

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 2:7-11

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

How many commandments are in view in verses 7-8?

The Old Commandment

In what sense is it "old"?

It was contained in the OT Law

Lev 19:18

And who is the neighbor in this context?

The Jews had known it from the beginning of their Jewish devotion

"The word which you have heard"

The heretics may have been teaching that one's neighbor meant loving one of their own, and hence it was right and proper to consider this as a novel new teaching. John wants to emphasize that this commandment was not a new, but had originated in the OT, which the Jews had know all along, and the Gentiles had known since they began their Christian walk.

The New Commandment

In what sense is it "new"?

See John 13:34

Cf., Mark 22:36-40

He provides an example in Luk 10:29ff

What new elements are added?

- 1 He expands on the concept of who one's neighbor is
 - a. Remember who the Samaritans were
 - b. The Samaritan and Jews were enemies
 - i. Matt 5:44
- 2 He commands them to love "one another as He Himself loves them."
 - a. How does Jesus love us?
 - b. Jesus shows the "new" aspects of this love in a concrete manner

- i. Jn 10:14ff, 15:12f)
- ii. Selflessness, willingness to offer Himself – even unto death, seeing one’s neighbor as anyone needing our help and compassion, irrespective of race or rank.
- c. And the same thing was to be seen in the disciples who followed His example.

“Which {thing} is true in Him and in you”

Which = Greek *ho* which is actually the word “the” (the definite article) without a noun, referring not to the commandment, but to the newness of it.

We may translate this verse: “The new commandment’s fulfillment is seen in Him and in you.”

The newness of this commandment lies in the fact that it is being fulfilled in a way not previously seen.

“because” – purpose clause, giving the explanation

“The darkness is passing away and the True light is shining”

There are two time periods being defined here. What are they?

The present age and the age to come
Matt 12:32

What event marks the beginning of the ‘age to come?’

Has this age fully dawned yet?

Of course not – the two ages overlap one another.

The picture is of the world fully engulfed in darkness, and then the first rays of the dawn penetrate the night. It’s not noonday, yet (and won’t be until Jesus returns), there are still portions of land under shadow, but the light is slowly growing brighter and brighter.

Christians have been delivered out of this present evil age (Gal 1:4) and have already tasted of the powers of the age to come (Heb 6:5; 1 Cor 10:11).

The true light is Jesus Christ, with whom light came into the world (Jn 3:19; Is 9:2).

He is true (Gk = *alēthinos*) not in the sense of true vs false, but in the

sense of real vs unreal – substance as opposed to shadow.

Alēhinos is a favorite adjective of John's.

Jn 1:9; 4:32, 15:1

The “true” idea of light, vine, and bread is the heavenly reality; the earthly material things which we call these things are mere copies of the true (Heb 8:5, 9:23-24, 10:1).

So, the new commandment remains new because it belongs to the new age which has been ushered in by the shining of the true light.

“The one who says he is in the light yet...”

This resembles the three “tests” of faith in chapter 1:

1 John 1:6, 8, 10.

What does John mean by being “in the light?”

What does he mean by being “in darkness?”

John equates Light and Love, darkness and hatred. There are no shades of grey.

Is hatred an active animosity or passive lack of love?

What is darkness? The absence of light.

What is hatred? The absence of love.

What were the Gnostics claiming to have?

True fellowship with God

John denies that such a claim is possible if we hate our neighbor.

The true Christian's faith is demonstrated in his right relationship with God and man.

“The one who loves his brother abides...”

continues in the light and so does not interrupt the light by hating his brother.

“...no cause for stumbling...”

skandalon

1) the movable stick or trigger of a trap, a trap stick

1a) a trap, snare

1b) any impediment placed in the way and causing one to stumble or fall, (a stumbling block, occasion of stumbling), i.e. a rock which is a cause of stumbling

If we love our brothers and sisters, we can clearly see how to avoid sinning against them.

“But the one who hates...”

Hatred distorts our perspective. We do not first misjudge people and then hate them as a result; our view of them is already jaundiced by our hatred.

It is love which sees straight, thinks clearly, judges fairly, and has a balanced outlook and conduct.

In the beginning of his Epistle, John emphasizes that the reality of a person's claims to spiritual life is to be tested by his sin. It is sin which cuts a person off from fellowship with God. Now, in this section, John sets out the converse: the reality of spiritual life is to be seen in the acceptance of God's commands and obedience to them.

It is not merely the absence of sin which characterizes the true Christian, it is also the positive presence of love. John wants us to see that life in Christ is characterized by positive acts of love, and such love will be seen in the fellowship of the church as well as our attitude towards other people generally.