

LETTERS OF THE APOSTLE JOHN

Part 1

I John 1:1 – I John 2:27

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We are going to be looking at three rather small books in the New Testament. We are going to look at the letters of I John, II John and III John. The Apostle John had some very important things to say. John, I think we know, was an elderly man when he wrote these letters towards the end of his life. People do not know for sure, but he was probably around ninety, maybe even a bit older. He was the last apostle alive; in fact he was probably one of the only people still alive from the days when Jesus physically walked on the earth. John had been around for a long, long time, and he had no doubt seen a great deal. He started his life off as a disciple of John the Baptist and then he moved across to the Lord Jesus when John the Baptist pointed Him out, for the rest of His life. John, you may recollect, was the disciple whom Jesus loved, and was apparently very close to Jesus. I guess their personalities clicked and so on, and here is John towards the end of his life and he has seen a lot. He has also witnessed a great deal of corruption and deception in the church. He has seen the brethren disappear, being deceived. It was nearly fifty years before these letters that Paul said to the Galatians, 'I am astonished that you are so quickly leaving the One who called you'. Peter also warned of deception, and here is John looking at, no doubt, a very interesting landscape.

Interestingly, there are no greetings from John. He does not say, 'Greetings and peace and joy to the brethren...', but he just starts right away.

I John 1:1 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...

So John starts with a bang, no real introduction at all. He is pointing out something that to him was very important, that he was an eye witness of the Word of life. This is not hearsay, he is not

telling us a story that somebody passed to him that was passed to them. John the apostle has seen, had heard and says even touched and handled the Lord Jesus. He had shaken His hand, put his arm around His shoulder, probably the Lord Jesus had put his arm around John on occasions. Certainly at the so-called “Lord’s supper,” when John leaned across and put his head on Jesus’ bosom. So John says, ‘This is real... I or we saw this... we touched the Lord Jesus’, and partly John is responding to a sort of teaching that was going around in those days that Jesus was not actually physical. Some of the people of that day taught that flesh is horrible, nasty, evil and sinful. They said that a pure God could not come in flesh, yuk, what a vile and disgusting thought. So they taught that what you saw when you saw Jesus was just sort of a ghost, an apparition. John says, ‘No, no, I was there. I can bear witness that this was a real being, and we did touch Him and we heard Him, and we saw Him, and He is real’. And it says that He is the Word of life, well that is what John often calls Jesus. The Word - in Greek the expression is *Logos*, and in his gospel John says, “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*”

I John 1:2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us...

It was revealed, it was shown, and it was made visible. So John is very emphatic: ‘I was there, I have seen, I have touched, I have heard the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of life’.

I John 1:3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.

Not an apparition, not a ghost, literally a *human being*. If you fellowship with us, you fellowship with the Father and His Son. It is very important to John the concept that we *are family*. We are not just talking about a relationship, we are talking about *fellowship*. Fellowship in the Greek implies to share an intimate relationship, and that is something that you and I should be conscious of.

We are actually in a very close, very family oriented, very intimate relationship with the Father, with Jesus Christ His Son, and indeed with each other. It is not enough to say, God is my Father and I am His son or his daughter, so we have a relationship. It is more than that. Fellowship is more than relationship.

If you think about it there are many families where mothers and sons, and fathers and daughters, brothers and sisters do not have fellowship with each other because there has been some family dispute over money, marriage or whatever, and they do not talk to each other. I know that in my own family, in fact my father's family as well. The relationships were still there, there were a father, a mother, a son, and a daughter. Relationships were there, but fellowship non-existent. My mother and father fell out with his mother when he got married to my mother. The last fifteen years of her life my father never spoke to his mother. There was still a relationship — but no fellowship. Same in my case. I could think back to a number of my relationships. They are there, as you cannot dispute the blood connection and the name, but fellowship would be poor to non-existent.

Now what John is saying here is, I am telling you this, I am explaining this about the fact that it is real because I want you brethren to have fellowship with the Father and the Son, and with us. Not just relationships, but fellowship, this intimate closeness. Another Greek expression is that they have all things in common. So we are talking about not just having a distant and technical relationship, but John says we are family: the Father, the Lord Jesus, us, we have fellowship, companionship, all things in common. This would have been very different to John's readers because in those days if you were in some pagan religion the gods were largely disinterested in human beings. You may try to placate them every so often with a sacrifice or two, but not the truth. The truth is that you and I should have fellowship with the Father and the Son.

I John 1:4 And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

John wants people to have fullness of joy, based upon the fact that we are *family* with the Father and Jesus Christ and it is real. Believers' lives should be joy full, as he says here, 'This is why I am writing this letter so that your joy may be full, or may be complete'. Or your joy may abound, and that is very important to John and very important to you and me as well. I think we would all prefer to be joyful than miserable, unhappy, and dispirited. John was not making up that it is important, and that we can be full of joy, because he heard it somewhere rather important, and if we look at John 15, we will see what John heard from Jesus, and he probably heard this a number of times in different contexts

John 15:10 "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. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.

Of course it could be that Jesus is talking religious words here, nice pretty platitudes that you could embroider perhaps on some decorative item in the house, or is Jesus talking truth?

Again in verse 11, "*These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.*" This is what Jesus wanted, for our joy to be full.

John 16:23 "And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you.

Of course, remember that you and I can have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Not relationship, but obviously when you are begotten God becomes your Father, and you become His son or daughter. But relationship could be distant. We are talking here about having fellowship, that close, intimate, real personal relationship between the Father, the Son and us.

John 16:24 "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.

That is one of the big promises in terms of prayer. Ask God in the name of the Lord Jesus, as Jesus Himself says, "Ask and you will receive." Not that you might, or that God shares these things out and there is a bit of a lottery, sometimes you win, but most of the time you lose, your number does not come up very often in the heavenly lottery. No, Jesus says, 'Ask in my name and you will receive that your joy may be full'. I guess we could ask ourselves on a score of 10, where 0-1 is misery guts, and 10 is bubbling over with joy, where do I figure? 1½? 2? 2¾? 9.9? Well Jesus said here twice in these couple of chapters that He anticipates our joy being full.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, *joy*, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

So the second of the fruits is joy, if we have the spirit of God in us and if we fellowship with the Father and the Son and we are pretty close, very intimate, that is what John is striving to achieve in his letter.

When I was growing up as a Catholic I was “religious.” But, of course, religious is not the same as living God’s way. Religion is just following the rules and regulations of some particular organization. And I followed faithfully, as I could as a 10, 12, 13, 14 year old, the laws and the commandments of the Catholic church. I believed in God, and I prayed. I went through the rote prayers that one learned by memory. But, there was no fellowship with the Father and the Son, because I did not understand God, or what He was like, what His plans were, or what my part was in them. But you and I should be way, way, way beyond that. We are supposed to be fellowshiping, that is our relationship with the Father and the Son is to be better and stronger than with our own family.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.

All of those are worth holding up as a sort of mirror, and then thinking, ‘What do I see looking back at me?’ How does Jamie compare in terms of goodness, peace, self control (and of course, stick your own name in there please and not mine, and just check out how you are doing). Because if things are not where they ought to be then we have to change. If you keep on doing what you have always done you will keep on getting what you have already got. And if it is not good enough, if some of the fruits of the spirit are not there, then some changes have to be made, it will not just change automatically, you and I have to do something.

So let us go back to I John 1:1. John says that he is writing these things to us and explains about fellowship with the Father and the Son, having all things in common, being close and intimate that your joy may be full. If you and I have fully understood our calling, our family, and our fellowship with the Father, the Son, our future, then we would be probably a lot more joyful than sometimes we are.

I John 1:5-7 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

John brings out a sort of comparison here, quite a handy one, and quite a cool one, light and dark. And he says in verse 5 that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. No darkness

whatsoever, it is black and white, it is light and dark. It is very clear that over on the one side you have light, where God is, and in opposition to that you have dark or darkness. Guess where you and I are supposed to be?

John 8:12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life."

This should be you and me. I guess it is a picture that is being drawn here, of light and dark, spiritual light and spiritual darkness. I think it is quite a reasonable picture. We can easily understand darkness. You go into a room where it is pitch black and there are no windows, what do you do? If you step forward you are going to fall over something or down a pit. There could be a rabid dog in there or a murderer. It is black, it is dark, and you cannot do much. Somebody throws the light switch and suddenly you can see now, you can see where to walk, where to go, where the refrigerator is, where the drinks cupboard is. Great, we have light and dark. One gives you light to see, but in darkness you are going to struggle. And it says God is light, and Jesus says, "I am the light of the world". If you follow Jesus you will not follow darkness, because you will fellowship with the Lord Jesus who is in the light.

So we have this picture of light and darkness, and you have to be in one or the other. You cannot compromise in terms of your lifestyle. You might, like we all do, slip up occasionally, but as a lifestyle, as a chosen way of living, you and I have to be in the light. If we are going to fellowship with the Father and His Son, which is this close relationship, this intimate relationship, well guess where they are? They are in the light. So, if you are in the dark what fellowship can you have with the Father? None! So it is very important that we are in the right place, because it is dangerous for you and me to be in the dark. We may stumble into it now and then, but we must not end up in the dark, because the Father and Jesus are not there (but somebody else is in the dark!).

John could have used lots of technical expressions and expounded on this but he is being more simple and using light and dark. This is easy enough to understand: 'Get into the light and stay there!'

Ephesians 6:11-12 Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities,

against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Why would we want armor if there are no enemies, no adversary, and no danger? When Paul says to put on the armor you know that you are vulnerable, that there is a danger and that you have to do something about that.

There are rulers of the darkness of this age that you and I live in. If you and I walk in the darkness, you and I are to be found in the dark, then we are in grave danger, because we are in an arena where there are demons, where there are spiritual hosts of wickedness, where there are principalities who rule this world's dark places. Someone said once, 'Don't play in Satan's backyard and you won't get bitten by Satan's guard dogs'. Stay in the light.

Quoting I John 1:6 again, *"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth."* We cannot afford to walk in the dark, but if we walk in the light then indeed we have this fellowship, this close and intimate family-friendly relationship with the Father and Jesus Christ. How do we know what is light? You and I want to be in the light, we do not want to be compromising with the dark.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

If you and I are going to walk in the light, well the scriptures will show us which way that is. God's inspired word will tell us what the way that is. It says that God's word is a lamp, you know, a bright light. It shows us the way to go.

Psalms 119:130 The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple.

You and I want to walk in the light, that is where God is, and that is where the Lord Jesus is. We find out how to walk by paying attention to His scriptures, because the entrance of God's words gives light.

You cannot be in the dark and hope to fellowship with the Father, because He will not be there. God is light and in Him is no darkness. Even the physical sun is quite bright, but the physical sun has some spots that are darker than the rest. But not in God's case, He is pure, bright and perfect light.

Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day.

That is the path of the just, it is in the light. In fact it says here that it gets brighter and brighter as we continue walking in the path of the just. So, I guess if we find our lives getting darker and darker, then there is a big challenge because the path of the just it says gets brighter and brighter, every month and every year that we live.

Proverbs 4:19 The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.

They have no idea why things turn out to be a disaster in their lives, in their communities, and in their nations, because they are blind. Part of the reason that they are blind is because most countries have thrown away the word of God. Bygone generations may not have known all of the truths of scriptures that you and I may do, but people then had a higher regard for the Bible. The words of the Bible were taught in schools, but nowadays of course, the scriptures are largely consigned to the dustbin by most leaders, and so they have no idea. They cannot know the solutions to their problems because it says, *“The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble.”*

Proverbs 4:20 My son, give attention to My words; incline your ear to My sayings.

That is, ‘Pay attention to the scriptures, because they give light, and they tell us where light is to be found’. Where light is found, God is found.

Proverbs 4: 21-22 Do not let them depart from your eyes; Keep them in the midst of your heart; For they are life to those who find them, And health to all their flesh.

The scriptures are that important, and you and I have to watch that we do not compromise and have one foot in the dark and one foot in the light. That is a difficult walk to have, very uncomfortable! Let us be clear that it is how you live, how you walk, not what "knowledge" that you might have. As I mentioned before, it has always been a slight weakness among Church of God people, but sometimes we think that because we know a few things that is sufficient. But it is not. You and I have to *live right* before God, not simply say, “Well I know about the Sabbath and I know how to count Pentecost, and I know where the tribe of Reuben is to be found today,

and I know all of these things". Well that is good, it good to know the truth, but the truth is to set us free so that we can *live right*, and walk right. You and I should be walking in the light.

I John 1:7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

This is very good news, and we have to recognize and accept that sometimes we do sin, and Jesus' blood cleanses us from that sin.

I John 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Hopefully, none of us are in that state saying that we have no sin.

I John 4:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

So we are talking about fellowship, and fellowship can be hampered if we were to sin, because you would feel a bit embarrassed, a bit guilty, and would withdraw slightly from the Father and the Son because you know that you have done something that is not at all pleasing to Him. You cannot have proper fellowship if you are hanging your head in shame and guilt. So provision is made for that.

You and I will sin, let us face it. I am sure that you have sinned in the last week or so, and when we sin we should not just hang back, feel this interruption in our fellowship with the Father and Jesus and walk away grumbling. It says that if we confess our sins, which obviously we must do, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, and our fellowship continues unaffected. Our relationship does not change in any event. They are still Father and Son even when we are disobedient, but the sin affects our closeness and our fellowship. God loves us just as much before and after, but it is you and I that tend to suffer when we sin, because we feel uneasy, we feel guilt, we feel discomfort, and we do not have that closeness any longer and we are affected by our own sins, and we should do something about it, namely confess them, and be cleansed.

You know that I have said before, it is one of those practices I learned long ago and I am very thankful for it, when you sin run *to* God do not run *from* God. Keep a short account with God, do not save your sins up and reckon them at the end of the month. When you sin drop right to your knees, or if you are in public just lift your mind up and get it done with there and then. Run to God when you sin, confess, and be cleansed. God forgets and your fellowship continues as far as you are concerned unaffected. Do not harbor sin and think, ‘Well I am so embarrassed I said that I would never do that again. What will I say this time, grumble, grumble...’ and just put it off, and put it off thinking, ‘Well, perhaps at the end of the week or on the Sabbath, or I will fast next month...’ Do it immediately, run to God when you sin, and you will, so you might as well remember that, run the moment that you sin, and deal with it on the spot no delay, no deferment, immediately.

It is a bit like when Adam and Eve sinned. God came walking in the garden, in the cool of the evening, and what did they do after they had eaten of the fruit of the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil? They ran off and hid in the woods. The voice of the LORD said, “Adam and Eve where are you?” And they had to come sheepishly out of the woods where they had hidden. Well that is what we tend to do humanly, but I can assure you the better way when you sin is to just hold your hand up and *run to God*, and get it dealt with. And, by the way, do confess it as sin; do not talk about your "mistake." It is sin, and later on, in I John, we will find out precisely what sin is.

Human beings being as perverse as we are someone might think, ‘Well that is okay then, if when I have sinned I can just run to God and be forgiven and cleansed. On that basis sin is not that important really, I can always deal with it again and again and again, and again, and again, and again’. But John says, ‘Hold on a second’:

I 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. And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world.

Do not be casual, do not treat sin lightly just because God is so willing to forgive, and God wants to forgive because He wants our fellowship to continue unaffected. His love for us does not stop when we sin. “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.” So God does not

change, it is us that tend to suffer from the embarrassment, the shame and the guilt. John tells us not to treat sin casually. If we do sin occasionally, God so desires that fellowship to continue that He has made provision. First of all, Jesus Christ is an Advocate for us. The Greek there is “parakletos,” and the Holy Spirit is often referred to as the “parakletos,” which means the comforter, counselor, intercessor, or advocate. Here in I John 2:1, the expression is Advocate, that is someone who comes alongside to help plead our case in a court of law. So Jesus Christ is our Advocate. If we sin, which we will, then we do not have to hide and run like Adam and Eve did, we can run *to God*, because we have a heavenly advocate.

Romans 8:31-32 What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?

God’s love for us is being pictured here, in His provision for us.

Romans 8:33-34 Who shall bring a charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.

Jesus Christ is our advocate. As Paul says, Jesus Christ is at God’s right hand, and makes intercession for us. Jesus was tempted in all points like as we are. He understands our weaknesses, He understands what it is like to be tempted, and Jesus Christ intercedes on our behalf. God made that available, and He wants that to take place.

I John 2:2 says that Jesus Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Propitiation, of course, is not a great word to most people, it is just far too religious. Some translations translate the Greek as atoning sacrifice, I am not sure that is any better. Propitiation is a gift that appeases or renders favorable. I think its origin would be an ancient sort of Greek mythology, where the gods would be potentially against you, they would be up in Mount Olympus, and if they felt like destroying your city or your nation by sending famine or a drought, the gods could do that sort of thing, these non-existent Greek Roman gods. You might try to bribe them in a sense to propitiate them, and so you would give them gifts. It might be sacrifices or whatever to try and propitiate or appease. Now, John is taking that expression and applying it here and telling us that Jesus Christ, and His shed blood, His death,

propitiates, and it renders us favorable in God's eyes. All of this is God making sure that we can continue to fellowship with Him. This is what God wants, He does not want it interrupted, and if we do stumble and fall, and we do and we will, then it would be a total shame for God to provide Jesus as an advocate, to provide Jesus as a propitiation, for Jesus to become those things, and for us then to sort of linger in sin and guilt when we can just deal with it on the spot. We do not have to cross oceans and deserts to do incredible feats and exploits to be forgiven, we just have to lift up our voice and say, "Sorry, I have sinned, that was wrong, I do apologize, please forgive me in Jesus' name, and I thank you for that" and it is done and then the fellowship that you and I want continues.

I John 2:3-6 Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments. He who says, "I know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

We are to live just as He lived. He said earlier on, 'Do not sin', and that walking in the light is keeping His commandments. He says that we know that we know Him if we keep His commandments. The scriptures tell us what sin is, and what the right way is, and if we walk in the light we will be amongst other things keeping His commandments. The word of God gives us instructions to deal with every circumstance in our lives. It is not enough for people to say, "I know the Lord, I have read a book about Jesus, and I have His picture on the wall", that is not knowing the Lord. And people say, "I know the Lord," and there are 95,000 different denominations out there. There must be 2,000 Church of God denominations out there these days. 'I know the Lord'. Well John says, and he is speaking from quite a bit of experience.

I John 2:3 tells us, "*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.*" If he does not keep the commandments he is telling a fib, he is a liar and the truth is not in him.

Titus 1:15-16 To the pure all things are pure, but to those who are defiled and unbelieving nothing is pure; but even their mind and conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work.

How do you know that you know God? Well John says that you know God if you keep His Commandments. But here Paul says to Titus that they profess to know God, they claim to know

God, and they talk about knowing God, but in works they deny Him. So here are people that profess to know God. Well, what does that mean? It means that they claim to be believers, they claim to be Christians, that is what they claim, and they profess it. "Yes, I know God and I love the Word of God." But, says Paul, "*but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient.*"

What John says is this: "if you know Him, you keep His commandments".

I John 2:6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.

I am with Christ, I am dwelling in the light, I am walking in the light, me and Jesus we fellowship together. Fine!

What would Jesus do? You may remember the bracelets of maybe ten or twenty years ago, of WWJD. It was quite a fashion for a while, "What would Jesus Do?" You wore those because it was supposed to give you some half a chance before you did something stupid. You would think, "Oh WWJD." Hmmm, in this situation that I am facing, "What would Jesus Do?" Of course, if we have any sense the scriptures must tell us somewhere, either explicitly or by principle. This was probably based on an old book way back in the 1890's titled, "In His Steps," written by an American minister, Charles Sheldon. I read it in probably 1971, and it was a story, a novel, based around a congregation somewhere in America that took that as a challenge. They all said, "Yes Sir, Mr. Minister, we will all live our lives according to that particular dictum. We will basically pursue His steps". The story is all about the challenges that that produced. It was not as easy as you might think, and it actually turns out to be the thirty-ninth best selling book of all time.

I Peter 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps:

Hence the book was called "In His Steps." As John has been talking about, that he who abides in Him also walk just as He walked, in other words, in Jesus' steps. So it is not a question of saying that you are a professing Christian, you can profess what you want, but John says this is how you will know that you know God, if you keep His commandments. It says here that Jesus left us an example that we should follow His steps who committed no sin, nor was guile or deceit found in

His mouth, who when He was reviled did not revile in return. When He suffered He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously. Jesus maintained His cool against pressure from other people, and you and I are supposed to do the same. We are to walk righteously, have no guile or deceit in our mouths, not revile when we are reviled and try and get back against the people, but we are to walk as Jesus walked. That is quite important. John tells us to walk in the light, and that means to walk as Jesus did, and to keep His commandments. That should not be a problem. It does intrigue and puzzle me why so many bible type people are so horrified by the commandments, and they talk about legalism, and spit usually on the floor, as if there is something wrong with the law. There is nothing wrong with the law, there is nothing wrong with the commandments, and that is the way that Jesus lived.

I 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. Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

So John is getting back here to this question of light and dark, and he says that he who is in darkness stumbles. They do not know where they are going, because they cannot see. Remember that the path of justice is a shining light that shines more and more into the perfect day, but the way of the wicked is darkness and they stumble. But here he is particularly saying light and darkness, and actually an example of that is whether or not you hate or love your brother (or sister, for that matter). It is also talking probably of other members of the fellowship, because the whole letter so far is about fellowshiping with the Father, His Son and with each other. He is implying here that quite honestly if you profess to be walking in the light but you hate fellow church members then you have a big problem. You are actually in the dark, and you have no idea what you are doing. In verse 9, he says, *“He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.”* But, *“He who loves his brother abides in the light.”* Now, it

began with talking about a new commandment, and an old commandment. What we will do is to look at the old commandment first.

Leviticus 19:18 ‘You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the LORD.

Quite well known, and it comes from the Old Covenant scriptures, “you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” That has been the beginning and that was God’s law from the days of Adam and Eve, and has always been the case, “love your neighbor,” “love your neighbor,” love your neighbor,” love your neighbor as yourself.” And love God, of course, these are the old Commandments. “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

I John 2:7 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.

The new Commandment we can find in John 13, and it is just an expansion of the old one.

John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.

Of course, that is the old Commandment, but it is new with a variation of “*as I have loved you, that you also love one another.*” So the new Commandment is the old one, but the bar raised quite a lot!

John 13:34 "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; AS I have loved you, that you also love one another.

John 15:12-13 "This is My commandment, that you love one another AS I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.

So the new Commandment is actually the old Commandment, other than it has been somewhat magnified. Love your neighbor as yourself, well that is a start, but actually love to the degree that I have loved you. And, of course, Jesus laid down His life for His friends, and that is the love that you and I are to have. Then John applies that, in I John 2, to our brothers and sisters in the fellowship. If we are to walk in the light, have fellowship with the Father and with each other

how could anybody do that and actually hate their brother? Again it says in verse 9, “He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness,” but the new commandments says love your brother the way that I have loved you.

John is bringing this very much to a practical level. The old commandment was great, but the new commandment is bigger, and more of a challenge. In terms of fellowship John expects the brethren to fellowship with each other, and the Father and the Son. He is quite strong on that point, as I guess he has seen plenty of difficulties, fusses, feuds, splits, and divisions, over his years. Very often those who would leave the fellowship would then point fingers at and accuse those who are left. And those who were in would accuse those who were out. Generally speaking it was probably at times quite a nightmare with all of accusations and provocations, but “Behold how good and how pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity”.

I John 2:12-14 I write to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. I write to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you have overcome the wicked one. I write to you, little children, because you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who is from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the wicked one.

It is not clear as to whether John means little children literally or because John is nearly one hundred, and he is looking at folk much younger than him. Is he talking about chronological age, or is he is talking about people’s spiritual growth, young in spirit? It is probably a bit of both, I suppose. Fathers could be the more mature physically or the more mature spiritually. Young men typically are the strongest. If you go to war it is not the fathers, or little children, that you send as a rule, so I guess that is implying young men being full of vim and vigor, or spiritually very energetic. Well the young men are strong, either physically or hopefully spiritually, and they have overcome the wicked one. It says that the word of God abides in these young men, “*the sword of the spirit is the word of God.*” If you are going to overcome the wicked one, having a sword is quite handy, and so the word of God abides in these strong young men and they have overcome.

I John 2:15-17 Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

So you are talking here about not loving the world. The word ‘world’ here is a Greek word, ‘cosmos,’ and it means man’s world, as in man’s organizations, man’s systems, and man’s arrangements for order. He is not talking about the physical earth. I think that we can all appreciate the earth that God made: sunsets, sunrises, beaches, waves coming in, forests, valleys, pastures, and the animals out in the field. There is much physically in the earth that you and I can really, really appreciate, and be grateful for. But man’s *system* that he has devised and built, his economies, his education, the civilization that is around us. It says we are not to love the world or the things that are in the world, because the world is in darkness.

There are rulers of the darkness of this age, and if we love the world, what we are saying is that we love darkness. If we are moving towards darkness then we are moving away from light, from the God of light. You and I cannot serve two masters, either we are in the light, or we are in the dark. We are either going to fellowship with the God who is light, or we are going to fellowship with the god who is darkness, and that is not where you and I want to be. We cannot serve the two. John is telling us, light and dark, light and dark, be in the light. Do not have affection for this world’s system, because if you love this world’s system you certainly do not love the Father, because He is in the light.

John 3:19 "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

Most men and women love the world, they love darkness.

John 3:20-21 "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. "But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God."

You and I should be attracted to the light, not to the dark. Back here in I John 2, John is saying, ‘Do not love the world, why would you want to be attracted to the world and its system, organizations, and its order?’

I John 2:16 For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world.

So there are three different areas there that can cause problems. The first being the lust of the flesh, and that would be where the physical sense dominate us, and in our pursuit of selfish pleasure we want to pamper our flesh, our bodies and we are wanting to please our senses. Rather than choosing to walk by faith, we walk by sight. Our physical senses dominate. If it feels good do it, is the motto.

Or, the second one is the lust of eyes, something that captivates and holds our attention, usually for selfish reasons. We say, ‘That looks really cool, I like the look of that’. Which is great in something that God is involved in, but if it is not then it is a desire that we should not have. The lust of the eyes is something captivating and holding our attention, and focused on something that is really selfish and greedy.

The last one is the pride of life, and this is really boasting, it is arrogance, it is a vanity or vain glory, trying to impress others by our accomplishments or our so-called self importance. It is the pride that says, ‘Look at me folks, look what I have done, I am so intelligent, I am so good looking. Look at my career, look at my house, look at my job’. Basically, you are saying, ‘Look at me. This is the pride of life, being vain, boasting, being vain and being glorious.

Those obviously do not come from God: the lust of the flesh, physical senses that dominate; the lust of the eyes, something that captivates your attention; and the pride of life, your arrogant boasting.

We can find those ways back in the garden of Eden

Genesis 3:6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Those are the three things that it said there. The woman saw that the tree was good for food, well that is going to please your flesh. Now she is not to have this tree, and she was told they could eat any tree that they wanted to, except the tree in the midst of the garden. So to desire something strongly something that she is not to have is to lust. So she said, 'Those trees are going to be great to eat, mmm fantastic I can almost taste it now'. So this is the lust of the flesh. Then again it says that it was pleasant to the eyes. Here we have the lust of the eyes. She said, 'That is a nice-looking tree, it looks pretty appealing. I know that I should not have it, but it does look good'. Then, the pride of life, and she said, 'A tree desirable to make one wise. When I have eaten that, I am going to be really super duper; I can feel my vanity expanding at the gaze of this'.

So, the garden of Eden, where so many things began, is precisely what John was talking about, things that should not be.

John says that all of these things that are in the world are passing away, it is temporary, and it is not going to last. It is worth you and me examining our thinking, as John is writing to people just like you and me. This is God's word preserved for our benefit. You and I could ask ourselves, what is our standard for success? Is it a godly standard that we have, which means success in our lives, or have we got a worldly standard, is it the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life that motivate us? What is our standard for education? Is it a godly standard or a worldly standard? What is our standard for sexual relationships and marriage? Is it worldly, based upon the lust of the eyes, and the lust of the flesh? Or is it based upon God's values? What is our standard for work? Do we do what God says and be industrious, (whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all of your might) or lie back and let others look after us? What is our standard? Is it Godly or is it worldly?

Of course, we are in the world, and if we are not careful we get shaped by it. It says elsewhere that you and I should be transformed by the renewing of our minds. It is being renewed according to God's Word, and God's standards. The will of God abides for ever, but the clock is ticking on the world's values, and there is no point in pursuing what the world values. What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and suffers the loss of his own soul? John tells us that the world is passing away, it is temporary, but if you do the will of God well then you will abide for ever. We are to walk in the light, and fellowship with the Father and with His Son.

They are going to abide for ever, and if we fellowship with them we are going to abide forever. To pursue the world means walking into darkness, moving into sin, moving into obscurity where we cannot see what we are doing. Why is it going wrong? That is temporary, and if we are in there it all gets burned up.

I John 2:17-29 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever. 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 they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is a liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Therefore let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. And this is the promise that He has promised us — eternal life. These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you. 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. And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him.

This particular section is a warning against deception by those who went out from us, whom John refers to as being many antichrists. You and I should walk in the light, but here are people who have gone out from us. It talks about antichrists, and antichrist means really against Christ, or in opposition to Christ, or indirectly would be in opposition for what Jesus stands for and taught and teaches.

For example, one thing that Jesus taught was that if you enter into life, keep the commandments. So what if somebody comes along and says that you do not have to keep the commandments, because you are under grace, which is actually in opposition to what Jesus, Himself, taught?

John said, just a chapter before, ‘This is how you know that you know him if you keep the commandments’. He is going to mention the commandments quite a bit in the latter chapters, but antichrists are those who are against or in opposition to Christ, or it could even be somebody who comes in place of Christ, and plans to usurp His position. Notice verse 19, “*they went out from us...*” These were people, who, I guess, were the tares from the wheat, and they had a different spirit and there were many of them. John is saying these folk that used to be with us, and used to fellowship with us, but have now gone out, and they have left us, they no longer fellowship with us, and they have now gone into the darkness, and it says that they are trying to deceive you. It is pretty standard that people leave a group and then want to, of course, "bring understanding" to those left behind. So there is a danger and certainly what John saw was that those who left he described as antichrists.

I John 2:19-20 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 they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us. But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. The anointing that you and I have is the Holy Spirit, which teaches us all things.

John 16:13 "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.

It is in every believer, and every believer is in fellowship with the Father and Jesus. The spirit of truth will guide you into all truth.

John 14:26 "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.

So ‘the Spirit will teach you all things and bring back to your recollection all things that I said to you’. That would apply to you and me today. If we have studied God’s word, and read God’s word, then God’s spirit can bring scriptures back to our minds, and this part of the anointing.

If we are going to be able to resist deception, which is what John is saying, with the many antichrists out there trying to deceive you, well do not be too concerned because you have an anointing, you have a spirit of truth upon you. What would the spirit of truth do? It would guide

you into all truth. The spirit of truth alerts you to deception if, of course, you have done your homework, if you have studied, if you have spent time in God's Word, if you abide in the word, and it abides in you, then it says that the spirit of truth is an anointing that will help you and protect you against the many antichrists.

To be continued.

Transcript by Patricia Plunkett (many thanks Trish!)