

The First Epistle of John

...so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1John 1:3)

1John 2:28 – 3:2

Review

Where is John writing from?

What heresy was he addressing?

What flavor of Gnosticism was John specifically dealing with?

What did the heretics teach?

How does John deal with this false teaching?

1John 1:6-10

Someone read v23 – 27

Someone else read v28 – 3:2

“Now, little children...”

Does someone have a translation other than the NASB?

Literally, “and now” (*kai nun*). This phrase is emphatic in the Greek, and signals the beginning of a new section which continues through 4:6.

The 3 tests:

Moral Test of Obedience or Righteousness (2:28 – 3:10)

Social Test of love (3:11 – 3:18)

A digression about the our assurance of salvation and our condemning heart (3:19 – 3:24)

Doctrinal Test of truth about Christ (4:1 – 6)

This section is the first time the believer is described as being “born of God” (v29). Previously, he has been described as the one who knows God, is in Christ, in the light, and abiding in the Father and in the Son.

But now we learn how it is that that we may be described in those ways: Birth from God. Such a spiritual ‘birth’ is due to a divine ‘begetting’, which is the imparting of the life of God. We can’t fully understand how or why God ‘begets’ us spiritually; it is – ultimately – a mystery. But it has manifest consequences in the life of the Christian:

He does not sin (3:9), but practices righteousness (2:29), loves his brother (3:10, 14), and believes that Jesus is the Christ (5:1).

When John speaks of “children of God,” he uses the phrase *tekna tou theou* (we have seen him use the diminutive form *teknia* , meaning “little children” several times previously in this letter, most recently in the passage we’re studying this morning).

Interestingly, he reserves *huios* , for Jesus, the unique Son of God. Can anybody recall the way that Paul distinguishes Jesus in his letters?

“His own Son” (*tou idiou huiou*)

The words John uses to denote relationship to God carry the connotation of likeness to God; likeness being the proof of relationship. Not that we literally look like God after we become believers, but as we are conformed to Christ’s image, we spiritually bear his likeness.

“Abide in Him...”

‘Abide’ renders the Greek *mentee*, which as in the previous verse, may either be rendered in the indicative or imperative. What’s the difference between indicative and imperative?

Indicative: Grammar . noting or pertaining to the mood of the verb used for ordinary objective statements, questions, etc., as the verb *plays* in *John plays football*.

Imperative: Grammar . noting or pertaining to the mood of the verb used in commands, requests, etc., as in *Listen! Go!*

To convey the imperative, many English translations include the word “you” before ‘abide’ in v27, even though it does not occur in the Greek.

Another complication is the word rendered “him” in most English translations. It is possible to translate the Greek as “it.” In this case, “it” would refer to “anointing” in v27.

It ultimately makes no difference; those who abide in the anointing and in the teaching accompanying it are bound to abide in Christ.

If the sense in v27 is the imperative, it is most likely indicative here – and it is most definitely personal: “abide in him.”

Those who abide in Him can look forward to His coming with confidence. The word translated “when” in most English bibles is the Greek *ean*, which can mean

“if” in certain contexts. But *ean* means “when” in this context, the only uncertainty is regarding the time of His return, not the fact that He is coming.

Notice how John speaks of Christ’s return using two terms: “appears” and “coming.” The second is a terms we all know:

Parousia – literally Presence, appearing, advent, or arrival

It was used in secular Greek to mean the arrival of a monarch. In the ancient world, most people would never see their king. Those who did would remember the event their entire lives. We have made it a term rich with theological implications.

The mundane usage of *parousia* can be found in 1Cor 16:17,Php 2:12. The theological use can be found in 2Thess 2:1, Jas 5:7.

John says that we may approach Christ with “confidence” which means boldness, “freedom of speech.”

Characteristically, John follows this “bold” assertion with its opposite: To “shrink away from Him in shame.” For an example of this, see Rev 6:15-17

It is important to note that we don’t have to wait until the Second Coming to come before Him with boldness; can boldly approach Him in prayer right now!

Somebody read V29.

“Born of Him” Who is “Him?”

Two options: Jesus or the Father

The consistent Johannine terms are to be “born of God” or “of the Spirit.

According to the commentator Law, “it is against the tenor of the NT to speak of Christians as “begotten of Christ.”

If Him is the Father, there would be an abrupt transition from Son as Him in v28, and the Father as Him in v29. But in making this decision, we must consider the upcoming verses as well (particularly in light of the fact that originally, there were no chapter and verse divisions).

Someone read vv1-2 in chapter 3.

It is almost a Biblical axiom that God is righteous:

Ps 11:7

And He requires righteousness of His people:

Deut 16:20 or more literally: "righteousness, righteousness you shall follow"

If you know as fact that God is righteous, then you will perceive as a logical consequence that everyone that practices righteousness is born of Him.

The child exhibits the parent's character because he shares the parent's nature. A person's righteousness is the evidence of the new birth, not the source of cause of it.

The heretics may have called their initiation into *gnōsis* a "regeneration," but John shows that righteousness, not knowledge, is the mark of the re-born.

One who practices righteousness is known by that very fact to be a child of God, even if one does not make such a claim with words, Actions speak louder than words.

So, the readers of John's letter can take comfort that, if they do what is righteous, this is a sign they are born of God, and hence they can have confidence on the day of judgment.