

# LETTERS OF THE APOSTLE JOHN

## I John 5 – II John - III John

By Jamie McNab  
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We are continuing through the letters of the Apostle John. Week one we saw that John claimed to be an *eye witness* of the Logos, the Word. John said, *I saw*, we touched, and we handled the Word of God, Jesus the Christ. John explained that his desire was that all believers should enjoy fellowship with the Father, with the Son, and obviously, with each other. That fellowship is not an officious standoffish, difficult relationship; it is a close and *intimate* friendly fellowship, as of family members.

John talked about light and darkness. God is light, God dwells in the light, and Jesus said that He was the light of the world. Yet, the world prefers darkness. But John says that you and I should walk, or live, *in the light*, and we fellowship with the Father and Jesus by walking in light. And this meant, as John said, keeping the Commandments. You and I are not to love the world's system, and we should not look to the world's system and want to be there and enjoy it. The world's system is built upon taking, and upon greed. It is a Babylonian system, and not one for us.

John continued to talk about the area of deception. He said that there are many Antichrists who have left the truth. He warns us to be careful, and to be on our guard. As John says, we have an anointing, which is the spirit. The Spirit of Truth should lead you and me into all truth.

Then last week, we saw that you and I are already the children of God. John said "Behold what love the Father has shown unto us that we should be called, right here and now, the children of God." Although the King James refers to "sons of God," that is actually a mistranslation, it is generally *the children of God*. Elsewhere, we can see that God's children are male and female, there are sons and there are daughters, and my expectation is that that will continue through eternity.

Then we saw that you and I are definitely not to sin. If we are going to fellowship with the Father and the Lord Jesus, and they are in the light and there is no darkness in them, then you and I cannot sin.

What is sin? John says that sin is the transgression of the law, it is lawlessness. Now John is also being quite emphatic about you and I keeping the Commandments. We must live as Jesus lived, keeping the Commandments. Some people in our day and age tend to be a little bit dismissive of people who claim that the Commandments are important. They say that we are being *legalistic*, and that is normally said with a sneer of

some sort. The word legalism or *legalistic* does not appear in scripture — but the term *lawlessness* does. Jesus condemns lawless conduct, lawless behavior, and lawlessness. So you and I are to be Commandment keepers.

Then John continues that if you and I are truly begotten, then we will not live in habitual sin. Why would we? We want to be in the light where the Father and Jesus are. One way that you can tell that we are walking in the light is if we love one another? How can you say that you love God and actually then dislike and hate God's own children? This would make no sense. And John points out that love is not a fuzzy feeling, and it is not just empty words, but it is our conduct, and it is what we choose to do.

We finished last week looking at what John was saying in Chapter 4, that we are not to believe every spirit. Do not believe every teacher, but *test* the spirit and be alert. Then again, he continued to say that you and I must show love for one another.

**I John 5:1-3** 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. By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

They are not grievous, it is not bondage, and it is not legalism to keep God's Commandments! The Commandments are *for our good* always, and they always have been. The Commandments set out the path that you and I, if we followed it, would lead to good things. Most of us stray off the path, we stumble, we do things according to our own personal desires and lusts, and we end up in serious trouble. We end up in trouble not because we are Commandment keepers, but because, generally, we thought that we found a short cut, and a better way. But God gave us the Commandments to allow us to enjoy the best that life has to offer, and it is showing love towards God when we respect the way that He has designed for us. As it says in verse 3, "*For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.*" Just shouting "Amen, Halleluiah, Father," might be okay, but if that is all that we did that is not good enough. God requires us to demonstrate our love for Him by, amongst other things, keeping His Commandments — which it says here are NOT burdensome. Keeping the Commandments is not negative, it is not "Thou shalt not do this, Thou shalt not do that, Thou shall not have a good time and Thou shalt be bored out of thy brains, throughout all of thy life." It is not a question of it being "pie in the sky, one day when you die." *Right now* God's Commandments lead to a better life!

If we back up to verse one for a moment, if you want to be technical we said that the words "begotten" and "born" come from the same Greek word, and the translators sometimes choose one, and sometimes the other. I am reading here the New King James Version, and it reads, "*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God,*" but then the translators carry on, "*and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten*

*of Him.*” You cannot really put born or "borned of Him" in there, because it does not make a lot of sense. The Greek word can be translated as born OR begotten. I think that you and I know, from many, many years of hearing God’s word that you and I are God’s children, but we are only *begotten*. The Spirit has begotten us, we are conceived, but we have a lot of growing to do before we are finally *born again* the second time into the God family. The Darby translation of verse 1 says, “*Everyone that believes that Jesus is the Christ is begotten of God, and everyone that loves Him that has begotten loves him also that is begotten of Him.*”

This is making the same point that we covered earlier, you cannot really say that you love God, but not love those who God has also begotten, His other children. It would make very little sense. You might say, "Well a lot of people say that they *believe* that Jesus is the Christ," but actually there is a bit more to it than that, because the word "believe" can be a little bit abused, and in our day and age you can *believe* almost anything. There is a scripture that says that the very demons believe and tremble, they believe that Jesus is the Christ, but they are not begotten (or born again, if you prefer). It is not a question of just having a simple “I am just saying that I believe.” The Amplified translation brings out that to believe means *to adhere to, to trust, and to rely on*. So if somebody *believes genuinely*, then they adhere to, they trust and they rely on. If they believe that Jesus is Lord what does that mean? It means that Jesus is the boss, He is Lord and they are His servant. He is the boss and what He says goes. To truly *believe* is an action word, and it does not mean just a few temporary words, “Well, I believe that Jesus lived and died, and went back to heaven.” That is not belief — that is just saying a few words. The question is: do you adhere to, are you glued to, do you stick to the Lord Jesus? If He is your Lord is he Master in your life, is He the Boss in your life? The devils also believe and tremble. It is true that if we believe that Jesus is the Christ that is fine, but believe is quite a strong word in the Greek, and it is not just a casual, “Yeh, I think that I will believe that Jesus lived years ago, He was a good man, and did a few things and so on.” That is not biblical belief.

**Matthew 7:21-23** "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. "Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"

So here are people that presumably "believe" on Jesus, because they actually say "Lord, Lord." But if you really accept Jesus as Lord and adhere to Him, rely on Him and trust Him, then you will DO what He says. You cannot just say "Lord, Lord," and say "well actually we did some preaching in your name." No, says Jesus, “I never knew you. Only if you DO the will of My Father in heaven, in other words keep His Commandments, walk in the light, do what is right. Do not come along with your lawlessness and say that you know Me, I am not having it, and I will reject it.”

**John 8:30-32** As He spoke these words, many believed in Him. Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. "And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."

But notice the first word that Jesus said, "If." Some of these Jews believed in Jesus, or on Jesus, they believed that He was a good man, and they believed that He was doing some outstanding signs, wonders and miracles. But Jesus said "If you abide, or continue in my word and in my teaching, then you are my disciples." It is not just a question of "believing on" Jesus, that He is a great person, or even that He is a messenger from God. That is a good starting position, to believe that He came from the Father. But then says Jesus, "*If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" And, of course, God's Word is truth. You occasionally hear people saying, that "the truth shall make you free," but that is not entirely true. It is not the truth that shall make you free, but it is the truth that *you know* that shall make you free. Jesus says, in verse 32, "*And you shall KNOW the truth, and the truth shall make you free.*" But just "believing on" Jesus, whilst it might be a starting position, is not enough, and we have to do what Jesus said.

**I John 5:2** By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments.

The Greek is a present tense there, when *we keep on keeping* His Commandments. It is continuous, and we are a people that keep, and keep on doing His Commandments.

**I John 5:3** For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome.

We read elsewhere that the way of transgressors is hard. It is the *breaking* of God's Commandments that is burdensome, not keeping them. If you commit murder, that is going to produce a hard life. If you commit adultery, that is going to cause pain, anguish, and possibly destroy families. If you steal, that is going to cause pain to the one that you stole from, and if you are caught you may end up behind bars, and that would be painful. So it is not commandment-keeping that is burdensome, but it is commandment-breaking that is burdensome. Of course, the ultimate "*... wages of sin is death.*" That is pretty burdensome. So the scriptures are fairly plain, and John is pretty blunt.

**I John 5:4-5** For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world — our faith. Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

Now in verse 4, John says "*whatever is born,*" (in the New King James Version) but the Darby version, and the New American Bible say, "*whoever is begotten.*" So you will always have this throughout the letters of John, do you choose "begotten," or do you choose "born?" I think most of us accept in this life today, that you and I

may be *begotten*, God has put His divine seed into our lives, and we are growing, developing and maturing, and one day, when Jesus returns, we will be *born again*. But, whatever it is, the begotten of God overcomes the world, in its attempts to make us not keep the Commandments. It says “for,” meaning that God’s Commandments are not burdensome, *because* you and I have been begotten by God, and we can resist the temptation, we can overcome the world’s attempts to make us veer away from the Commandments. This is the victory that has overcome the world, our faith. You and I should be people who believe that we can be overcomers. You and I are not supposed to be the defeated of the world, living down at the tail end of Poverty Street, with nothing to show for our lives. You and I have to be overcomers. God gave us the Commandments that are not burdensome, that it might be good with us always. And our victory that has overcome the world, is our faith.

*“Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?”* And, of course, you and I now surely fall into that category. We are believers in the Son of God, and our faith helps us to walk in victory when we believe that God hears our prayers, we believe that God helps us, we believe that we can overcome Satan and this world, and our flesh, we have faith for that. Or do we, or do we just take it easy and think that we can just play in the world. We read earlier in John, that we are not to love the world, not to lust after what the eyes seek, and the flesh desires, and the pride of this life. We are to live in the light, and then we can be overcomers as we should be. In Revelation 2 and 3, overcomers get lots of rewards. You and I are to be overcomers, and we are not just to accept that our place in life is to just crawl along, with our head hanging down, sort of flagellating our backs as we go, beating our chests. We should not be thinking that life is a disaster, but one day, by and by, there will be pie in the sky when we die. That is not what life is all about. Jesus came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly, *right here and now*.

**I John 5:6** This is He who came by water and blood — Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.

This appears to be a reference from John to the fact that Jesus was baptized in water and that set Him apart, and of course, the Spirit descended on Jesus as a witness that Jesus was the Messiah, but also Jesus proved that by shedding His blood. There was a teaching apparently back in these days of John that actually The Christ did not really die. If I understand it properly, the idea was that Jesus was a physical, fleshly being, but the Christ was a *separate* sort of God-being that descended out of the sky, out of heaven, and entered into Jesus, and as Jesus was taken to be beaten and crucified, The Christ left the physical body of Jesus, and it was Jesus who was crucified and not the Christ. It is all very confusing, and it is all complete nonsense, but John is making it very plain that he was there and that he saw, touched, witnessed and handled the Word of God. And Jesus proved who He was by the water and the blood. It was real blood from a real being.

**I John 5:7-8** For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.

Those words do not belong there, they are added incorrectly. The actual proper reading should be, "For there are three who bear witness, the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one." What John appears to be saying is that the three witnesses, if you like, that Jesus the Christ has been to the earth, He is the Son of God, and has been crucified, are the Spirit (which descended on Jesus at His baptism), the water (when He was baptized), and the blood (which He shed). They are all witnesses that Jesus is the Christ. Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. You can even say that the Spirit witnesses, by all of the miracles, signs and wonders throughout Jesus' life that were done by the Spirit of God, definitely testifies that Jesus is who He said He was. The water, when John the Baptist baptized and immersed Jesus, and the Spirit came down in the form of a dove. And the blood, which Jesus did shed, showed it was not some sort of phantasm, or spirit-type ghost. It was real blood, from a real body, and it was Jesus the Messiah who died, not just some physical body whilst the Christ's spirit "took off" back to heaven.

But now you have these other words that we said should not be there, which read "*the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness on earth*"

These words are incorrect, and they do not belong in the scriptures. They are often used to "prove" that God is a trinity. But those words do not exist in any Greek manuscript for about fourteen hundred years! I think that we all know that the New Testament was translated from the Greek, and there are multiple Greek manuscripts, and these particular words do not exist in any Greek manuscript till round about one thousand four hundred, or thereabouts. You cannot find any old Greek manuscript with those words in, even though there are thousands of them. They do appear in a Greek manuscript around fourteen or fifteen hundred. They do appear in some Latin versions, but they have no authenticity. I think that that is not disputed, as 99.9% of commentaries will tell you, that these are just added and that there is no reason to accept them. They do not belong there, and they even break up the actual flow of the words.

**I John 5:9-10** If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son. He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

I think that you and I, if we are believers, we know that Jesus is the Son of God; we have that almost as a witness in ourselves

**I John 5:11** And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

And, of course, Jesus said, "*I am the way, the truth and the life.*"

There is only one way into life, and that is to accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Indeed the life is in the Son, and if you reject the Son, well that is bad news, because you will not enjoy eternal life, and also if you reject the Son you have to reject the Father who sent the Son, and commissions His Son, and testifies of the Son. It does that appear that John had some problems in his time with this, and some people accepted the God in heaven — but would not accept Jesus as being *the Son of God*. So John was having some difficulties in trying to make that point clear.

**I John 5:12** He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

That puts Buddhists, Hindus and atheists, and so on, in their place. If you do not have the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah, you do not have life.

**I John 5:13** These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

The expectation is that you and I should know, not wonder, "I wonder if I am really converted?" "I wonder if I really know God?" We should know, we should not doubt it, because we have the evidence in our lives.

**I 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. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

These are both challenging verses. This is the confidence, or *the boldness*. You might think "I will go to God and I will hang my head down, and be very apologetic and very unsure, because I do not want to trouble God, and maybe if I really, really *plead and beg*, maybe God out of the goodness of His heart will throw me a little bone." John says that the boldness is *confidence* that we have in Him. If we ask anything, according to His will, He hears us. But, of course, people say, "How do you know God's will?" Fair enough. The answer is that we should KNOW what God's will is, it is not a mystery. God has written the scriptures to tell us what His will is.

**Ephesians 5:15** See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand *what the will of the Lord* is.

So Paul's expectation is that you and I can not only know, but actually *understand*, what God's will is. We should understand God's will — it is not hidden, it is not some mountain in the Himalayas, and you have to go up there and fight your way through snow, blizzards, and find some tiny box full of truth. You are looking at it.

God's word explains God's will, His methods, His ways, and His principles. We should not be unwise and say "Well you just can't know, can you" and "You never know what God is going to do." Well, He has given us His word to *tell us* what He is going to do. You and I *should understand* what that will is.

**II Peter 1:2-4** Grace and peace be multiplied to you in *the knowledge* of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through *the knowledge* of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

So here, in two places, it talks about *the knowledge* of God; and we get that knowledge from the word that God has inspired and preserved.

**II Peter 1:5** But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue *knowledge*, Knowledge is important, and you and I have to gain knowledge. If we want to understand God's will we have to gain knowledge; and that knowledge is in the pages of your Bible. You cannot perceive God's will whilst watching the television, or reading the newspapers, or gossiping with church members. "To the Law and to the Testimony;" we have to look at God's word. It is as simple as that, there is no short cut.

**I John 5:15** And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

We have asked according to His written will.

The Amplified Bible translates that: "*Since we positively know that He listens to us, in whatever we ask, we also know with settled and absolute knowledge that we have granted to us as our present possessions, the requests made of Him.*"

The Amplified is bringing out that it is positive, *definite knowledge*. We are not hoping and praying, we are praying, and *we know*, and we know that He hears us — and He will — if we ask according to His will. Then it says *whatever we ask* we KNOW that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him. That is quite a challenging scripture; and the question is, do you and I live up to that, or do we try to water that down and say, "Well, not in my life. I do not see that in my life; my life is really asking and once, in ten or fifteen years, something that *might* have been an answer, but I am not too sure. Maybe it was, but maybe it wasn't." That is not what John is saying. He is saying that because we have this intimate fellowship with the Father and His Son, because we walk in the light, because we have that friendliness together, they are real beings that we are talking to, praying to and worshipping. It is not just that we are down here, poor old us, and God is way, way,



way over there at the far end of the universe with His back turned to us, and we have to beg. John is saying because we are family, we are His sons and daughters, because we all walk in the light, we can ask God for these things and *He does them for us*, and He wants to.

**Mark 11:24** "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.

John had heard Jesus teaching along these lines. Jesus brings out that there has to be some faith here.

*WHEN* do you believe that you will receive them? You believe that you will receive them *when you pray*. You do not wait to have them and then believe, because there is no faith required in that. You believe *WHEN* you pray, and *then* you will have them. That is faith and Jesus is echoing there what John was to say later.

**Matthew 7:7-11** "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

You have to admit Jesus is saying that God is much, much, much, much more generous to His children than any human father would be to his own beloved son or daughter. Probably all of us who are parents look after our kids, and provide for them, and do what we can within our limitations. And that is just what we do as parents. Jesus said the Father is *far more concerned* and interested, and *far more willing*. "...*how much more willing your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!*"

**I John 5:16-17** If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.

So there is some type of sin with which John says you could profitably pray for a brother, but equally there is some sin which is frankly probably wasting your time. What is the sin leading to death? Well, the sin that would lead to death is going to be sin which *breaks the fellowship*, sin that brings you into the dark. He does not mean that if you tell a lie that is going to lead you to eternal death, and that we should pray about that. It does not mean that gossip is the sin that leads to death and that nobody should pray about that. It does not mean adultery. Sin leading to death is a person choosing *a sinful, habitual style of living*, which actually breaks their fellowship with the Father and the Son, and puts them firmly in the area of the dark. That sin, if they choose to go that way, obviously will lead to death, because they are cut off from the only source of life, and they have

chosen the dark. I do not think that there is a sin that you might commit, an individual sin, or even a number of them — it is just you choosing a *lifestyle*. You have chosen to join Darth Vader in the dark side. If you do this, well — goodbye.

**Hebrew 10:26-31** For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Now to the one who willfully sins, and chooses a life style in the dark, in the cold, calm light of day, has become essentially an anti-Christ, has left the truth. John is saying "I do not say that you should pray for that person, because probably it will not do any good." But people who just have "ordinary weaknesses" (if we can call them that), and I think that you and I are plagued with, then we can intercede for our brethren there.

**I John 5:18** We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.

Certainly the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, but you and I are supposed to be armed with the shields and swords, and so on.

**I John 5:19** We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.

Some translations say the power of the devil. But you and I are not under the devil's power, we have been redeemed from the authority of darkness, and we are walking in the light. "The path of the just is as a shining light, that shines more and more into the perfect day." That is what you and I are. We are not with the world, under the sway and power of the wicked one.

**I John 5:20** And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

So we are in Him, we are united to the Father; we are His friends, we are His family, and we are in the light.

**I John 5:21** Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

I guess the context is that John has been talking about fellowship with the Father and with His Son, and walking in the light. You could not fellowship with the Father and have an idol. You cannot have two masters,

and you cannot worship in two directions. If you and I are going to walk in the light, live in the light, and have fellowship, friendly, intimate daily, hourly fellowship with the true God and His Son, we cannot have idols. This includes statues or anything in our lives that comes between us and our God. We want unbroken fellowship with the Father, and so therefore John tells us to keep ourselves from idols or idolatry. In other words keep yourself in the light, and walk in the truth.

End.

## **II John**

**II John 1:1-3** THE ELDER, To the elect lady and her children, whom I love in truth, and not only I, but also all those who have known the truth, because of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever: Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.

So this letter is addressed to the elect lady and her children. It may be a specific lady, and her immediate family, a real person in other words, or it might be cryptic reference to the lady being a church, or a particular congregation, and her children being the members. It does seem that in John's day there was a great deal of persecution, so John may be deliberately concealing either the person and their family, or the church group and the members, so it would not identify people who could then be harassed. Either way, if it is a lady with her children, or the church and her children, it is certainly John just giving some very brief advice and some warning. It does say in verse 3, "Grace, mercy, and peace will be with you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ," So once again, the poor old Holy Spirit, the Trinity is ignored, which of course the Apostle Paul always did, he never mentioned the Holy Ghost, the third person of the trinity.

The reality is that the greetings would come from the Father and Jesus and that is all that there is! There is no third person

**II John 1:4** I rejoiced greatly that I have found some of your children walking in truth, as we received commandment from the Father.

It does say, "*.....some of your children,*" which would imply that not all. If it is talking of a congregation that would be rather normal, that some in the congregation walk in the truth, and others do not.

**II John 1:5** And now I plead with you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we have had from the beginning: that we love one another.

Nothing new with that, we are to love God with all of our heart and love our neighbor as ourselves. That has been there from the days of Deuteronomy and Leviticus.

**II John 1:6** This is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, that as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it.

So, John tells us to love one another. I guess John perceived that people were not too caring about others? He gets down now to his key point:

**II John 1:7** For *many deceivers* have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

So John is writing to this lady, or to this congregation, and he says, “.....*many deceivers have gone out into the world...*” John says MANY, not a few. John battled with deception, and church history demonstrates that the truth was largely buried. Remember Jesus' words in the so called Olivet prophecy, “*Take heed that no one deceives you, for MANY shall come in My name, saying I am the Christ, and shall deceive many.*” That was Jesus' first warning, "take heed that no one deceives you." John is saying the same thing, “...*many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.*”

There is more than one way to read that. But one way certainly is that it says that Jesus Christ, is here and now *literally*, presently, "coming in the flesh." If we believe that Jesus Christ is coming *in the flesh* today, He would be *dwelling* in you and me, and if He was dwelling in you and me, how would He live? Back in the days of John, some people said that flesh is horrible, it is nasty, it is carnal and it is corruptible; and that you would not get a God Being coming into a fleshly state, "that is ridiculous." Hence they had their weird ideas about some "Christ-being" descending into a Jesus' body, which was nonsense. John said that Jesus Christ *did come in the flesh*, and what is more He *is coming* in the flesh.

It is not that Jesus *had come*, a few years ago, as a flesh and blood person. John was there, and he saw and touched and heard. Also, Jesus Christ IS COMING today, *continually*, in our flesh.

**Colossians 1:27** To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory.

Christ IN us, coming in the flesh.

**Galatians 2:20** "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ *lives in me*; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Paul says, "*Christ lives in me.*" And Paul says, "...*Christ IN you, the hope of glory.*" You and I should know that Jesus Christ lives in us, comes in us in Spirit; and it is real, it is not imaginary, Jesus Christ is coming, today, yesterday and tomorrow, IN our flesh. If Jesus Christ is literally coming in the flesh, then how would He live? If Jesus Christ is living in me, as He was in Paul, then how would Jesus Christ live? Well, the way that He has always lived. He would keep the Sabbath, the Holy days, and He would keep the Commandments. He would have compassion and love, and He would do good, because that is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the same yesterday, today and for ever. If He is coming in the flesh, then He will live as He has always lived.

**II John 1:7-8** For many deceivers have gone out into the world who do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. Look to yourselves, (be on guard) that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

So he is addressing this to the elect lady, or this church group, and he said, "Watch out that you do not lose those things that you have worked for."

**II John 1:9** Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ does not have God. He who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

Transgresses means *to go beyond*, to go ahead, beyond what Christ has taught. Some people occasionally do that, and it is someone's "revelation" that you will not find in scripture.

**II John 1:10-11** If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him; for he who greets him shares in his evil deeds.

The situation in John's day was that there were travelling missionaries, and false teaching was brought from people who travelled from town to town. To greet someone would mean that you were appearing to endorse this person's false teaching. So do not welcome them into your home, do not receive them into your house. Ideally, if there was a preacher of truth, and they were coming along to your town, it would be culturally the right thing to do to welcome them into your home. You would perhaps give them a bedroom and you would feed them. They could stay with you while they were preaching in your area, and then a week later, or a month later, they would move on to another place. But John says do not do that with somebody who brings false teaching.

When he refers to "*your house*" this could mean where you are holding services. You certainly would not have him there in your meetings.

John is saying that if he is teaching contrary to the Lord Jesus you should not receive him,

**II John 1:12** Having many things to write to you, I did not wish to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

John had other things to say, but they were best not put in writing. Again, that implies that perhaps these were very difficult times. Perhaps there was a great deal of public persecution. Perhaps John thought that too many details in a letter, if intercepted, might cause problems. So he said I hope to see you soon face to face, and talk about some situations.

**II John 1:13** The children of your elect sister greet you. Amen.

*End*

### **III John**

Remember that these letters were written towards the end of John's life; he was an elderly man. When he says, "the elder" he is saying that he is a very aged individual, and had lived a long time. He had been around for 90 or 95 years, and he had seen a great deal. He said, "I have seen them come, and I have seen them go."

**III John 1:1** THE ELDER, To the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth:

This is addressed to an individual about whom, unfortunately, we know next to nothing about.

**III John 1:2** Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

Some people think that it is good to be sick, down trodden and poor, because it is "good" for you. That is not how John saw it, because he was very keen that Gaius had a successful life.

**III John 1:3-4** For I rejoiced greatly when brethren came and testified of the truth that is in you, just as you walk in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.

Better to walk in truth than in a lie! Satan is a liar, and the father of lies, and you and I need to be careful not to play with lies. Truth and light are good — darkness and lying is bad. There is no such thing as a "little white lie." God the Father does not tell "little white lies." Jesus Christ does not tell "little white lies." So, you and I should walk in truth.

**III John 1:5-7** Beloved, you do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles.

So John is talking again here of travelling preachers, individuals that are sent out with the truth, and to take it from place to place. Therefore they should be looked after, people should be hospitable to them, and they should give them a bed to sleep in, and perhaps give them some money to help them along the road. Gaius has obviously done that, and he is a good example. The people would say "Gaius really helped us; he is a really great guy. When you are in that area go and see Gaius, he will really look after you." Gaius was very careful to send them on their way very well looked after.

**III John 1:8** We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.

John says that is good, and we all should be willing to show hospitality and be hospitable to these travelling preachers. I guess we do not have quite so much travelling today, as people can do it via hook-up, or by internet program, or whatever.

John is very careful to commend Gaius; he is a very good example. Unlike the next person we see here:

**III John 1:9** I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us.

So, it is interesting here, because John has quite a pedigree. He was the disciple that Jesus loved, and he was one of the sons of Zebedee. He was there at the raising of Lazarus from the dead, and he saw Peter walk on the water (at least for a while!), and he saw the loaves and fishes multiply. He was there at Jesus' crucifixion and he was there at the resurrection. John was your number one, and yet here is Diotrephes, some pip-squeak, who loves to have the preeminence among the church. He does not receive them, and make them welcome, and he will not accept us.

**III John 1:10** Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church.

This is one specific example of how the church was splitting. Here is a man who loves to have the preeminence. Other translations say, "*loved to be number one,*" He is the head honcho; he is your big guy. Even John (been there, done it, got several t-shirts), writes to the church and his letter is not read out. It looks like Gaius would not have even known about the letter unless John referred to it here. In fact, if anybody does want to receive the brethren, Diotrephes actually puts them out of the church. Actually the ones that were cast out were the true

believers, and the ones that stayed in were Diotrephes, and those who were his friends or shared his views. They rejected John, and of course if you reject the Apostle (that is one who *is sent*), then you reject, in essence, the One who sent him. So, Diotrephes was actually rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ and His messenger. And, if you reject the Lord Jesus Christ, you reject the Father. This is a very, very dangerous position to be in. But equally it is an indication of how the church was breaking up, and those who were strong types were able to cast out the brethren, and essentially take over whatever assets there were. Of course, we have seen that in recent times, and it is not unheard of.

**III John 1:11** Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. He who does good is of God, but he who does evil has not seen God.

This put Diotrephes in his place, because he clearly is evil, and knows nothing of God. He cannot, because John is representing the true God, and Diotrephes will not accept it and receive any messengers. He does not send them on their way, attended to and looked after. He will not allow them anywhere near his congregation. This is really quite serious. Usually you try to conceal a matter, but there are times when clearly God's men decide that you have to name and to shame. So, at least to Gaius, Diotrephes is an evil man, and you should not imitate him.

**III John 1:12** Demetrius has a good testimony from all, and from the truth itself. And we also bear witness, and you know that our testimony is true.

So John is saying, I will confirm that. We have heard from many people that Demetrius is a good man. I will tell you the same and you know that my testimony is true. So Demetrius is a person that you ought to imitate. For you and I, two thousand years later, we do not know Diotrephes, and we do not know Demetrius, and they are just names to us. But to Gaius, these were real people. But what we do know, I think in our day and age, is that when you look around at the leaders in the Church over the years, there have been Demetriuses and they have been humble, worked hard, and been faithful. And there have been a few Diotrephes who have been preeminent in their own mind, and these are the guys that want to be Number One. They are to minister to you and this is why they think you will serve them. You will run around and park the car for them, run after them with tea and coffee, and you will carry their bags, you will do the ironing for them. It is not a nice thing to see, it is vanity at work. But John saw it and he is warning Gaius that there are good examples and there are bad. There is black and there is white, there is light and there is dark, and Gaius imitated the good.

**III John 1:13** I had many things to write, but I do not wish to write to you with pen and ink; but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace to you. Our friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.



John is more or less saying, it is probably best again if I say no more, perhaps I have said enough already. But when I come and see you face to face, there is some additional information that I want to pass on to you; and I hope to see you soon.

These are three fairly brief letters from John the Apostle. He was a man that had been around a very long time. There is much there that we can learn from. The key to me, in those three letters, is that John is very plain — there is light and there is dark. You and I are supposed to be walking in the light, and living in the light. We are to be keeping the Commandments, and showing love to one another. We are to shun and avoid deception, and we are to be alert to the risk of deception. We are to shun any attempt at lawlessness. When we talk about loving each other, that should be something that is visible in deed and in action, and not simply in word. When we look around the Church of God today, or the bits that you and I are familiar with, do we see that level of outgoing concern or not? I guess you can form your own judgment there. But, you might ask yourself this question, “Personally, what do you do?” What do *you do* that demonstrates the sort of love that John referred to? That we love one another as Jesus loved us. Is it just talk, is it just wishful thinking, is it something in the back of our minds, or do we *do things* that can be described as *showing love*? Do we pray for other people? Do we phone up other people to encourage them, and to remind them that we are thinking about them? Do we send them letters and cards? Do we send them personal e-mails? What do we do? Or do we just sit back and relax and let *everybody else* show the love. We can see that John’s letters are quite blunt there, and he expects that you and I are going to walk in the light, fellowship with the Father and the Son, and fellowship with each other. That means living a life style which is the way that Jesus lived. So showing love to each other is more than just having a warm fuzzy feeling in our hearts. It is to be shown in actions and deeds!

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*Transcript by Patricia Plunkett (many thanks Trish!)*

