh, what a "negative" way to end the book! John, you're so "judgmental." Don't you know you're supposed to "lift people up" and make them feel more "positive" as they leave the service? To feel good about themselves...? What is this... "...DON'T..."? After all, doesn't Paul write to think "positive?" "...things that are noble, just, lovely, virtuous, and ...PRAISE...!! Think on these things."(Phil4:8) You have it all "wrong, wrong, wrong!" Don't you know you're considered the "Apostle of LOVE?" Let's show a little more "love" here. If they leave feeling "cautious" they probably won't come back next week, and the offerings will drop, and then we'll have to figure some new scheme and program to raise money for the new building program. You've gotta have people leaving, feeling all "pumped up" with their "batteries charged" to feel "victorious."

Aaah, but...human nature! The "flesh."

What was Israel's downfall? Even while they had "just" received the Law, to which they responded, "all that the LORD our God says to you..we will hear and do it."(Deu5:27) Moses is scarcely gone up into the mountain 40 days, and they revert to pagan idolatry with the golden calf. Paul says their actions are recorded as "...our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." (1Cor10:6-7) The records of the kings of Israel is a record of idolatry, Ahab and Jezebel being primary examples.(1Kg16:31) Along with Manasseh.(2Kg21:11) One of the primary messages of the prophets is that Israel might turn away from idolatry, and the judgements that would come because of it.(Is2:8,10:11, etc.)

The early church council at Jerusalem compiled a list of four things for the new Gentile converts to be concerned with. One of those was related to "idolatry."(Acts15:29) Much of the book of 1Corinthians was necessary because of their pagan idolatrous sexually perverted background. Their whole problems with "spiritual" matters required a major "chunk" (Chs12-14) to set things from idolatry (12:2) straight. And as the occult has been infiltrating the "church" in our day, these same problems have become the mainstream of what is called "christian."

What is an idol?

An image used as an object of worship. "You shall not make for yourself a carved image-any likeness that is in heaven..or on earth."(Ex20:4)

A false god. "You shall have no other gods before Me."(Ex20:3)

One that is adored, often blindly.. "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve.'" (Mat4:10)

Well, we certainly don't have any images as "objects of worship" do we? Not unless one considers the "Bible" book stores full of pictures of Jesus, crucifixes, crosses, etc. which people adorn their houses and church "sanctuaries" with. Or the little "charms" that one is promised if they will donate "X" number of dollars to their favorite TV "christian" network.

What about false gods? The biggest one being promoted today is "self." Rather than preaching "thus says the Lord" the preachers are building up "self-esteem" in their followers. Appropriating God's (??) "power" as they go around as "little christs."

Self manifests itself in all sorts of ways. Paul put it best, "For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame; who set their mind on earthly things. (Phil3:18-19)

When it comes down to it, idolatry is anything which takes our attention, focus and worship from God Most High, and substitutes it with some other person or thing. John is writing to "little children." In other words in the context of his writing style; to Believers. For Believers...as Paul continues, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, (Phil 3:20)

If our citizenship is in heaven, our primary focus is not earthly. We are "sojourners" on this earth.(1Pt2:11) "This world is not my home, I'm just a passin' through..." As sojourners, we are not to get bogged down by fleshly lusts. Yes, we live in houses, drive cars, and wear clothes. But these things do not control us. We do not invest our every waking moment in the betterment of our earthly existence. Because we "lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us...[running] with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame..."(Heb12:1-2) So, if we are following Christ, we will "deny [ourselves] and take up [our] cross DAILY, and follow [Christ]."(Lk9:23)

To that end... "keep yourselves from idols."

Amen!

Addendum Section:

Perfected in love? (1Jn 4:7-21)

READER QUESTION:

I must disagree with your last statements. A person who is not perfected in love MAY truly be of God. Our souls are still being saved, as it says in the book of James (though our spirits be born-again).

Or did I misinterpret you?

VW ANSWER:

Let's take it all "in context" shall we. Let's go back to the example of the felines, again.

A kitten weaned from its mother and taken to a household where NO OTHER CATS exist...knows how to groom itself. It knows how to lick its paws, and then use those paws to "wash" its face. As it grows, it develops its "technique" in the matter. But all cats, essentially, wash their faces in the same way. They are "perfectly" (completely) "feline." It is the cat's "nature" to behave in this way.

In similar fashion, it is the Christian's "nature" to "love." If a person CANNOT love, he is not a "Christian." He does not possess the Holy Spirit of Christ residing in him.(Rom8:9) This does not say that as he "grows"(1Pt2:2) he won't develop and "understand love" more and more. But a true Believing Christian has the "seed"(1Jn3:9) remaining in him, and thus, it is in his nature. He cannot BUT love..."big" love, "little" love. There will be "love" there. If there isn't, he is not Christ's.