

## 1 John

**1:1** That which was from the beginning constituting the message of life—that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we looked at and our hands touched.<sup>1</sup>

**1:2** Indeed, life was revealed, and we have seen and are bearing witness to and proclaiming to you eternal life, which was a possession of the Father and was revealed to us.<sup>2</sup>

**1:3** That which we have seen and heard, we are indeed proclaiming to you in order that you also will have an understanding in common with us. And our understanding is in common with the Father and with His Son, Jesus the Messiah.<sup>3</sup>

**1:4** Indeed, we are writing these things in order that your joy may be full to the utmost.<sup>4</sup>

**1:5** This is the instruction that we have heard from him and are proclaiming to you—that God is light. Indeed, in Him there is no darkness.<sup>5</sup>

**1:6** If we claim that we have a common understanding with Him and we are living in the darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth.<sup>6</sup>

**1:7** But if we are living in the light as He is in the light, we do have a common understanding with one another, and the blood of Jesus, His Son, is cleansing us from all sin.<sup>7</sup>

**1:8** If we claim that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.<sup>8</sup>

**1:9** If we are owning up to our sins, He is faithful and upright so that He forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all immorality.<sup>9</sup>

**1:10** If we claim that we have not sinned, we are making Him a liar, and His message is not in us.<sup>10</sup>

**2:1** My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you do not sin. Yet, if someone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus the Messiah, the Righteous One.<sup>11</sup>

**2:2** In addition, he is the propitiatory offering for our sins, and not for ours only but also for those of the whole present realm.<sup>12</sup>

**2:3** Now, we know by this that we have come to know him, if we guard his instructions.<sup>13</sup>

**2:4** The one who says, “I have come to know him,” and does not guard his instructions is a liar and the truth is not in him.<sup>14</sup>

**2:5** But whoever guards his message,<sup>15</sup> truly in this manner God’s love has achieved its intended purpose.<sup>16</sup> We know by this that we are in him.<sup>17</sup>

**2:6** Also, he who claims that he remains in him is himself morally obligated to live his life just as he lived his.<sup>18</sup>

**2:7** Beloved, I am not writing a new teaching to you but an old teaching which you have had from the beginning. The old teaching is the message which you heard.<sup>19</sup>

**2:8** On the other hand, I am writing to you a new teaching, that which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.<sup>20</sup>

**2:9** The one who claims that he is in the light and hates his brother is still in the darkness.<sup>21</sup>

**2:10** The one who loves his brother remains in the light and there is no stumbling in him.<sup>22</sup>

2:11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and he lives his life in the darkness. Indeed, he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.<sup>23</sup>

2:12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.<sup>24</sup>

2:13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you have known that which was from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have conquered the evil one.<sup>25</sup>

2:14 I write to you, children, because you have known the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you have known that which was from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the message of God remains in you, and you have conquered the evil one.<sup>26</sup>

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2:15 Do not love the present realm nor the pursuits in the present realm. If someone loves the present realm, the love for the Father is not in him,<sup>27</sup>

2:16 because all that is in the present realm—the strong desire of one’s humanness, the strong desire of the eyes, and the self-important claims of life—is not from the Father but is from the present realm.<sup>28</sup>

2:17 Indeed, the present realm is passing away and its strong desire, but he who does the desire of God remains into the age.<sup>29</sup>

2:18 Children, it is the last hour, and just as you heard that opposition to the Messiah is coming, even now many opponents of the Messiah have become apparent, from which we know that it is the last hour.<sup>30</sup>

2:19 They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they were of us, they would have remained with us. But, so that they could become known, because not everyone is of us.<sup>31</sup>

2:20 Now, you have an anointing from the Holy One and you know all things.<sup>32</sup>

2:21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because every lie is not of the truth.<sup>33</sup>

2:22 Who is the liar except he who denies that Jesus is the Messiah. This person is an opponent of the Messiah, who denies the Father and the Son.<sup>34</sup>

2:23 Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father. He who acknowledges the Son indeed has the Father.<sup>35</sup>

2:24 As for you, let what you have heard from the beginning remain in you. If that which you have heard from the beginning remains in you, indeed you will remain in the Son and in the Father.<sup>36</sup>

2:25 And this is the promise which he promised us—eternal life.<sup>37</sup>

2:26 I have written these things to you concerning those who are deceiving you.<sup>38</sup>

2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him remains in you, and you have no need for someone to teach you. But just as His anointing teaches you concerning all things (it is both true and it is not a lie), and just as it taught you, remain in it.<sup>39</sup>

2:28 And now, little children, remain in it so that, when he is revealed, we may have bold openness and not be ashamed before him at his blessed appearance.<sup>40</sup>

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**2:29** If you know that He is morally perfect, you understand that, indeed, everyone who does righteousness has been born of Him.<sup>41</sup>

**3:1** Look at how great a love the Father has given to us, that we be called children of God. Indeed, we are. Therefore, those in the present realm do not recognize us, because they do not know Him.<sup>42</sup>

**3:2** Beloved, we are now children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be. We do know that, when he is revealed, we shall be like him, because we shall see him just as he is.<sup>43</sup>

**3:3** And everyone who has this hope based on it purifies himself just as that one is pure.<sup>44</sup>

**3:4** Everyone who commits sin also commits lawlessness. Indeed, sin is lawlessness.<sup>45</sup>

**3:5** And you know that that one was revealed so that he would take away sins. In addition, there is no sin in him.<sup>46</sup>

**3:6** Everyone who remains in him does not sin. Everyone who sins has neither seen him nor known him.<sup>47</sup>

**3:7** Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does righteousness is righteous just as that one is righteous.<sup>48</sup>

**3:8** He who commits sin has sided with the adversary, because the adversary continues to sin from the beginning. The Son of God was revealed for this purpose—so that he would destroy the efforts of the adversary.<sup>49</sup>

**3:9** Everyone who has been born of God does not commit sin, because His seed remains in him. And they are not able to sin, because they have been born of God.<sup>50</sup>

**3:10** By this the children of God and the children of the adversary<sup>51</sup> are obvious.<sup>52</sup>

Everyone who does not do righteousness is not of God, including everyone who does not love his brother,<sup>53</sup>

**3:11** because this is the instruction that you heard from the beginning, that we love one another<sup>54</sup>—

**3:12** not like Cain. He was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his actions were evil and those of his brother were righteous.<sup>55</sup>

**3:13** Therefore, do not be surprised, brethren, if those in the present realm hate you.<sup>56</sup>

**3:14** We know that we have departed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother remains in death.<sup>57</sup>

**3:15** Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that every murderer does not have eternal life remaining in him.<sup>58</sup>

**3:16** By this we have come to know love—that that one gave up his life for us. Thereby, we have a moral obligation to give up our lives for the brethren.<sup>59</sup>

**3:17** Now, the person who possesses the things of the present realm and sees his brother in need and closes off his inner resource of compassion towards him, how does love for God exist in him?<sup>60</sup>

**3:18** Little children, let us not love in thought or speech but in action and truth.<sup>61</sup>

**3:19** And by this we shall know that we are of the truth. Indeed, we shall convince our hearts before Him,<sup>62</sup>

3:20 because, if our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts and He knows all things.<sup>63</sup>

3:21 Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.<sup>64</sup>

3:22 Indeed, that for which we ask, we are receiving from him, because we guard His teachings and we do the things that are pleasing to Him.<sup>65</sup>

3:23 And this is His teaching—that we believe in the name of His Son, Jesus the Messiah, and we love one another just as he gave this instruction to us.<sup>66</sup>

3:24 Now he who guards his teachings remains in him and he in him. Indeed, by this we know that he remains in us, by virtue of the Spirit that He gave to us.<sup>67</sup>

4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit but examine the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.<sup>68</sup>

4:2 By this you know the spirit of God. Every spirit that acknowledges Jesus as the Messiah, even though he has come in the flesh, is from God,<sup>69</sup>

4:3 and every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus as such is not from God. Indeed, this is the spirit of opposition to the Messiah, which you have heard that it is coming. And, indeed, it is now already in the present realm.<sup>70</sup>

4:4 You are from God, little children, and you have conquered them, because greater is the One who is in you than that the one who is in the present realm.<sup>71</sup>

4:5 They are from the present realm. Because they speak from the present realm, indeed those of the present realm listen to them.<sup>72</sup>

4:6 We are from God. The one who knows God listens to us. The one who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.<sup>73</sup>

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4:7 Beloved, we should love one another, because love is from God. Indeed, everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.<sup>74</sup>

4:8 The one who does not love has not known God, because God is love.<sup>75</sup>

4:9 By this God's love was made known among us—that God has sent His unique Son into the world in order that we, through him, would live.<sup>76</sup>

4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as a propitiatory offering for our sins.<sup>77</sup>

4:11 Beloved, if God loved us in this way, indeed, we are morally obligated to love one another.<sup>78</sup>

4:12 No one has ever seen God. If we love one another, God remains in us, and His love has achieved its intended purpose in us.<sup>79</sup>

4:13 By this we know that we remain in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.<sup>80</sup>

4:14 Now, we have seen and we are bearing witness that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of mankind.<sup>81</sup>

4:15 Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he remains in God.<sup>82</sup>

4:16 And we have come to know and have believed in the love which God has within us.

God is love, and he who remains in love remains in God, and God remains in him.<sup>83</sup>

4:17 By this love has reached its intended purpose within us so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because just as that one is, so also are we in this present realm.<sup>84</sup>

4:18 There is no fear in love, but love that has reached its intended state discards fear, because fear involves punishment. And the one who fears has not reached his intended state in love.<sup>85</sup>

4:19 We love because He first loved us.<sup>86</sup>

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4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and he hates his brother, he is a liar. For the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen.<sup>87</sup>

4:21 Indeed, we have this teaching from Him,<sup>88</sup> that he who loves God should also love his brother.

5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been born of God, and everyone who loves Him who fathers people loves him who has been born of Him.<sup>89</sup>

5:2 By this we know that we love God's children, whenever we love God and perform His teachings.<sup>90</sup>

5:3 For this is the love of God, that we guard His teachings. And His teachings are not difficult to carry out,<sup>91</sup>

5:4 because everyone who has been born of God conquers the present realm.

And this is the victory that conquers this present realm—our belief.<sup>92</sup>

5:5 Who is the one who conquers the present realm except he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?<sup>93</sup>

5:6 This is the one who came through water and blood. Jesus is the Messiah—not by means of just water, but by water and by blood. Furthermore, the Spirit is the one who bears testimony, because the Spirit is truth.<sup>94</sup>

5:7 So there are three which bear testimony—

5:8 the Spirit and the water and the blood—and the three do establish one claim.<sup>95</sup>

5:9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony of God, that He has born witness concerning His Son.<sup>96</sup>

5:10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony within himself. The one who does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son.<sup>97</sup>

5:11 In addition, this is the testimony,<sup>98</sup> that He has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.<sup>99</sup>

5:12 The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life.<sup>100</sup>

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5:13 I have written these things to you so that you will know that you have eternal life—to those who believe in the name of the Son of God.<sup>101</sup>

5:14 Now, this is the confidence that we have towards Him, that if we ask for anything according to His will, He listens to us.<sup>102</sup>

5:15 And if we know that He listens to us, to whatever we ask, we know that we have from Him the requests which we have made.<sup>103</sup>

5:16 If someone sees his brother sinning a sin whose end is not death, he will ask and He will give him life, to those who are sinning whose end is not death. There is sin whose end is death. I am not talking about that particular sin, that he may ask.<sup>104</sup>

5:17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin whose end is not death.<sup>105</sup>

5:18 We know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin. But he who was born of God will hold on to him, and the evil one will not touch him.<sup>106</sup>

5:19 We know that we are from God, and that everyone in the present realm lies under the influence of the evil one.<sup>107</sup>

5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come, and He has given us understanding in order that we may know the truth. Indeed, we are in the truth, in His Son, Jesus the Messiah. This one is the true God and eternal life.<sup>108</sup>

5:21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ὁ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὃ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὃ ἐώρακάμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὃ ἐθεασάμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν – John does not announce himself or his role at the beginning of this letter, because it is really not a letter. It is a treatise on the apostolic message as received by the true apostles who were eyewitnesses of Jesus. Therefore, John just dives into his response to the false teachers.

2 and 3 John help interpret this letter. It is not about loving everyone. It is about not rejecting authentic Christians who claim that Jesus is the Messiah and are following the apostolic message. There is a group of false teachers who say they know better about Jesus than the true apostles, because they claim to have been eyewitnesses of Jesus. According to them Jesus never said he was the Messiah, and he cannot be anyway because he was crucified by the Jewish leadership. Therefore, they claim that Jesus was an ordinary rabbi who taught and encouraged people to follow the Mosaic Covenant. In line with him, even though he ran afoul of the Jewish leadership, they also are promoting obedience to the Mosaic Covenant as the focal point of anyone's relationship with God. These false teachers are different from the ones Paul addresses in Galatians, because the latter at least believed in Jesus as the Messiah.

The older generation heard the gospel from the apostles such as Paul and John, while the younger generation are hearing it from their parents. The false teachers are splitting up families because the younger generation do not know if they should trust their parents or these teachers who are bringing a different message. John is going to say that the spiritual issue here is that the spirit of antichrist is at work in these teachers, that they deny Jesus as the Messiah. In this introduction of 1:1-4, John reestablishes his apostolic authority on the basis of his and the other apostles' eyewitness experiences of Jesus as the Messiah and his message of aionic life, i.e., eternal life. While many interpreters believe that John is addressing the problem of incipient Gnosticism, and specifically Docetism where Jesus was considered only to appear to be a material, human being because he was simply a ghost or spirit (cf. 4:2), as well as considering human beings to be free from sin and immorality if we ignore our material selves and take into account only our spirits, 3 John shows us that he is addressing the same kind of issue as Paul in his letters, that of Jewish teachers who focus on the Mosaic Covenant and in this case deny that Jesus is the Messiah, probably because the whole concept of a crucified Messiah (King) made no sense to them.

It would be easy to think that John is referring to the same concepts as in John 1:1. But, again, 2 and 3 John as cover letters show us that he is referring to when Jesus first taught the gospel and the apostles heard it. Thus, he wants to go all the way back to the first notions that the apostles learned from Jesus as the prime communicator of the NT message of himself as the Messiah, and John wants to include everything else that they learned after that. In other words, this is all about the information of Jesus as the Messiah which results in eternal life for human beings who are in need of God's mercy. And it is about the fact that the true apostles had physical contact with Jesus and the effects of his miracles, for example, when he healed lame people so that the disciples could touch their legs and feel their strength. This is unlike the false teachers who claim to have been eyewitnesses of him. If they had been, they would have come to the conclusions that he is the Messiah.

Consequently, John and the other apostles personally experienced the audible, visible, and tangible evidence of Jesus' authority over reality as the Son of God, the final, eternal Davidic King from the Father, the transcendent Creator of reality. Therefore, there were these three ways of hearing, seeing, and touching that John received information to substantiate the truth of the message of Jesus as the Messiah. By mentioning these facts, John is establishing his apostolic authority, which people like Diotrephes, who has been influenced by Jewish teachers of the Mosaic Covenant and has rejected Jesus as the Messiah even after hearing the apostolic message, are denying.

The "message of life" is the teaching from the Father through the Son that explains eternal life, both what it is and how to get it (cf. John 1:4), in contrast to the message that is being proclaimed by Diotrephes and any false teachers, who reject the apostolic message, deny that sin is the profound problem that it is, deny that Jesus is the Messiah, and consequently mistreat authentic Christians who have grasped these vital points of theology. The false teachers would consider eternal life something to be obtained through strict religious obedience of the Mosaic Covenant, thus missing the whole point of Jesus as our offering and high priest as the author of Hebrews explains.

<sup>2</sup> καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ τὸ ἐώρακάμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἣτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν – The description of eternal life and the way to get it was brought to light by Jesus and his teaching and performance of miracles to back up his claim to be the Messiah.

Again, the "we" here are the apostles, rather than the plural of authority. John is speaking on behalf of all the apostles to emphasize their authority (the plural of apostolic identity); cf. John's use of "I" in 5:13; cf. 2 John 5, 3 John 9.

The outcome and benefit of Jesus' message as the Messiah is eternal, i.e., aionic, life. John is claiming the true apostles are the bona fide spokesman for God and Jesus regarding exactly what eternal life is and how to get it. Also, they have the three ways that they have interacted and continue to interact with the truth—seeing the effects in Jesus' ministry, bearing witness to it as apostles, and proclaiming it as apostles to others in order that they believe it.

John refers to God as the Father of the final Davidic king, Jesus, who is the Son of God (cf. 2 Samuel 7:14) and the ultimate source and owner of the information that came to the apostles which they passed on to others in the 1<sup>st</sup> century Roman Empire. Therefore, for the false teachers to be speaking on behalf of God by focusing on the Mosaic Covenant is to deny God's claim as the source of Jesus and his message of eternal life.

Indeed, Jesus as the Messiah with his message of eternal life was manifested specifically to the apostles. This, as above,

is not the plural of authority. John is speaking on behalf of all the apostles to emphasize their authority (the plural of apostolic identity).

<sup>3</sup> ὁ ἐώρακάμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν, ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὅτι καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχετε μεθ' ἡμῶν. καὶ ἡ κοινωνία ὅδε ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – John wants his readers to have an understanding of the true gospel that matches that of the apostles (cf. 2 John 11 for a similar use of the verb form of κοινωνία to refer to a sharing in the evil deeds of false teachers). 1 John is about knowing and believing the truth about Jesus as the Messiah, which is why it makes sense that κοινωνία here refers to common *understanding* of the truth and not “fellowship” as we typically think of this word.

Only the apostles can authoritatively say that their understanding of the biblical message exactly matches that of God's. But this is the point, to listen to only them and no one else about the truth of God and His Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. In this letter, the concepts of “Son” and “Messiah” as connected to Jesus are key for John the author. And of course they should be since these words refer to his all important role. However, it is only by means of a clear understanding of these words as used in the Old Testament that someone can interpret John correctly. They do NOT refer to Jesus as the co-eternal 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity. Within the context of the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7, Psalms 2,8 and 89, they refer to God's human proxy on earth, whether someone like Solomon or Jesus, as well as to God's designated eternal high priest for sinners according to Psalm 110, in which case only Jesus fulfills this responsibility as John will indicate in this letter (cf. Hebrews).

<sup>4</sup> καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡ ἡμῶν ἢ πεπληρωμένη – (MT – ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν) – John's readers have had their joy robbed from them by the false teachers who are proclaiming a message of eternal life that can come from only following the OT Torah and Mosaic Covenant. This is a message which ignores the complete and eternal forgiveness from God that comes from Jesus and through Jesus and his one sacrificial offering to God of himself. Thus, John is referring not to “our joy,” but to “your joy,” because John is concerned about his readers' salvation and their persevering in holding on to the apostolic message which they first received. It is only a proper understanding of the entire biblical message with the gospel of Jesus in the NT that can provide a sinful human being with the correct motivation for being genuinely joyful in this life by virtue of the Bible's unique position of spelling out God's plans to grant mercy and life eternal to sinful human beings through Jesus as the one and only propitiatory offering and advocate before God (cf. 2:1,2).

Joy that is intended to exist even in the midst of life's trials and difficulties is the natural result of fully grasping the message of God's eternal mercy through Jesus as our intercessor. This is joy which is “full to the utmost,” and which comes from confidence in the apostolic message of belief in Jesus' as offering, priest, and king, not in promoting the Mosaic Covenant. Salvation is through Jesus, not through Moses.

<sup>5</sup> Καὶ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἐστὶν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἐστὶν οὐδεμία – See also 1 John 3:11 for ἀγγελία. The false teachers claim that they have heard what they are teaching straight from Jesus. Obviously, John as one of the true apostles begs to differ, and he declares that “this [that which he is saying in this letter] is the bona fide instruction from Jesus (“him”). In addition, John as representative of the whole group of apostles is proclaiming it to his readers who are being disturbed by the false teachers.

“Light” refers to intellectual truth which leads to a correct understanding of God and reality, which includes repentance for one's sin and obedience to God's moral commandments to love him and people—and to believe that Jesus is our only and necessary advocate before God in order to obtain His eternal mercy. A major theme in John's New Testament documents is light vs. darkness, i.e., accurate understanding of God and reality, especially a person's immoral condition with Jesus as advocate at the final judgment (cf. 1 John 1:8-2:2). This understanding comes from God through Jesus as the Messiah vs. an erroneous understanding of especially the Mosaic Covenant and the Messiah which comes from Jews who misunderstand the Bible and have influenced “Christians” such as Diotrephes. Cf. John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9,10; 12:35-46 and 3 John.

John finishes this thought by saying that being a member of the group who are following God (“in Him”) means that a person is also believing truth and not falsehood. To be taught of God is to contain no lies in one's mind. This person is not engaged in believing the false ideas about God and Jesus of the false teachers. Instead, all those who are “in [God]” are also those who have recognized the truth of the gospel and are living their lives on the basis of this truth—believing that Jesus is the crucified Messiah and embracing fellow Christians as those with whom they worship God.

<sup>6</sup> ἐὰν εἰπῶμεν ὅτι κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατοῦμεν, ψευδόμεθα καὶ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν – Here the “Him” is God again and his teachings that have come through Jesus the Son. It is a contradiction to say as the Jewish false teachers do that one has a common understanding of reality with God if the person denies the truth that God has presented, especially that Jesus is the Messiah. To say, “I agree with God,” and then deny that Jesus is the Messiah while also promoting the Mosaic Covenant is THE center of one's relationship with God is to lie and not follow the truth of God. This is to be and live in intellectual darkness, not realizing how much sin is in you that requires the kind of confession that needs Jesus' death, resurrection, and advocacy to resolve (cf. 1:7-2:1).

Thus John is stating categorically that not doing the Bible in line with the true, apostolic message is exactly the case with Diotrephes and the unbelieving Jews who are trying to influence John's readers.

<sup>7</sup> ἐὰν ᾧ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατοῦμεν, ὡς αὐτός ἐστιν ἐν τῷ φωτί, κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων, καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας – Here it makes sense that “He” refers to God who is “in the



light” (ἐν τῷ φωτί) in the sense that He is immersed in truth, indeed the truth of the gospel of Jesus as crucified Messiah for the forgiveness of sins.

To live in a manner commensurate with God and His message is to have an understanding of reality that matches that of the apostles, and of God!

John uses Old Testament terminology to indicate that through Jesus’ death as an offering, like the animal offerings of the Mosaic Covenant, we gain forgiveness and mercy eternally from God, which is what Diotrephes and the false teachers are giving up by not admitting the depth of their moral problem while claiming that animal sacrifices are sufficient and by rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and their advocate at the judgment (cf. 2:1). Probably, Diotrephes’ and the Jews’ objection to notion of Jesus’ as the Messiah, i.e., “His Son,” is the apostolic claim that in him is combined the roles of king and ruler of Israel and of the eternal Kingdom of God along with that of priest and advocate at the judgment (cf. Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews – “a priest according to the order of Melchizedek), and that it was necessary for Jesus as our priest to suffer death on the cross as the one and only acceptable propitiatory offering to God. They are probably claiming that the death of Jesus as a good rabbi meant that there was a problem with his message that got him in trouble with the Jewish leaders, thus proving that he was not the Messiah. But John is saying that the ONLY way to gain God’s forgiveness is by depending on Jesus’ sacrifice and the role of intercessor for which he qualified by dying on the cross, NOT by depending on one’s natural human performance of animal sacrifices in line with the Mosaic Covenant.

Thus, “His” as the possessive pronoun of Son refers to God and not to Jesus.

<sup>8</sup> ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν, ἐαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν<sup>1</sup> – If we human beings claim that we have no deep sin problem, guilt, and blame before God, because we are, in our minds, adequately keeping Old Testament Torah and the Mosaic Covenant, which is providing forgiveness and cleansing from our sin through our religious practices of repentance and offerings at the temple, then the death of Jesus, the Son of God and King of Israel, means nothing to us in terms of its bringing forgiveness from God through his intercession at the final judgment (cf. 2:1; Romans 5:20; 7:7ff.). The very statement, “The Messiah died for our sins,” is supposed to catapult us into an understanding of the depth of our moral depravity and need for God’s mercy apart from anything we do that could possibly solve the problem, including OT sacrifices (cf. Romans 6:1ff).

Anyone who refuses to acknowledge the depth of their immoral condition is engaged in moral and spiritual self-deception and is, in effect, rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. The false teachers of course are explicitly denying Jesus’ role and his death as meaningless. They fail to realize that his death proclaims that all human beings stand condemned by God with no ability on their part to resolve the problem. It is only God through the crucified Messiah and the inward work of His Spirit which can bring about mercy and forgiveness.

<sup>9</sup> ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, πιστός ἐστιν καὶ δίκαιος, ἵνα ἀφῇ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας<sup>2</sup> καὶ ῥαπαρισῇ ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας – If we are continuing to acknowledge and groan over our continued problem of sin and guilt within the fabric of our being at the level of our defining essence and which never goes away within the present realm so that it requires God’s independent mercy apart from any effort on our part to solve the problem, then THE issue in any human being’s life is to acknowledge his moral depravity. Then, with the death of the Messiah which illustrates what we deserve from God, we can repent and expect complete forgiveness from Him for all eternity through Jesus’ intercession and advocacy.

This “He” in this verse and v. 10 is God as in v. 7. God the Father is faithful to His promise in Genesis 12:1-3 that He will bless true believers by forgiving them because they own up to their humanly insoluble moral problem. And remaining faithful to His promise is obviously the right thing for Him to do.

Again, Old Testament terminology where “cleanse” = forgive (cf. 1:7) in order to say that God responds with mercy to those who acknowledge the profundity of their need for mercy. It is as “simple” as this, but acknowledging our sin with the genuine humility which the Bible requires is completely impossible for all human beings apart from God’s causation through His Spirit’s changing them inwardly. Along with grasping the reality of divine determinism as the umbrella over even man’s “free-will” (free from the creation) and accountability before God, the idea of acknowledging our profound sin is right near the top of THE most important concepts to understand and live. It is at the top with embracing Jesus as one’s advocate before God (cf. 2:1)

<sup>10</sup> ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν, ψεύστην ποιοῦμεν αὐτόν, καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν<sup>3</sup> – Continuing in the same line of thought as the previous verses, John is saying that if a person claims that he has not done anything wrong or is not evil to a depth that his own religious actions in following the Mosaic Covenant cannot motivate God to forgive him and grant him eternal life, then he is also claiming that God is lying about the depth of this sin that He is teaching through Jesus’ death on the cross. This means too that God’s message of truth that comes through Jesus (cf. 1:1) is certainly not what this person is claiming to believe. If he thinks that his religious performance of the OT Mosaic Covenant (or NT Christianity by extrapolation) is sufficient to please God and gain His eternal mercy and life, then he does not understand God, the nature of his sin, and God’s purposes for Jesus as intercessor and advocate.

<sup>11</sup> τέκνιά μου, ταῦτα γράφω ὑμῖν ἵνα μὴ ῥαμαρτήτε. καὶ ἐάν τις ῥαμαρτή, παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν δίκαιον – John does not want his readers to allow their natural born hostility towards God to get the best of them so that they listen to Diotrephes and others with the result that they reject the true message of Jesus as the Messiah. Thus, this is not a call to be morally perfect, but an encouragement not to commit the unpardonable sin of

dismissing Jesus' teaching after hearing it through the apostles, and here specifically through John.

Then John speaks generally of sin as part of the normal course of human existence in this life, even as Christians. If someone admits he is a sinner with such profound moral depravity that he realizes he needs an advocate before God other than the bulls and goats he would offer via the Mosaic Covenant, then...

We have someone who will appeal to God the Father for mercy at the final judgment. And of course it is Jesus, not some bull or goat which a person sacrifices to God according to the Mosaic Covenant. These offerings merely point to a person's need for a crucified priest, i.e., Jesus (cf. Hebrews 9), so that Messiah here means not king but mainly priest. Cf. **Isaiah 53:11** As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the **Righteous One**, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

John more than likely refers to Isaiah 53 to highlight Jesus' role as advocate and priest. He is the morally perfect human being who, by his propitiatory offering (2:2), becomes the means to God's forgiveness and mercy for obtaining eternal life. No one else and nothing else, i.e., nothing else within the Mosaic Covenant, can do so.

<sup>12</sup> καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, οὐ περὶ τῶν ἡμετέρων δὲ ἴδιον ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου – Cf. Lev. 25:9; Num. 5:8; Ps. 130:4; Ezek. 44:27. By being the propitiatory offering for our sins, Jesus acts as mankind's high priest and offering for sin, indeed our only high priest, etc. Thus Jesus becomes the means to eternal forgiveness by qualifying to act as our advocate before God the Father at the judgment. Cf. Romans 3:21-26; 4:25; 5:6-10. See note also at 1 John 1:7.

Assuming that John is writing to Christian communities that are mainly Gentile but also with a minority of Jews, in western Asia (modern Turkey), then his point is to remind them that Jesus' death applies to all Jews and Gentiles who are willing to embrace him as the Messiah. In this way, Jesus becomes the focal point of everyone's relationship of God while the Mosaic Covenant fades into the background for the sake of the restored Kingdom of Israel after Jesus returns.

<sup>13</sup> καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν. ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν – Here is a vital criterion for determining whether or not a person is an authentic "Christian." Does he embrace everything that Jesus taught, including that fact that he was going to die, rise from the dead, and become the advocate for sinners.

If God's inner work within us relentlessly and irreversibly moves us to consider worth protecting Jesus' instructions, his Torah (cf. Deut. 17:19; 1 John 2:5), that includes his death as the most profound message about the depth of our moral depravity and need for him as our advocate along with the importance of loving others who embrace this truth, rather than rejecting or doubting the veracity of Jesus' teachings, then we can truly say that we know Jesus. Obviously this is in contrast to the false teachers who claim to know Jesus but actually reject his teachings.

Thus, it makes more sense to translate τὰς ἐντολὰς as instructions or teachings and not just commandments.

<sup>14</sup> ὁ λέγων ὅτι ἐγνώκα αὐτόν καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν ψεύστης ἐστίν, ὁ καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν – Diotrephes and other false teachers must have been claiming to know Jesus, if not personally, at least his teaching, so that they could speak authoritatively about him, in fact, more authoritatively than John and the other apostles. They also must have been saying that Jesus did not claim to be the Messiah as the apostles were saying. In their opinion, Jesus was just a decent rabbi who unfortunately ran afoul of the Jewish leaders. John is saying that there is a problem with the person who does not consider exactly what Jesus said about mankind's moral problem and God's solution of his death on the cross as the most precious intellectual property to preserve and protect.

The above kind of person is lying about what Jesus said, so that another way to say this is that the truth of God and the biblical message is not a part of who they really are.

<sup>15</sup> ὃς δ' ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον –

<sup>16</sup> ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται –

<sup>17</sup> ὃς δ' ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον, ὁ ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἔσμεν – Cf. 1:1,10. John is speaking of someone like the apostles who relentlessly embraces Jesus' teaching with the same pertinacity and fervor.

The intent of God's loving work within human beings is to cause them to recognize and irreversibly embrace as true the apostolic message from Jesus about man's deep, immoral condition and need for unmerited mercy that ultimately will come through Jesus' advocacy as our Messiah and High Priest at the final judgment.

We, i.e., all authentic believers, know that we are true disciples and followers of Jesus when we embrace and live by his teachings regarding eternal life that have come from the Father. The key as John lays it out in this letter is to confess the profundity and humanly insoluble nature of one's sin as well as to love others who do the same—all on the basis of Jesus' death as that which demonstrates man's moral depravity and which qualified him to be our advocate. To count on his being such is at the heart of what it means to be a Christian.

<sup>18</sup> ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν ὀφείλει, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιπατήσεν, καὶ αὐτὸς οὕτως περιπατεῖν – This is the person who claims that he is persistently following Jesus and his teachings.

John is not suggesting that Christians must live morally perfectly as Jesus did, but that they are morally obligated by their belief in Jesus to pursue morality in the light of the profound immoral problem of humanity that was not only part of Jesus' teaching, but also was what helped guide him in his life as he proceeded toward the cross in order to qualify to be our advocate at the final judgment. Thus, Jesus' teaching includes loving those who follow the apostolic message from God through him on the basis of a new, inward commitment to the same values and perspective as Jesus. Cf. vs. 7-11. The point is that from truth comes love of fellow Christians, not rejection or ostracizing them.

<sup>19</sup> ἡ ἀγαπητοί, οὐκ ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν ἀλλ' ἐντολὴν παλαιὰν ἣν εἶχετε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς· ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιὰ ἐστὶν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε — John's point is that Diotrephes and any false teachers are basically bringing a "new" message, which itself is basically an old message, that of strictly following only the Mosaic Covenant. Cf. 2 John 9 — "Everyone who keeps advancing and does not remain in the teaching of the Messiah does not have God." John certainly is not going to change the message that he has been proclaiming and that they first heard. It is the correct "new instruction" so to speak, the "new" Torah of Jesus as the Messiah which he revealed when he appeared on earth to live out his role with the goal of his being the crucified Messiah. Cf. Deut. 17:19 where it sounds as though God is saying the king do Israel, even the final king, Jesus, should place the Mosaic Covenant at the center of every Jew's (and Gentile's by extrapolation) life. In a sense this is true for the Jews in the millennial kingdom on the land of Israel. However, the rest of the biblical message makes it clear that really it is the king as both ruler and priest who is actually at the center of every true believer's life.

John reminds his readers that the very first information which the older generation of Christians heard about Jesus is exactly what he is communicating to them now.

This is the apostolic message and account from God through Jesus of how completely immoral human beings can obtain eternal life, i.e., through Jesus as the propitiatory offering to God (cf. 2:1,2). Therefore, the false teachers who say that the Messiah would never die, leaving Jesus as just a decent rabbi, are not really teaching Jesus' "message." John calls this the "old teaching," because it is what the older generation of Christians heard and it is old in comparison to the "new" and different information which they are receiving from the false teachers.

This is again a reference to the first time which John's readers heard the information about Jesus, either from John himself or from those who had been sent out by John (cf. 3 John 3ff.).

<sup>20</sup> πάλιν ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν ὅ ἐστιν ἡ ἀληθὴς ἐν αὐτῷ· καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ἡ σκωτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἤδη φαίνει — John is now claiming that his information about Jesus as the Messiah is in a certain sense new. It is new because Jesus has appeared and revealed himself to the world, which had not happened before.

Therefore, his message is a kind of new instruction, a new Torah, that came through him from the Father (cf. Deut. 17:19) and is in addition to the Mosaic Covenant as well as certainly different from the teaching of Diotrephes and the unbelieving Jews who misunderstand the Mosaic Covenant and the whole biblical message.

This new teaching is the truth that Jesus held and that you hold if you follow Jesus

The erroneous understanding of the Mosaic Covenant will disappear when God fulfills His promises to the Jews and brings about a massive revival amongst them (cf. Romans 9-11). Nevertheless, the correct understanding of the Mosaic Covenant and Jesus as the Messiah has occurred already to some degree among the Jews and has also occurred among John's readers. Indeed, they are fulfilling the MC by their love (cf. Romans 13:8 — Owe nothing to anyone except to love one another, for he who loves his neighbor has fulfilled the Law).

<sup>21</sup> ὁ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶν ἢ ἐν τῇ σκωτίᾳ ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι — John is speaking of the person who claims that he is following the teaching of Jesus that comes from God (yet, is pursuing the Jewish traditions derived from the Mosaic Covenant with the wrong perspective on man's immoral condition and on the need for Jesus as intercessor at the judgment, and, therefore, on the fact that Jesus is the Messiah).

These same people are like "Diotrephes...[who] does not receive the brethren..., and he forbids those who desire to do so and throws them out of the church (3 John 9,10)" — i.e., anyone who ostracizes genuine Christians who appropriately confess their immoral condition, who claim Jesus as their sin offering, who pursue loving Christians, and who look forward to Jesus' intercession before the Father at the judgment. From falsehood comes "hate."

Is defiantly rejecting God's message about man's immoral condition and need for unmerited mercy, thus, in effect, rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. One of the most important litmus tests of genuine belief is the willingness and pursuit of loving people who are sometimes very similar and sometimes very different from you, but they embrace the same apostolic message of Jesus as King, Priest, offering, and leader with humble and constant acknowledgement of their sin and need for God's undeserved mercy for their eternal salvation.

<sup>22</sup> ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει, καὶ σκάνδαλον ἔν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν<sup>2</sup> — Here John addresses the same issue that Paul does for example in 1 Corinthians 12-14 and Ephesians 4 of the importance of Christians' maintaining the unity that comes from having been inwardly changed by God which results in belief in the truth of God and love for those who do likewise. Thus, the one who loves his fellow Christian also persistently follows the truth of God's message regarding our profound need for mercy and obtaining it through Jesus as our advocate who offered himself to God.

There is nothing that is going to make him stumble in the "darkness" of his falsehood and fall to his eternal destruction by rejecting the apostolic message from God through Jesus.

<sup>23</sup> ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκωτίᾳ ἐστὶν καὶ ἐν τῇ σκωτίᾳ περιπατεῖ καὶ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει, ὅτι ἡ σκωτία ἐτύφλωσεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ — The so-called Christian, e.g., Diotrephes, who ostracizes authentic Christians, is in the midst of stumbling to his eternal destruction. Diotrephes and the unbelieving Jews are blinded by their defiant rebellion and moral depravity which they are unwilling to recognize. They cannot see and embrace the truth of God's message of mercy through Jesus as Messiah and Advocate at the judgment.

<sup>24</sup> γράφω ὑμῖν, τέκνιά, ὅτι ἀφένονται ὑμῖν αἱ ἀμαρτίαι διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ — John is addressing everyone who is a "descendant" of his by virtue of believing the apostolic message that John proclaims. This pertains to both the older generation and the younger generation.

On account of all that Jesus is as the Messiah, offering for sin, and advocate at the judgment, and not on account of their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant and its animal offerings; and eternal forgiveness of sins is the most important issue in a person's life. Yes, the Mosaic Covenant is one way to deal with sins and forgiveness. But the eternal way is Jesus as Son of God and propitiatory offering in order for him to qualify as intervener at the judgment.

<sup>25</sup> γράφω ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. γράφω ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρὸν. – John is writing to the older generation who first heard the gospel and passed it on to their children.

He is also writing to the younger generation who have conquered Satan by embracing the apostolic message which their parents taught them, implying that they will be giving in to Satan's lies if they embrace the message of the false teachers.

by resisting deception of the false teachers and continuing to believe the message of Jesus as the Messiah (cf. 1 John 5:4,5) – Satan has been a deceiver from the beginning, believing and spreading lies instead of truth.

<sup>26</sup> γράφω ὑμῖν, παιδιά, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι ἰσχυροὶ ἐστε, καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει, καὶ νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρὸν – Again, John is addressing everyone who is a “descendant” of his by virtue of believing the apostolic message that John proclaims.

This pertains to both the older generation and the younger generation. And they have come to know the Father of the Son of God who is their Father too, all by virtue of embracing the apostolic message of Jesus as Messiah and advocate which they have heard. Thus, Jesus is the final Davidic king and ruler of Israel and the cosmos.

As above, John encourages both the older and younger generations that they have believed the truth in contrast to the message of the false teachers, the truth which the older generation believed when they first heard it from an apostolic source and that makes the younger generation strong in their understanding of reality and ability to combat the evil one and win that battle for the sake of receiving eternal life.

<sup>27</sup> μὴ ἀγαπάτε τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἔάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ – The primary exhortation of this section is to love the Father and not the “world.” This results in believing the apostolic message. John is also exhorting the recipients of this letter not to be deceived by the false teachers who deny that Jesus is the Messiah. Thus, he is saying not to have a subjective orientation that buys into the world's culture where everyone is out for themselves, not to become devoted to this distorted mindset that comes so naturally to evil human beings. This would include even unbiblical Judaism that is fundamentally opposed to God and his truth, even while claiming to know and worship God. (cf. “all” in v. 16 and John 7:7 – Jesus' reference to the world that is evil; also John 12:19 – the Pharisees call the Jews who have believed in Jesus “the world”; also John 15:18ff. – Jesus refers to even the unbelieving Jewish community as “the world;” cf. Matt. 6:24).

Buying into the culture and its rejection of God is obviously mutually exclusive with loving God. Either complete commitment and selling out for the culture is a person's orientation, or complete commitment and selling out for God is. You cannot serve God and mammon. The exhortation is to reject the attitude that makes the stuff of this world, even physical life, primary. The issue is a person's subjectivity, not the quantity of his assets.

<sup>28</sup> ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστίν – Our natural born sinful humanity whose fundamental passions lead us to defy God and his moral commandments, especially the commandment to embrace and deal with the depth of our moral depravity properly—the ease with which we choose to do evil instead of good. All three things mentioned in this verse appear in also those adhering to unbiblical Judaism. So sensuality is one example, while Pharisaism is another. The evil desires of our eyes are referring to the things and pursuits of life that we feel so strongly that we want and need, even religiously, when we observe them. Ultimately referring to the basic inclinations that stem from our moral depravity that lead us to pursue that which is contrary to truth.

The “self-important claims of life” are referring to the erroneous, inflated assertions that created human beings make about their self-importance along with their pursuits, even, in this context, in regard to their moral capability and their knowledge of the truth that actually results in rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and those who do fully embrace the depth of their sinfulness and Jesus as their advocate at the final judgment (cf. Diotrephes, 3 John 9; it takes divinely created humility within us to embrace the apostolic message of the Messiah).

partitive ἐκ in ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς referring to these things' not being a part of God's ultimate project centered in the Davidic Covenant with Jesus as his Son and final king, but a part of the “world's” project within God's story and whole project. The world's project is to try to create heaven on earth for every human being through strictly human effort. Or it is get what I believe I deserve, which is what everyone else has, through any means I can employ to reach my goal.

<sup>29</sup> καὶ ὁ κόσμος παράγεται καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία αὐτοῦ, ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα – The subjective orientation of human beings that characterizes people in this world will not last into the next age of eternal life (cf. 2 John 2). God's project is not ultimately the perpetuation of the present world and its kind of people, even though the millennial kingdom will be the beginning of the eternal Kingdom of God. But it will be the creation and eternal existence of the next realm that will last forever with people who are oriented towards God. To count on this world alone to satisfy and fulfill us is to misunderstand God and not love him. To love God is to love him for his whole project that includes and emphasizes the next age and the eternal realm. The difficulty is that this world feels so profoundly substantial and thus important to us, which, along with our sinful orientation towards ourselves that leads us to defy God, results in our passionately pursuing making more out of the present existence than we should. John, here, is defining value based on longevity and God's ultimate moral project.

<sup>30</sup> Παιδιά, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν, ὅθεν γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν – Only use of “last hour” in the Bible. Jesus’ first coming marked the beginning of the age before God ends the present age and starts the final age with the millennial kingdom and then a completely new creation that will be the eternal Kingdom of God (cf. Hebrews 1:2; cf. Genesis 49:1, “Then Jacob summoned his sons and said, ‘Assemble yourselves that I may tell you what will befall you in the days to come (עֲשׂוּ בְּיָמֵי אֲנִי כִּי יִבְרַח אֲנִי) (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν).”) (Also cf. Numbers 24:14, “And now, behold, I am going to my people; come, and I will advise you what this people will do to your people in the days to come (עֲשׂוּ בְּיָמֵי אֲנִי כִּי יִבְרַח אֲנִי) (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν).”) Even though John must know from the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24 that the time between Jesus’ first and second appearances will be long, nevertheless, this whole interval is the last hour. And from all quarters of humanity, perhaps especially from the Jews, before and near the second coming of Jesus the Messiah and before the mass revival of the Jews (cf. Ezek. 37, Rom. 11), there will be opposition to Jesus as the Messiah.

Even now before the final days of this age, opposition to Jesus as the Messiah has arisen from within the Christian community, in spite of people being exposed to the apostolic message from John or any of the other apostles. The combination of the future coming of the Messiah and opposition to the Messiah now, even in John’s day, is clear indication to him that “it is the last hour.”

All this data for John indicates that we are in the end times, the final age before the restoration of the Kingdom of Israel.

<sup>31</sup> ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξηλθον ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν, εἰ γὰρ ἔξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μεμενήκεισαν ἂν μεθ’ ἡμῶν – ἀλλ’ ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν – The false teachers started within the community of believers who had heard the apostolic message from those such as John and Paul and their close associates, but they became persuaded to abandon the gospel and revert to a Judaistic message that denies that Jesus is the Messiah.

Thus, they traveled away theologically from the apostles while claiming to be of the apostles, while claiming to adhere to and proclaim the same apostolic message, but, because they lacked proper inwardness, they distorted the message by rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and by rejecting God’s people who acknowledge the profundity of their sin; this is much more difficult to detect today because no apostle is alive and available to explain the apostolic message accurately, thus making everyone dependent on only the written documents of the New Testament, which are difficult to interpret to the point that no theologian or Bible teacher since the apostles has ever understood them completely accurately.

If the false teachers had continued to embrace the apostolic message, then they would have conveyed the truth instead of falsehood.

However, to demonstrate their lack of authentic inwardness and subjective orientation towards God, they began to proclaim a completely false message about Jesus and about the depth and problem of people’s sin.

And they did they because not everyone who seems to have embraced the apostolic message is an authentic believer.

<sup>32</sup> καὶ ὑμεῖς χρίσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου ὡκαὶ οἴδατε ὅτι πάντες – John is convinced that both the older generation and younger generation of these believers are marked by God inwardly with a change that has produced authentic belief in the true, apostolic message.

Either πάντες or πάντα – probably the latter. That everything that John is saying regarding the apostolic message is true since they have been taught by the apostle John or at least one of his close, legitimate disciples, and they have been fundamentally changed by God inwardly. They should not embrace the ideas of the false teachers. So John is saying, “You know all that matters about Jesus’ being the Messiah, etc.” But John is not saying that it is the anointing that has taught them all things. It’s the apostles who have taught them and God who has changed them. The combination of these two elements constitute their being authentic believers.

<sup>33</sup> οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀλλ’ ὅτι οἴδατε αὐτὴν καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεῦδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν – John is not writing to correct their thinking but to affirm it, because they have not yet bought into Diotrephes’ message but are only questioning it. And the reason they are thinking correctly is because the originally received the apostolic message from Paul and himself and others associated with them.

<sup>34</sup> Τίς ἐστὶν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός; οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν – By saying, Jesus is not the Messiah, i.e., the eternal Davidic king of the eternal Kingdom of God. This is the crux of the world’s mindset, denying all that it means for Jesus to be the Messiah, that his death communicates the profundity of our moral problem and that we need his advocacy at the judgment that will lead to his ruling over us in the eternal Kingdom of God. This denial can exist for people even while claiming to have known or know Jesus and his teachings, as is the case with Diotrephes in 3 John. Perhaps they acknowledge that he was a great moral teacher, but this is all he is because they claim that the Mosaic Covenant is still the most important element of biblical teaching for anyone and the only legitimate means to acquiring God’s mercy through bringing offerings and sacrifices to God at the temple. And they probably also believe that they make themselves worthy of His mercy by their obedience to the covenant. Thus, they deny that Jesus is not only the long-expected Messiah, but also the only valid high priest for a sinner who is seeking God’s eternal mercy (cf. Hebrews). In fact, they probably feel justified in denying Jesus as the Messiah on the basis of his having been executed by the Jewish leadership who rightly emphasizing the Mosaic Covenant in both Jews’ and Gentiles’ lives.

By denying that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, these false teachers are rejecting also God the Father

who sent him. This is their major error because they fail to appreciate the significance of Jesus' death as a propitiatory offering for man's sin.

<sup>35</sup> πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει, ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει – Because, according to the Davidic Covenant, the king of Israel is the Son of God and God's proxy on earth, to reject the king is to reject God, even if a person claims to be following another important part of the Bible, e.g., the Mosaic Covenant in this case. Therefore, rejecting Jesus' kingly authority would be like rejecting David's or Solomon's kingly authority.

<sup>36</sup> ὑμεῖς ὁ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω. ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνῃ ὁ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε – John is of course referring to the apostolic message that the older generation received from Paul, him, and their associates.

He is encourage them to make every human effort to align your pursuits with the fundamental change that God has produced in them.

John's readers will remain disciples of Jesus as the Messiah and obedient to the Father, even his Father through the Davidic Covenant. They will be followers of the Father's and Jesus' truth that originated with the Father.

<sup>37</sup> καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἣν αὐτὸς ἐπηγγείλατο ἡμῖν, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον – God has made a promise to those who believe the apostolic message. It is eternal life as He said He would bless Abraham and those who are "in him." Thusw, eternal life is the outcome of a person who authentically embraces the Father's message through Jesus that Jesus is the Messiah and all that this means regarding our moral problem and need for the Messiah's advocacy at the judgment (cf. 2:1).

<sup>38</sup> ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν περὶ τῶν πλανώντων ὑμᾶς – John's purpose is to refute the false teachers who are trying to deceive his readers into rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and ostracizing true believers (cf. Diotrephes, 3 John 9).

<sup>39</sup> καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ ἡρίσμα ὁ ἐλάβετε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἡμεῖς ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε ἵνα τις διδάσκῃ ὑμᾶς, ἄλλ' ὥς ὅτι αὐτοῦ ἡρίσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων, καὶ ἀληθὲς ἐστὶν καὶ οὐκ ἐστὶν ψευδός, καὶ καθὼς ἐδίδαξεν ὑμᾶς, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ – John is saying that the inward change that God has produced in them along with the apostolic message which they heard and embraced with authentic belief is permanent.

Thus, God's permanent, inward change along with their belief in the apostolic message means that there is no need to shift messages as people like Diotrephes are trying to convince John's readers that they need to do.

Again, two separate things. God's changing them with authentic belief in the truth is permanent, and the apostles have taught them all that they need to know, so that they should simply ignore someone like Diotrephes.

So John is not claiming that they need no teaching at all. Instead, they need no teaching from anyone who would steer them away from the apostolic message which John and others have taught them. They simply need to stick with what John has said and close their ears to anyone who would present something different to them as truth.

He finishes by urging them to make every human effort to pursuit life in accordance with God's inner change and the truth that now resonates as truth.

<sup>40</sup> Καὶ νῦν, τέκνιά, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ, ἵνα ἐὰν φανερωθῇ σχῶμεν παρρησίαν καὶ μὴ αἰσχυνοῦμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ – The ultimate outcome of authentically embracing and guarding the apostolic message is eternal mercy through Jesus' advocacy at his second coming and the judgment. John would have his readers persevere in their belief so that the apostles and them together as all authentic believers will not be embarrassed by unbelief, which would demonstrate a lack if effect in their lives of the truth which they presented to them.

Or John may be speaking of only his and the other apostolic workers' not being embarrassed by his readers' unbelief. This may seem rather selfish on John's part, but even Paul looked forward to seeing his work validated at the judgment by the authenticity of the belief of people whom he had taught. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:19, "Who is our hope or joy or crown of bragging? Is it not indeed you in the presence of our Lord Jesus at his coming?"

<sup>41</sup> ἐὰν εἰδῇτε ὅτι δικαίος ἐστὶν, γινώσκετε ὅτι καὶ πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται – If a sinful human being knows and believes that God the Father is morally perfect, then this same person will pursue moral goodness, including believing in Jesus and loving God's people, from a condition of having his inner commitments changed miraculously by God so that they match those of Jesus.

This is the person who has been fathered by God to resemble His moral character in his life and to inherit His property, which is eternal life.

<sup>42</sup> Ἰδετε ποταπὴν ἀγάπην ἡμεῖς ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ πατήρ, ἵνα τέκνα θεοῦ κληθῶμεν, καὶ ἐσμέν. διὰ τοῦτο ὁ κόσμος οὐ γινώσκει ἡμᾶς, ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνω αὐτόν – God's love is so great that we be drawn to Him as His heirs, that the Father of Jesus, the Son of God and final Davidic king, is also the Father of those whose inwardness He has changed so that they authentically obey Him with belief and love and thus are loved by God.

Indeed, we are children of God who pursue morality because God has birthed us spiritually.

The present realm that is filled with morally depraved human beings, including Jews who reject Jesus as the Messiah while claiming to know the Father by obeying the Mosaic Covenant and who refuse to grasp the appropriateness of the claims of authentic believers, especially of the apostles, of knowing biblical truth. As a result, believers are out of sync with the world. The fact that the world cannot rightly discern who believers really are is because they refuse to discern rightly who God is.

<sup>43</sup> ἀγαπητοὶ νῦν τέκνα θεοῦ ἐσμεν, καὶ οὐπὼ ἐφανερώθη τί ἐσόμεθα. οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἐὰν φανερωθῇ, ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα, ὅτι ὁψόμεθα αὐτόν, καθὼς ἐστὶν – We have the status of being God's children and heirs of God's eternal property. But we do not know exactly what our existence is going to be like in the Kingdom of God except for our

being eternal and morally perfect beings.

We also know that when Jesus appears, we shall be exactly like him in his eternal and moral nature. We will share his resurrected existence that will be of a completely different order from the one in which we exist now.

To become morally perfect like God requires being able to welcome Jesus at his second coming because of one's true belief and longing expectation for this event. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff.

<sup>44</sup> καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἐλπίδα ταύτην ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἀγνίζει ἑαυτόν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος ἀγνός ἐστιν – In the midst of being a sinner, a person strives for moral purity with authentic belief just as Jesus is morally perfect, including loving God's people, which is what the false teachers are not doing. The authentic Christian pursues being like Jesus as he has been, is now, and always will be.

<sup>45</sup> πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία – In the background of 3:4-7 is the teaching of the false teachers along with the important distinction between a simple transgression of the Mosaic Covenant and actual, biblical sin, which is deeper and has the important inward component of our being evil people. In addition, the false teachers are probably looking at only the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant and defining sin as a transgression against any of these commandments, and no more. In other words, if the Mosaic Covenant does not explicitly say, "You shall not be a jerk," then being a jerk is not "lawlessness" and sin. In contrast John is pointing out that any sin, even if it is not explicitly spelled out in the covenant, is just as much a violation of the covenant as a transgression against any of the actual commandments and is justifiably damnable. Thus, John's definition of sin is that which is contrary to God's commandments, including and especially the commandment to be inwardly changed in order to believe truth and pursue morality with proper humility. Jesus makes the same qualification about the depth and inwardness of sin in the Sermon on the Mount, e.g., [Matthew 5:27](#) "You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY'; 28 but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." In other words, "religious" people tend to look at only the external elements of morality and thereby trivialize it by ignoring the inward component and the extent of it, e.g., rejecting authentic believers on the basis of strictly their doctrinal differences when they have a genuine desire to pursue biblical truth and God's righteousness and mercy.

John will go on to say that everyone (like Diotrefes) who rejects Jesus as the Messiah, who ostracizes true believers, who rejects the truth from God about Jesus as the Messiah is actually acting contrary to both the Mosaic Covenant, which the false teachers claim to be obeying, and Jesus' commandments, which they reject anyway.

<sup>46</sup> καὶ οἴδατε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐφανερώθη, ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας τ' ἄρῃ, καὶ ἁμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἐστὶν – There are two options for "take away sins" – 1) remove sin altogether from the world or even just from Christians so that they can live a "righteous" life free from sin, or 2) bring about forgiveness from God for our sin. #1 is completely out of sync with the rest of the New Testament and even the whole Bible. Therefore, this is Old Testament terminology—that Jesus will be able to appeal to God for forgiveness on our behalf at the final judgment. And this is instead of relying on bringing animal sacrifices according to the Mosaic Covenant as the means to obtain God's eternal forgiveness. They strictly foreshadow Jesus' offering which is the only one sufficient to provide sinners with eternal mercy.

Therefore, when "that one" = Jesus was revealed at his first coming, his purpose was to be God's instrument of mercy for all sinners.

Several options for "in him there is no sin" – 1) Jesus is morally perfect, 2) sinners who belong to Jesus as their rabbi, Lord, and Savior can live morally perfect lives, 3) sinners who belong to Jesus flee from sin and pursue goodness and righteousness according to God's moral commandments, including loving God, His people, and even unbelievers. #3 is the most coherent. Since Jesus' purpose is to provide

<sup>47</sup> πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει· πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἑώρακεν αὐτόν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν – John goes on to explain the last statement of v. 5 further by saying that authentic, persevering belief motivates Christians no longer to have a fundamental desire to rebel against God and reject the truth, including rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and ostracizing true Christians as the false teachers are doing (cf. 3 John 9ff.). Christians do not purposely and intentionally make room for sin. They are not committed to sin and trivialize it the way the false teachers are while actually claiming to obey God by adhering to the Mosaic Covenant.

Those who do make room for sin have not really grasped who Jesus is even if they claim that they have seen him and understood his teaching—as the false teachers are claiming. Thus, regardless of the false teachers' claim either to have seen Jesus or to have come to know what he taught through others who have seen Jesus, they are wrong because they are disobeying his commandments to believe that he is the Messiah and to love others who embrace the same belief. In other words, they have not really seen Jesus.

<sup>48</sup> παιδεία, ἡμεῖς πλανᾶτο ὑμᾶς· ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην δίκαιός ἐστιν, καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιός ἐστιν – While δίκαιός could mean pardoned and/or accepted by God, John means the latter for both authentic believers and Jesus. Certainly, Jesus did not need to be pardoned while all other human beings as sinners do. But both are accepted by God because of their commitment to God's program. Thus, both pursue righteousness and moral goodness before God. Sinners do it as sinners, and Jesus does it as the morally perfect Messiah and icon of God in the story.

John urges his readers not to let anyone deceive them from believing this truth about Jesus and themselves, because they are the offspring of God.

<sup>49</sup> ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου ἐστίν, ὅτι ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἁμαρτάνει. εἰς τοῦτο ἐφανερώθη ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα λύσῃ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου – There are two kinds of people in this world, those who side with Satan,

trivialize morality and sin, while remaining committed to immorality and those who side with God, extol biblical morality while remaining committed to God and Jesus as the Messiah. The false teachers have especially sinned by rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and focusing strictly on the Mosaic Covenant, thinking that it is the latter that defines one's relationship with God, resulting in the additional sin of mistreating authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah. cf. Hebrews 2:14, ἵνα διὰ τοῦ θανάτου καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦτ' ἔστιν τὸν διάβολον. The goal of Satan is to keep everyone focused on rebelling against God and to destroy both the Jews and believers in Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus' goal is to rescue those whom the Father gives him (cf. John 6).

<sup>50</sup> πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ, ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει, καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται – Everyone who has been fathered by God and become a child of God by God's changing his inner commitments through the work of the Holy Spirit does not pursue a life of sin and disobedience to the truth like the false teachers. And this is because God's "seed," i.e., the inner change that God has brought about that will grow into the plant of eternal moral perfection and forgiveness, remains the most important aspect of this person.

As a result, authentic believers cannot act contrary to the change of inner commitments that God has brought about. They cannot reject the apostolic message, they cannot reject Jesus as the Messiah, and they cannot mistreat other Christians whose values match theirs. They cannot turn their lives into a sinfest.

<sup>51</sup> τὰ τέκνα τοῦ διαβόλου – To be "born of the devil" and therefore his child is to have been born into the human race that is fundamentally rebellious towards God because of people's natural born sinful humanity.

<sup>52</sup> ἐν τούτῳ φανερά ἐστιν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τοῦ διαβόλου – Children of God resemble God in their intellectual and moral orientation. Children of the devil resemble the devil in their intellectual moral orientation—as the false teachers are by rejecting Jesus as the Messiah and the genuine followers of Jesus.

<sup>53</sup> πᾶς ὁ μὴ 'ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην' οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ – Here is the second half of the central element of authentic Christianity for John. Everyone who does not pursue morality by loving God's people with the same kind of commitment to Jesus as the Messiah and with the same definition of the depth and extent of sin and morality, cannot truly belong to God.

<sup>54</sup> Ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ 'ἀγγελία ἣν ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους – cf. John 13:34,35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." John had already passed on to his readers, especially the older generation, this commandment that Jesus originally gave to only the apostles, that we worshipers of God who genuinely seek His eternal mercy through only His grace care for and be attracted to one another because of our common goal of forgiveness through Jesus as our advocate and obeying God through loving Him and one another.

<sup>55</sup> οὐ καθὼς Κάιν ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν καὶ ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ· καὶ χάριν τίνος ἔσφαξεν αὐτόν; ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν, τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια – Abel was Cain's blood brother, but, because they were both worshipers of God, the story works for John to use as an example of someone hating their "brother." It is this simple. Abel was a "righteous" man, and Cain was an "evil" man. Righteous people bug the heck out of evil people, who deep within them are envious of God's acceptance and approval of them. As a result, evil people "kill" righteous people. Cain and Abel were both worshipers of God, but only Abel had a changed heart. Cain was like the false teachers and became angry and "ostracized" his brother by killing him after learning that his religious performance was unacceptable to God. False worshipers of God know intrinsically that they are wrong and unacceptable to God and therefore, become envious of genuine believers.

<sup>56</sup> καὶ μὴ θαυμάζετε, ἀδελφοί ὦ, εἰ μισεῖ ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος – Do not be surprised that people who can be classified as of the world, even if they claim to be "Christians," are so offended by you authentic believe and pursuit of genuine morality, that they end up wanting to kill you. So this includes the religious world, whether Jews, Christians, etc. If they are not truly fathered by God to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, etc., then they will oppose you with every fiber of their being—as Cain did with Abel.

<sup>57</sup> ἡμεῖς οἶδαμεν ὅτι μεταβέβηκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς ὦ· ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν ὦ μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ – This is the litmus test for true faith. The person who has exited from a legal position before God of receiving eternal death and condemnation and moved into a legal position of mercy, salvation, and eternal life (cf. 3:15) will demonstrate such by virtue of loving the people who are just like him—authentic believers in Jesus as the Messiah and lovers of God and one another. Salvation by works!

The one or ones who ostracize(s) true believers stand eternally condemned before God. Their "love" fails the litmus test.

<sup>58</sup> πᾶς ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν ὁ αὐτοῦ ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἐστίν, καὶ οἶδατε ὅτι πᾶς ἀνθρωποκτόνος οὐκ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἐν ὧ αὐτῷ μένουσαν – Like Cain and Diotrephes every false teacher or Christian who ostracizes genuine believers who seek God's eternal mercy through His grace and Jesus' death as the Messiah has a spiritual and moral inwardness like Cain, i.e., anti-God.

And every Cain-like worshiper of God will receive God's eternal condemnation, regardless of how fervently they worship God (sing songs to Jesus) and claim to have eternal life.

<sup>59</sup> ἐν τούτῳ ἐγνώκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην, ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ὕπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν τὰς ψυχὰς ὡθεῖναι – This is the measure of love. It is Jesus' love for us. He gave up his life for sinners,



and ultimately for sinners who become genuine believers through God's drawing them to himself (cf. John 6). Therefore, authentic Christians are morally obligated to emulate him and give up themselves and their stuff for their fellow Christians.

<sup>60</sup> ὃς δ' ἂν ἔχῃ τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου καὶ θεωρῇ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ χρεῖαν ἔχοντα καὶ ἰκλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, πῶς ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἔμεινεν ἐν αὐτῷ – The person who refuses to respond to the teaching of the message that resides in him from Jesus to love those also believe that Jesus is the Messiah, so that he withholds the things in this world that are important to show love, such as showing hospitality to the emissaries from John, is not a true follower of Jesus.

God's love for human beings that he gives to them so that it exhibits itself through self-sacrifice in those who have been inwardly affected by it, as Jesus himself demonstrated (cf. 3:1). It would seem then that the false teachers with their Cain-like spirituality are withholding money, food, and clothing from authentic Christians. This is exactly what Diotrephes is doing and demanding that his followers do in 3 John. Thus, they lack the genuine self-sacrifice that Jesus demonstrated as the Messiah by dying for those who truly want God's mercy and thereby demonstrate that they lack authentic faith. They are false teachers and false Christians.

This passage cannot be used to prove that if there is one person out there in the whole wide world who is hungry or in need, then we are not being good Christians. John is speaking to the specific situation of his readers who are being forbidden by Diotrephes and others like him to shun authentic believers who are carrying the truth from the apostle John. The context of Cain and Abel is key to interpreting this passage too.

<sup>61</sup> τεκνία τ', μὴ ἀγαπῶμεν λόγῳ 'μηδὲ τῇ' γλώσσῃ, ἀλλ' ἐν ἔργῳ καὶ ἀληθείᾳ – The false teachers with their Cain spirituality are big talkers about being loving, but they do not act this way towards people of genuine belief who are seeking God's mercy through Jesus as the Messiah.

"Action and truth" is an hendiadys where the two things are being used to express one idea—that truth and loving actions are so intimately connected to one another that you cannot have one, e.g., belief in truth, without the other, e.g., loving actions towards the brothers who come from John to present the truth of the apostolic message. A person cannot say that he is loving and then not consistently act in a loving way. These are mutually exclusive.

<sup>62</sup> Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἔγνωσόμεθα ὅτι ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας ἐσμέν. καὶ ἐμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πείσομεν τὴν καρδίαν ἡμῶν – This is the second criterion for knowing who are authentic followers of Jesus—they guard Jesus' teachings, instructions, and commandments (vs. 22,23), including the teaching that Jesus is the Messiah.

We shall be able to assure ourselves in God's presence that we are authentic believers by virtue of our guarding God's teachings of belief in Jesus as the Messiah and love for those who proclaim this belief (cf. vs. 22,23).

<sup>63</sup> ὅτι ἐὰν καταγινώσκῃ ἡμῶν ἡ καρδία, ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς τῆς καρδίας ἡμῶν καὶ γινώσκει πάντα – If our inner subjective feelings tell us that we are not of the truth, because others are saying that we are not right with God by not focusing on the Mosaic Covenant and by loving believers in Jesus as the Messiah, trying to shame and condemn us into questioning our salvation so that we feel insecure (thinking of this from John's point of view). Probably not unlike the feeling we get around certain Christians, i.e., that we are not quite performing up to the standard that they hold and, therefore, are less Christian than they are, leading us even to question the authenticity of our Christianity while they subtly or not so subtly encourage us to leave those who are simply believers in Jesus as the Messiah.

"we know" is assumed from v. 19, continuing the idea that John and his readers know the truth—in this case, the fact that God is more merciful than their self-condemning feelings are condemning and sees into the depth of their beings that their fundamental desire is for His mercy and eternal life, thereby resulting in God's mercy winning out over their self-condemnation. Probably, the Judaistic teachers are working hard at making these authentic believers feel bad before God because they are not as moral as they are, leading to the authentic believers actually being that much more aware of their moral depravity and questioning the authenticity of their obedience to God.

John's readers are having thoughts and doubts about whether they really have the truth of God, because the false teachers are saying that it is necessary to be a disciple of Moses only in order to receive God's blessings. John is saying the opposite. God's voice is more powerful than the voice of the false teachers.

For us, reading the Bible and comparing our condemning thoughts with the message of God is vital to ensuring ourselves that we have and believe the truth. God's voice is more powerful than the punitive and critical ones in our heads that we more than likely grew up with because of the limitations of our parents.

<sup>64</sup> Ἀγαπητοί, ἐὰν ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν μὴ καταγινώσκῃ, παρρησίαν ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν θεὸν – If we take the above step and grasp the fact of God's greatness, mercy, and omniscience, then constantly acknowledging our moral depravity is part of authentic belief, leading to confidence in God's presence, especially at the judgment, that he will grant us mercy through Jesus as our Advocate (cf. 1 John 2:1;4:17).

<sup>65</sup> καὶ ὁ ἐὰν αἰτῶμεν, λαμβάνομεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ, ὅτι τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ τηροῦμεν καὶ τὰ ἄρεστὰ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ποιοῦμεν – Indeed, that which we request from God, specifically mercy at the final judgment, is exactly what God will grant us. Therefore, we stand to receive that which we request. John is not referring to just anything that we might ask God for, e.g., more money, a new job, etc. In the context, it is His blessing of eternal life. We ask not because we are disciples of Moses, but because we are disciples of Jesus our Advocate.

Because we embrace God's instructions, his Torah, i.e., believing in Jesus as the Messiah and loving his people, as the most important ideas that a human being can embrace and that are that by which we can bring joy to God (cf. 1 John 2:3; 4:23), we know that we will receive that for which we ask—eternal life.

<sup>66</sup> καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα ῥιστεύσωμεν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἔδωκεν ἐντολὴν ὁ ἡμῖν – John is speaking of God the Father’s teaching that came through the Son, Jesus ( cf. 1:1).

Jesus’ name is his role and function as the Son of God, Messiah, and all the other titles. John is saying that we embrace all that it means for Jesus to have the title “Son,” i.e., that he is the final Davidic king, ruler of the eternal Kingdom of God, and intervener at the final judgment—prophet, king, priest, and judge/ruler.

Just as the Son, Jesus, gave us God’s teaching of belief in Jesus as the Messiah and of loving God’s people, Jew or Gentile, who has this authentic belief. This is the gospel stated in the simplest of terms—believe in the Messiah and love those who also believe.

<sup>67</sup> καὶ ὁ τηρῶν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι μένει ἐν ἡμῖν, ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος οὗ ῥῆμιν ἔδωκεν – The person who embraces Jesus’ teaching that to the effect that he is the Messiah as the most important information for human beings is also the one who continues in the group of people who are committed to him, and he remains committed to this person. He is on his side such that he will be his advocate before God who will grant him eternal mercy and life.

By virtue of this truth of Jesus as Messiah and Advocate, we apostles know that he is committed to us with the teaching which he gave us and promised to bring to our memory by virtue of the Spirit which he promised us. Cf. the language of Upper Room Discourse in John 14:16-31 and also 1 John 4:1, placing this in the context of refuting the false prophets of Judaism. The Holy Spirit was vital to their confidence and courage to proclaim the truth in the hostile environment in which they found themselves. Just as Jesus had been their parakletos who encouraged the apostles and continually reminded them of what he was teaching, so was the Spirit of God after Jesus’ left them and ascended from the earth.

Thus, John refers to God’s activity and faithfulness to his promise through Jesus to make the apostles his sole, authoritative spokesmen (cf. John 14:16-31; 17:13-21). John is combatting the assertion from the Judaistic false teachers that he is not an authority on Jesus and that they are (cf. 4:1). It would seem, too, that John is saying that it is a miracle that the apostles continue to proclaim that Jesus is the Messiah, just as much as it is a miracle that his readers would continue to believe this message. All that is true is of God’s doing, i.e., the Spirit’s doing, not man’s.

<sup>68</sup> Ἀγαπητοί, μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε ἀλλὰ δοκιμάζετε τὰ πνεύματα· εἰ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν, ὅτι πολλοὶ ψευδοπροφῆται ἐξεληλύθασιν εἰς τὸν κόσμον – Here “spirit” refers to both the inner purposes, i.e., the inwardness and desires, of the people who are speaking and their message that they are presenting. John is saying that it is possible to test what is really going on in someone who claims to be presenting you with truth. On the one hand, if their message is strictly about getting the things I want out of this life, then their message is suspect. On the other hand, if and only if they affirm that Jesus is the Messiah and all that this means, i.e., suffering in this life and an eternal existence in the Kingdom of God, then they are pursuing truth. But be carefully, because there are many false teachers and false claims of truth out there in the world, even ones who have gone out from the apostolic community. But then they have changed the message to one that denies that Jesus is the Messiah and that claims that the Messiah has to be good for something right now—such as immediately restoring the kingdom to Israel.

<sup>69</sup> ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκετε τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ· πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ ὁμολογεῖ ῥῆσιν Χριστοῦ ἐν σαρκὶ ῥῆλῃθότα ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν – One can tell a person’s inwardness as to whether or not God has reoriented the person towards the biblical truth by confessing that Jesus is the Messiah and all that this means for the sake of eternal life. And it means accepting that he was a mere man who was executed by the Jewish authorities on the cross. The false teachers are thinking that the Messiah is going to be more than a man (similar to Hebrews) and that certainly he will not be considered a criminal by the Jewish leadership and put to death by them. Plus, he will uphold the Mosaic Covenant as the very center of anyone’s (a Jew’s or a Gentile’s) relationship with God.

Most commentators take this verse as evidence of John’s writing both for the preexistence of the Messiah and against a Gnostic approach to Christianity that believed that Jesus was a mere ghost and did not possess physical, human flesh. However, John the Baptist is spoken of as having been sent by God and coming from God, and he was merely human (John 1:6,7). Also, the entire context of this letter makes it clear that the issue is complete rejection of Jesus as the Messiah, not a partial rejection of such while accepting all that is true about Jesus except his physicality. Therefore, John uses this clause to emphasize that the Messiah, the final Davidic king, has appeared, and that Jesus is he. God has brought into existence the human being who is central to His story and is the very icon of God.

<sup>70</sup> καὶ πᾶν πνεῦμα ὃ μὴ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἐστὶν καὶ τοῦτό ἐστιν τὸ τοῦ ἀντιχρίστου ῥὸ ἀκηκόατε ὅτι ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἡδὴ – Every person with an inwardness (his desires, perceptions, and inclinations) that does not result in his embracing the truth that Jesus is the Messiah promised by God through the OT is not following God but the father of lies, Satan, who has injected a current of unbelief and opposition into the stream of human cultures throughout the whole world. In John’s and his readers’ circumstances this was evidenced by the Judaistic teachers like Diotrefes who has rejected Jesus and his believers and is centering his life in the Mosaic Covenant.

<sup>71</sup> ὅμεις ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστε, τεκνία, καὶ νενικήκατε αὐτούς, ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ ἐν ὑμῖν ἢ ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ – John is saying that origin of his readers’ as authentic believers is God, just as the origin of Jesus’ role as the Messiah is from God (cf. v. 2).

And they have acquired the knowledge and inwardness from God to combat and defeat the assertions and pressures of

the false teachers in order that they obtain eternal life.

God's anointing (cf. 1 John 2:20 and 4:13) of a changed inwardness and resultant belief in Jesus as the Messiah is greater in both strength and endurance than the influence of the false teachers (cf. language of Upper Room Discourse in John 14). Because it truly is God, the transcendent Creator, who is at work in the believers, while it is only Satan, a created being who is at work in the false teachers.

<sup>72</sup> αὐτοὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου εἰσὶν, διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου λαλοῦσιν καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν ἀκούει – John is saying that the origin of the false teachers' as false teachers is the present realm with the devil, Satan, as the one whom they are following as he injects his lies and deceptions into present culture. They have only the mindset and strength of the present realm to propagate their lies.

The "spirit" of the present realm, i.e., what people really want, is only the stuff of this life while they are opposed to God. Thus, those who are of this inwardness and mindset affirm each other in their rebellion against God.

<sup>73</sup> ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν· ὁ γινώσκων τὸν θεὸν ἀκούει ἡμῶν· ὃς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, οὐκ ἀκούει ἡμῶν. Ἐκ τούτου· γινώσκωμεν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης – We apostles have been commissioned by God through Jesus to proclaim the message of the NT gospel with the same authority and accuracy as Jesus (cf. John 12-17).

One of the tests of authentic belief is whether or not a person is willing to listen to the apostles and learn their message about Jesus as the Messiah as opposed to listening to the people who are entrenched in the present realm and its rebellion against God, which would include the institution of the church in our day with its obsession with tradition and traditional teaches as opposed to truly learning from the Bible.

John provides a litmus test of authentic belief vs. entrenchment in the present realm. People who consider only the apostolic, i.e., biblical, authors to be authoritative are being led by the Spirit of God since He is the same "spirit" that leads the apostles. People who consider others to be authoritative, e.g., Jewish adherents of solely the Mosaic Covenant while denying that Jesus is the Messiah, Darwinian evolutionists, and Christian traditionalists who adhere more to the man-made religion of their traditions than to the actual truth of the biblical message, are being led by the influences of the present realm. They are buying into the lies of Satan.

God is definitely at work in those who embrace the apostolic message of Jesus as the Messiah, but He is not in those who reject this message and instead follow the lies of their societal or religious culture.

<sup>74</sup> Ἀγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους· ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶ, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται, καὶ γινώσκει τὸν θεόν – The third criterion for being authentic believers—loving even one's enemies as a reflection of the Christian's most important parent, God. Up to this point, John has spoken of love for the "brethren," i.e., for Christians. Now, by drawing upon the more general notion that "love is from God," i.e., that God loves sinners by sending Jesus to die for them, he expands the concept of love to include others, e.g., one's enemy who is not a Christian, and indeed who may be hostile and persecuting in his behavior towards Christians.

John is saying that genuine and biblical love for others is both a miracle of God and a response to one's understanding about God and His love. Indeed, true love can and will by necessity occur only if God has inwardly worked in a sinful human being. In addition, it is a cognitive response to a person's understanding about God. And the Christian is willing to extend God's love even to his enemies, even though by definition they hate him and are unlovable. A Christian's enemies do not deserve his love, but the Christian does not deserve God's love. Therefore, it is good and right that the Christian grant the same love to his enemies as God grants to him.

By doing so, the Christian demonstrate that God has given birth to him as His child and that this child knows his parent, God. Children naturally imitate their parents. Christians should "naturally" imitate their most important "parent," God.

<sup>75</sup> ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν θεόν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν – It is only natural that false Christians not properly love others, including their "enemies," i.e., authentic Christians, because genuine love requires both an inward miracle of God and a proper understanding of God. The false teachers are not reflecting God's love because they do not know or understand God.

<sup>76</sup> ἐν τούτῳ ἐφανερώθη ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεὸς εἰς τὸν κόσμον, ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι' αὐτοῦ – Jesus is the unique Son because he, as a human being created by God and therefore "sent" by him (cf. John 1:6,4:34), is the final Davidic king who will realize all that this role involves, especially the responsibility of ruling over the eternal Kingdom of God and being an advocate as high priest and offering at the final judgment for believers.

Once again, John expresses God's purpose in bringing about this project of creating the eternal realm with Jesus' ruling over it, granting eternal life to sinners by means of the advocacy of Jesus at the final judgment. Thus, God has demonstrated His love for sinners not by giving them the Mosaic Covenant and its religious system, but by giving them Jesus as a propitiatory offering and the sole means by which they can obtain eternal life and mercy. See the next verse.

<sup>77</sup> ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήκαμεν τὸν θεόν ἀλλ' ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἱλασμὸν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν – Probably, the false teachers are saying that they are earning God's salvation by their loving him through their obedience to the Mosaic Covenant, whereas John is pointing out that the fundamental issue is God's love for sinners and recognizing this so that one then *responds* supernaturally and miraculously with both love for God and love for others that have no meritorious qualities to them. Thus, we learn another basic element of unbelief and the mindset of the present realm, that they focus on what man does for God and not what God does for man. Also, see note at 1:7 regarding the important biblical notion of the combining of the role of

king and priest in the Son of God and Messiah, a notion that the Jews reject with respect to Jesus. Cf. Romans 3:21-26; 4:25; 5:6-10. Cf. Matthew 5:44-47.

In other words, only Jesus delights God so that He will listen to him as our advocate and grant us mercy and eternal life. On our own, we do not delight God, not even when we appeal to him from our changed inwardness. It takes Jesus to delight God enough to provide us with eternal salvation. Paul is saying the same thing in Romans 5:4ff.

<sup>78</sup> Ἀγαπητοί, εἰ οὕτως ὁ θεὸς ἡγάπησεν ἡμᾶς, καὶ ἡμεῖς ὀφείλομεν ἀλλήλους ἀγαπᾶν – Thus, after one recognizes the fundamental issue of God's love for sinners and that sinners' love for others is a miracle, one also recognizes that it is a moral obligation of sinners to pursue loving other sinners, for Christians to love their enemies. In this way, the transcendent and existential levels of reality mesh with one another. God's independent love for sinners motivates sinners to love even their enemies.

<sup>79</sup> θεὸν οὐδεὶς πώποτε τεθέαται. ἐὰν ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ ἔν ἡμῖν τετελειωμένη ἐστίν – Are the false teachers claiming some kind of special revelation of God to them, as though they had seen God (cf. John 1:18)? Or, are they claiming some kind of authority based upon Moses' experience with God, that he had "seen" God and they are following him? Or, is John merely highlighting the value of God's people loving others by pointing out that, while no one has seen the transcendent Creator, everyone can see his reflections within the created reality, i.e., his people who genuinely love others by being born of God and responding to their truthful understanding of God. Yes, it is this last idea that John means.

John is saying that clear evidence of the miraculous effect of having heard God's message, embracing it, and experiencing God's eternal commitment is loving all other human beings, even our enemies. By this we allow people to "see" God by demonstrating His love to them.

<sup>80</sup> Ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ μένομεν καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν ἡμῖν, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ ἔδωκεν ἡμῖν – John is referring to himself and his fellow apostles who were commissioned by Jesus to be his authoritative spokesmen during the Upper Room discourse of John 12-16, especially chapter 14 where Jesus promises them another parakletos, someone who will come alongside them and remind them of the truth which he has been teaching them. cf. 1 John 3:24, "Now he who guards his teachings remains in him and he in him. Indeed, by this we know that he remains in us, by virtue of the Spirit that He gave to us." John became convinced that God is working on the apostles in a special way by making them his authoritative spokesmen, thus giving everyone else a basis on which to hear the message of Jesus as the Messiah from them and believe the message for the sake of their eternal salvation. This is a similar point to Paul's in Romans 7-8 that a sinner changed by the Spirit of God is able to obtain God's mercy vs. a sinner who looks only to the written commandments of the Mosaic Covenant and his self-produced obedience to them for his making himself worthy of God's mercy. Also, in Romans 5:1-11 Paul explicitly identifies God's love towards sinners as Jesus' death for them and God's Spirit being poured out in their hearts which results in their belief and its perseverance which leads to hope and confidently waiting for eternal salvation from God.

<sup>81</sup> καὶ ἡμεῖς τεθεάμεθα καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν ὅτι ὁ πατὴρ ἀπέσταλκεν τὸν υἱὸν σωτῆρα τοῦ κόσμου – Because of the Spirit's work within them as their parakletos, the apostles can testify to the truth that Jesus is the savior and liberator of the world from their sin. The one who continues to believe Jesus' teaching that God is love and that He has loved us through Jesus' death is holding to the apostolic message and believing God correctly. This would be in contrast to the false teachers who deny that Jesus' death was an act of love on God's and his part to qualify for his role as savior. Therefore, the false teachers do not have eternal life.

<sup>82</sup> ὃς ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἔστιν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ θεῷ – The person who has truly embraced Jesus as the final Davidic king will also receive eternal life, unlike Diotrephes in 3 John and those influenced by Judaistic teachers to abandon the notion that the Messiah of David suffered in order to qualify as such.

In addition, we can derive from the OT's understanding of the phrase "Son of God" as the earthly king who is the proxy of God the fact that John is not claiming that a bona fide Christian must believe that Jesus is the co-eternal 2<sup>nd</sup> person of Trinity. Instead, he must recognize that Jesus is that human being who is the icon of God as well as king and priest of Israel and all other sinners who embrace him as such.

<sup>83</sup> καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐγνώκαμεν καὶ πεπιστεύκαμεν τὴν ἀγάπην ἣν ἔχει ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν. Ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν, καὶ ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῷ θεῷ μένει, καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ ὁμῶς – John states that the apostles have embraced the fact that God's love resides within them through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit whom Jesus promised them.

Then, John makes the categorical statement that God is love in and of Himself, which by inference has manifested itself in the presence of the Holy Spirit in all believers. Therefore, the person who remains committed to acknowledging the Spirit within him and to loving God and His people is the person in whom God obviously abides with His presence and towards whom God remains committed to grant eternal life (as John will go on to say in the next verse).

<sup>84</sup> ἐν τούτῳ τετελείωται ἡ ἀγάπη μεθ' ἡμῶν, ἵνα παρρησιᾶν ἔχωμεν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως, ὅτι καθὼς ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν, καὶ ἡμεῖς ἔσμεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ – By virtue of recognizing God's love especially through Jesus' willingness to die on the cross, all Christians can know that God's love through the inward work of His Spirit has achieved its intended purpose. As a result, when we Christians stand before God at the judgment (when Jesus returns and we are either resurrected from the dead or lifted off the earth—cf. 1 Corinthians 15 and 1 Thessalonians 4), we can have the confidence that Jesus will step forward so to speak and appeal to the Father for mercy on our behalf (cf. 1 John 3:19-23). It is only by this method, and not by bringing offerings and sacrifices to God via the Mosaic Covenant, that a

person truly can receive God's eternal mercy (cf. Hebrews).

John goes on to say that just as Jesus has been and certainly still is committed to God's project, goodness, and truth, so also all Christians remain committed to it too as long as they are in the present realm. But of course for Jesus, he has been committed not only at the level of his heart commitments but also at the level of the defining essence of his moral nature, i.e., he has always been morally perfect. We, on the other hand, are committed in our hearts while we still remain sinful and disobedient at times. Nevertheless, because of God's love faithfully working within us, authentic believers are inwardly committed to the same values of goodness and mercy as Jesus.

<sup>85</sup> φόβος οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ, ἀλλ' ἡ τελεία ἀγάπη ἔξω βάλλει τὸν φόβον, ὅτι ὁ φόβος κόλασιν ἔχει, ὁ δὲ φοβούμενος οὐ τετελείωται ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ – Is Jesus speaking of fear that comes from a poor understanding of God and Jesus or of fear that comes from abject rebellion against God? If the former, then he is urging his readers to grasp the significance of Jesus' death and their belief in him as THE profound demonstration of God's love towards them that saves them from eternal condemnation and any fear they may have of such. In other words, this is a good fear that merely needs a proper understanding of God and comes to recognize fully that all punishment by God is eliminated through Jesus' role and sacrifice. If the latter, then he is indicting the false teachers for not only being wrong, but also being in rebellion against God because they sinfully want to hold on to their despairing fear (cf. Søren Kierkegaard's "being in despair" in his book *The Sickness Unto Death*). In this case, the non-believing Jew or person who has been influenced by the Jews and who misunderstands the Mosaic Covenant both operates on the basis of fear of punishment and is attempting to push John's readers back into the same mentality and emotional state, thereby missing the point of God's love that provides salvation at the judgment through Jesus' intervention and, therefore, confidence and freedom from fear of punishment for the true believers. Thus, the non-believer has not reached that point of being "in God's love" by embracing his love.

The former probably makes more sense in this context.

<sup>86</sup> ἡμεῖς ἀγαπῶμεν (αὐτόν – TR), ὅτι αὐτὸς πρῶτος ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς – If the αὐτόν is not there, then John is making a general statement to the effect that Christians are loving people. They love God. They love their fellow believers. And they even love their enemies. Why do they do all this? Because God initiated in our lives as sinners and chose to love us—in spite of our deserving His wrath, condemnation, and destruction. Thus, we imitate God's love for us by loving even our enemies.

If the TR is correct, then authentic believers in Jesus as Messiah and Savior fulfill the greatest commandment of the Old Testament to love God with all one's heart, etc. (Deut. 6:5), because God's love of sending his Son and causing them to believe in him as Savior also results in their loving God.

<sup>87</sup> ἄν τις εἴπῃ ὅτι ἀγαπῶ τὸν θεὸν καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῇ, ψεύστης ἐστίν· ὁ γὰρ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ὃν ἑώρακεν, τὸν θεὸν ὃν οὐχ ἑώρακεν· ὅπου δύναται ἀγαπᾶν – Now John moves towards the end of his letter by restating his main points and summarize.

The brother is the one who believes Jesus is the Messiah and, therefore, has eternal life. In this case, "his brother" is only in theory, because, by rejecting the truth, the false teacher is outside the family of God and not loving the true brother.

Talk of loving the invisible God is cheap in comparison to loving one's visible brother. This is the situation for the false teachers. They say they love God by following the Mosaic Covenant. But by ostracizing those who believe in the apostolic message, they are demonstrating a hatred for God. Therefore, they are lying.

<sup>88</sup> καὶ ταύτην τὴν ἐντολὴν ἔχομεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ – The teaching from God via Jesus is that those who love God love those who love God as specifically marked by their belief in Jesus as the Messiah.

<sup>89</sup> Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστίν ὁ Χριστὸς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν γεννήσαντα ἀγαπᾷ· καὶ ὁ τὸν γεγεννημένον ἐξ αὐτοῦ – God through the inward work of His Spirit causes a sinner's commitments to change such that he believes the truth of the role of Jesus as God's Anointed king and priest for sinners which in turn leads to a sinners loving others to whom God has performed this same inward action.

Again, John is talking about Jesus as the Davidic king and propitiatory offering and priest, not as the co-eternal 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity.

<sup>90</sup> ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅταν τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ποιῶμεν – By specifically obeying the teaching of God that has come through Jesus, it will naturally result in our loving God's children, who are authentic believers in Jesus as the crucified Messiah. To obey God's teaching is to love God's children. To love God's children is to obey God's teachings. These both go hand in glove.

<sup>91</sup> αὕτη γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν, καὶ αἱ ἐντολαὶ αὐτοῦ βαρεῖαι οὐκ εἰσὶν – God's love for human beings that he performs by the supernatural work of changing their hearts results in their guarding for themselves the truth of Jesus as the Messiah and of loving believers in Jesus as the Messiah. By saying that God's teachings are not difficult, John must mean that they are not impossible because God continues working miraculously and supernaturally in Christians to ensure they choose to love their fellow Christians. He must mean that this is not impossible, because we all know how difficult it actually can be to love one another.

<sup>92</sup> ὅτι πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ νικᾷ τὸν κόσμον· καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ νίκη ἡ νικήσασα τὸν κόσμον, ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν – Everyone who has had the miraculous work of God change him inwardly so that he is open and desirous of guarding God's instructions has the wherewithal to combat the false ideas of the people who continue to rebel against God and the pressures to join them in their rebellion. God has provided not only an inward change but also truth to beat

back the seductive lies, errors, and hostility towards God. I do not save myself. God saves me.

Ultimately, as John has been explaining, it is God who conquers us by changing our hearts and causing us to have genuine belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Therefore, he can say that our belief is a kind of victory over the rebellion of the present realm because it demonstrates that God is committed to our final and eternal salvation from his condemnation. It is also the case that belief in Jesus as the Messiah in the midst of pursuing obeying all of God's moral commandments, particular His commandment to love other bona fide Christians, is what demonstrates the genuineness of a person's guarding God's commandments. In other words, belief in Jesus as the crucified, resurrected, ascended, and returning Messiah is the core element of a true guarder of God's commandments.

<sup>93</sup> Τίς 'δέ ἐστιν' ὁ νικῶν τὸν κόσμον εἰ μὴ ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ – Here, John spells out even more explicitly just what is the content of a genuine believer's belief, that it is belief in Jesus as the final, Davidic king who offered himself in order to appeal to God for our mercy.

Once more, John is not talking about Jesus as the co-eternal 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity, because John is not a trinitarian.

<sup>94</sup> οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἐλθὼν δι' ὕδατος καὶ ᾠμάτος, Ἰησοῦς Χριστός, οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι ἴμόνον, ἀλλ' ἐν τῷ ᾠματι καὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι· καὶ τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ μαρτυροῦν, ὅτι ὅτ' πνεῦμά ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια – Two options for the “water”—1) Jesus' own baptism when the Spirit of God descended on him in John 1 and John the Baptist recognized him because God had alerted him to this fact, or 2) Jesus' preaching baptism and his disciples' performing it for people in John 3:22ff.

If #1, Jesus' existence as a human being involved not only water baptism by John who was preaching repentance for sins, thereby permitting the morally perfect Jesus to affirm John's preaching, but it also involved death by execution as an offering to God, so that both attested to his doing what was necessary in order to qualify to be the Son of God and our advocate at the judgment, i.e., affirming the idea that human beings are morally depraved and need God's mercy which is granted them by His grace only and outwardly demonstrating his commitment to be people's high priest and advocate before God by willingly suffering being executed on the cross. This is in contrast to those like Diotrefes. He probably believes that the Messiah is only a king and not both an offering to God and a priest in addition. Thus, John is stating categorically that Jesus cannot be the Messiah by virtue of water baptism alone (probably Diotrefes' belief). He must also have died in order to qualify as the one who can intercede on behalf of sinners.

If #2, then Jesus affirmed John the Baptist's teaching of the repentance towards God of water baptism and then went beyond that to fulfill his role as the Messiah by dying on the cross in order to qualify to be the advocate of sinners before God.

The Holy Spirit, i.e., the work of the transcendent Creator within the creation, attests to Jesus' identity as the Messiah by virtue of such things as Jesus' miracles, the dove descending on Jesus at his baptism (Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; Luke 3:22; cf. John 1:32-34), and the three recorded times of the audible voice from heaven affirming Jesus' as the Son of God (baptism—Matthew 3:17; Mark 1:11; Luke 3:22; transfiguration—Matthew 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35; Jesus' prayer—John 12:28).

Cf. Jesus' statements in the Upper Room Discourse about the Spirit as he encourages his apostles to fulfill their role as his authoritative spokesmen, e.g., John 14:16,17, “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper [Teacher/Persuader], that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.”

<sup>95</sup> ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα, καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν – The combination of the Spirit, either Jesus' baptism by John or Jesus' preaching and performing through his disciples the baptism of John, and Jesus' death verifies that Jesus is the final, Davidic king and high priest at the judgment. He is the Christ, the Messiah.

<sup>96</sup> εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαμβάνομεν, ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων ἐστίν· ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅτι μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ – Human beings naturally believe other human beings (cf. Reid's principles of veracity and credulity, *Inquiry and Essays*, pg. 95). Should it not be all that much more natural to believe God, the transcendent Creator of all reality? Of course, even when the biblical answer is that it requires the supernatural work of God to cause a morally depraved human being to embrace and believe what is natural about God.

Nevertheless, this belief is still as rational as believing a human being for saying something as simple as 1+1=2, thus bearing witness to it.

God's primary message to human beings, the message that they should believe above and beyond any other message, is that Jesus as the Son of God through the Davidic Covenant is the King of the eternal Kingdom of God. And God has borne witness to this message through the audible declarations of the Spirit, Jesus' water baptism (or proclaiming a baptism of repentance), and the cross as all mentioned in the gospel accounts.

<sup>97</sup> ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἔχει τὴν μαρτυρίαν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ, ὁ μὴ πιστεύων τῷ θεῷ ψεύστην πεποίηκεν αὐτόν, ὅτι οὐκ ἐπίστευκεν εἰς τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἣν μεμαρτύρηκεν ὁ θεός· περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ – God has provided plenty of good evidence to the effect that Jesus is the Son of God. To deny or reject this evidence is to call God a liar.

<sup>98</sup> καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία – In addition to the mere fact that Jesus is the King of the eternal Kingdom of God as demonstrated by the audible declarations of the Spirit, Jesus' baptism, and Jesus' crucifixion, there is the long term effect of this “witness” that sinful human beings acquire eternal citizenship in this kingdom through acceptance of Jesus as their King. Thus they gain life forever through Jesus and not through the Mosaic Covenant.

<sup>99</sup> καὶ αὕτη ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τῷ νίῳ αὐτοῦ ἐστὶν – Eternal life is obtained through Jesus’ advocacy at the judgment, not through the Levitical priesthood’s advocacy or by simply living like a Jew according to the Mosaic Covenant (cf. 1 John 2:1,2 and Hebrews).

<sup>100</sup> ὁ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν ἔχει τὴν ζωὴν· ὁ μὴ ἔχων τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν ζωὴν οὐκ ἔχει – Once a person has been confronted with the message of Jesus as the Davidic, eternal King, acceptance of him as such for oneself is the litmus test as to whether or not a person will live in the eternal Kingdom of God with Jesus. John is warning his readers who might be tempted to be influenced by Diotrophes and those like him.

<sup>101</sup> ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, ἵνα εἰδῆτε ὅτι ζῶντες ἔχετε αἰώνιον, τοῖς πιστεύουσιν· εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ – In the light of the message of the false teachers that Jesus is NOT the Son of God and Messiah of Israel, John has written this letter to those who DO believe he is in order to refute their teaching. Very straightforward. John does not prove in this letter that Jesus is the co-eternal 2<sup>nd</sup> person of the Trinity, because this is not what he believes Son of God means. Instead, he understands as an apostle that Jesus is the propitiatory offering as advocate and Messiah for sinners.

<sup>102</sup> καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ παρρησία ἣν ἔχομεν πρὸς αὐτόν, ὅτι ἑάν τι αἰτῶμεθα κατὰ τὸ ῥῆμα αὐτοῦ ἀκούει ἡμῶν – This is not a blank check. John is saying that God listens to His children who have genuine faith and who want Him to remain faithful to them and cause them to persevere in their faith and grow in their knowledge and understanding of Him and their desire to do what is good and right in their lives—all for the sake of obtaining eternal life. As a result, He will do just exactly this.

<sup>103</sup> καὶ ἐὰν οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀκούει ἡμῶν ὁ ἐὰν αἰτῶμεθα, οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἔχομεν τὰ αἰτήματα ἃ ᾠτήκαμεν ἅπασι αὐτοῦ – See note for previous verse.

<sup>104</sup> ἐάν τις ἴδῃ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτάνοντα ἁμαρτίαν μὴ πρὸς θάνατον, αἰτήσῃ καὶ δώσει αὐτῷ ζωὴν, τοῖς ἁμαρτάνουσιν μὴ πρὸς θάνατον. ἔστιν ἁμαρτία πρὸς θάνατον· οὐ περὶ ἐκείνης λέγω ἵνα ἐρωτήσῃ – If a Christian who has really grasped what John has written and the apostolic message sees a “brother” who is being influenced by the false teachers and leaning towards abandoning the gospel, he should pray that God will wake up the brother to his error and move him away from the lies and deception that ultimately come from Satan, so that the brother recaptures the gospel in his mind and heart. The result will be that this wayward brother will obtain eternal life just like any genuine Christian. On the other hand, if the “brother” really is not a Christian and lacks the inwardness to become committed to the truth, then God may not answer the true Christian’s prayer and direct him to believe the truth. In this case, the “brother’s” sin may end up in eternal death and destruction. For God has made vessels of wrath and vessels of mercy, and we need to allow for this fact even within our Christian communities that probably contain both. The vessels of wrath are therefore attracted to Christianity for social or religious or artistic reasons, and for the right reason of fleeing from the wrath of God and obtaining His eternal mercy and life. In other words, we should still pray for the person who rejects Jesus as the Messiah, but there is no guarantee that God will grant our request and save this person.

<sup>105</sup> πᾶσα ἀδικία ἁμαρτία ἐστίν, καὶ ἔστιν ἁμαρτία ἡ οὐ πρὸς θάνατον – Even Christians are still sinners and still sin during their lives. But their sin does not result in eternal condemnation, because it is that which a believer performs. His sin is occurring in the midst of a changed heart that fundamentally wants God’s eternal mercy. And God is faithful to cause his faith and desire to do goodness persevere. Nothing will derail God from causing those who are vessels of mercy from reaching the goal which He has for them—life in the eternal Kingdom of God.

<sup>106</sup> οἶδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει, ἀλλ’ ὁ γενηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ ἑαυτὸν καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς οὐχ ἄπτεται αὐτοῦ – The apostles and those who embrace the apostolic message of Jesus as the Son of God and Messiah know that the true believer, changed inwardly by God so that his fundamental desire is no longer to rebel against God, does not pursue or tolerate sin in his life and, certainly, will not utterly reject Jesus as the Messiah and ostracize true Christians as Diotrophes and the false teachers are doing.

In addition, Jesus, the one who himself was “born of God” through His creating activity in Mary, will hold on to each and every authentic Christian. As a result, Satan will not be able to touch him by preventing him from obtaining eternal life. The entire process of God the Father and Jesus the Son acting together so that they are always in sync with one another will mean that all genuine believers will acquire what God has destined for them, eternal life. Jesus says the same thing in [John 6:37](#) “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out. [38](#) For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. [39](#) This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that He has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. [40](#) For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”

<sup>107</sup> οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν καὶ ὁ κόσμος ὅλος ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται – John concludes the letter by once again claiming that he and the other apostles have grasped the apostolic message which he is proclaiming so that they understand that they are believers by virtue of what God has done within them. Likewise, the apostles understand what is the spiritual condition of the rest of humanity, that they lie and recline at the table so to speak of the evil one, of Satan. The rest of the world are constantly buying in to the lies of Satan and following his leadership instead of God’s through Jesus.

By virtue of Satan’s involvement in deceiving Eve into disobeying God by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, everyone since then has followed in her footsteps, yet with complete unbelief if God has not changed them inwardly. Therefore, they will be accused by Satan himself at the final judgment and will incur God’s eternal condemnation.

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In John's day, those involved in paganism and false Judaism in the Roman Empire were under the influence of Satan. Today, Satan has his followers in other religions and false Christianity whereby people reject Jesus as the Messiah from a heart of unbelief, even while claiming to believe in Jesus as the Messiah.

<sup>108</sup> οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἦκει καὶ ἑδέδωκεν ἡμῖν διάνοιαν, ἵνα ᾔνωσκωμεν τὸν ἀληθινόν ὁ, καὶ ἐσμέν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ᾧ ζωὴ αἰώνιος – The apostles are absolutely certain that the Messiah, the Son of God and God's proxy within the creation, has appeared. He has said so in the first four verses of chapter 1.

John is also saying that "we," the true apostles and not Diotrephes, reside intellectually and spiritually in the truth of who God is and what He is about through the Son, Jesus. God has given the truth of Jesus' messiahship to the apostles so that they are absolutely convinced of it and grasp it intellectually as well as any human being can.

To state it clearly, the man, Jesus, is the very embodiment of God and God's proxy, as well as the means to eternal life. John has been saying that belief in Jesus as the Messiah who gave himself as a propitiatory offering in order to qualify to be our advocate at the judgment is what gains a person eternal life, not following Moses and obeying the Mosaic Covenant.

<sup>109</sup> Τεκνία, φυλάξατε ἑαυτὰ ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων – John is warning his readers against believing in a false God and Messiah that does not correspond accurately to the Bible, even while claiming to obey God and to be waiting for the Messiah by following the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, this is also a warning against believing in a false Jesus, i.e., perhaps saying that he was only a rabbi. Today, this would be a warning against believing in a false Jesus and distortion of the biblical message, even while claiming to believe in Jesus and to be obeying God. Any object of worship which is not the one true God and His Messiah and Spirit, even if people use the same terminology as authentic Christians, constitutes idolatry.