

1 John

1:1 That which was from the beginning¹ constituting the message of life²—that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we looked at and our hands touched.⁴

1:2 Indeed, life was revealed,⁵ and we have seen and are bearing witness to and proclaiming to you eternal life,⁶ which was a possession of the Father⁷ and was revealed to us.⁸

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.⁹ And our understanding is in common with the Father and with His Son, Jesus the Messiah.¹⁰

1:4 Indeed, we are writing these things in order that your joy¹¹ may be full to the utmost.¹²

1:5 This is the report¹³ that we have heard from him¹⁴ and are proclaiming to you—that God is light.¹⁵ Indeed, in connection with him there is no darkness.

1:6 If we¹⁶ claim that we have a common understanding with him¹⁷ and we are living in the darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth.¹⁸

1:7 But if we are living in the light as he is in the light,¹⁹ we do have a common understanding with one another,²⁰ and the blood of Jesus, His Son, is cleansing us from all sin.²¹

1:8 If we claim that we have no sin,²² we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.²³

1:9 If we are owning up to our sins,²⁴ He is faithful and upright²⁵ so that He forgives us our sins and cleanses us from all immorality.²⁶

1:10 If we claim that we have not sinned,²⁷ we are making Him a liar,²⁸ and His message²⁹ is not in us.

2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you do not sin.³⁰ Yet, if someone sins,³¹ we have an advocate with the Father,³² Jesus the Upright Messiah.

2:2 In addition, he is the propitiatory offering for our sins,³³ and not for ours only but also for the all those in the present realm.³⁴

2:3 Now, we know by this that we have come to know him,³⁵ if we guard his teachings.³⁶

2:4 The one who says, “I have come to know him,” and does not guard his teachings³⁷ is a liar and the truth is not in him.³⁸

2:5 But whoever guards his message,³⁹ truly in this manner God’s love has achieved its intended purpose.⁴⁰ We know by this that we are in him.⁴¹

2:6 Also, he who claims that he remains in him⁴² is himself morally obligated to live his life just as he lived his.⁴³

2:7 Beloved, I am not writing a new teaching⁴⁴ to you but an old teaching which you have had from the beginning.⁴⁵ The old teaching is the message⁴⁶ which you heard.⁴⁷

2:8 On the other hand, I am writing to you a new teaching,⁴⁸ that which is true in him⁴⁹ and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.⁵⁰

2:9 The one who claims that he is in the light⁵¹ and hates his brother⁵² is still in the darkness.⁵³

2:10 The one who loves his brother remains in the light⁵⁴ and there is no stumbling in him.⁵⁵

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.⁵⁶

2:12 I am writing to you, little children,⁵⁷ because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.⁵⁸

2:13 I am writing to you, fathers,⁵⁹ because you have known that which was from the beginning.⁶⁰ I am writing to you, young men,⁶¹ because you have conquered the evil one.⁶²

2:14 I write to you, children,⁶³ because you have known the Father.⁶⁴ 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 God⁶⁵ remains in you, and you have conquered the evil one.

2:15 Do not love the present realm nor the pursuits in the present realm.⁶⁶ If someone loves the present realm, the love for the Father is not in him,

2:16 because all that is in the present realm, the strong desire of one's humanness,⁶⁷ the strong desire of the eyes,⁶⁸ and the self-important claims of life⁶⁹ is not from the Father but is from the present realm.⁷⁰

2:17 Indeed, the present realm is passing away and its strong desire, but he who does the will of God remains into the age.⁷¹

2:18 Children, it is the last hour,⁷² and just as you heard that opposition to the Messiah is coming,⁷³ even now many opponents of the Messiah have become apparent,⁷⁴ from which we know that it is the last hour.⁷⁵

2:19 They went out from us,⁷⁶ but they were not of us.⁷⁷ For if they were of us, they would have remained with us.⁷⁸ But, so that they might become known,⁷⁹ because not everyone is of us.⁸⁰

2:20 Now, you have an anointing⁸¹ from the Holy One and you know all things.⁸²

2:21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth,⁸³ but because you do know it and because every lie is not of the truth.

2:22 Who is the liar except he who denies that Jesus is the Messiah.⁸⁴ This person is an opponent of the Messiah, who denies the Father and the Son.⁸⁵

2:23 Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father. He who acknowledges the Son indeed has the Father.⁸⁶

2:24 As for you, let what you have heard from the beginning⁸⁷ remain in you.⁸⁸ If that which you have heard from the beginning remains in you, indeed you will remain in the Son and in the Father.⁸⁹

2:25 And this is the promise which he promised us—eternal life.⁹⁰

2:26 I have written these things to you concerning those who are deceiving you.⁹¹

2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you have received from Him remains in you,⁹² and you have no need for someone to teach you.⁹³ But just as His anointing teaches you concerning all things⁹⁴ (it is both true and it is not a lie), and just as it taught you, remain in it.⁹⁵

2:28 And now, little children, remain in it so that, when he is revealed,⁹⁶ we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming.⁹⁷

2:29 If you know that He is morally perfect,⁹⁸ you understand that, indeed, everyone who does righteousness has been born of Him.⁹⁹

3:1 Look at how great a love the Father has given to us, that we be called children of God.¹⁰⁰ Indeed, we are.¹⁰¹ Therefore, those in the present realm do not recognize us,¹⁰² because they do not know Him.¹⁰³

3:2 Beloved, we are now children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be.¹⁰⁴ We do know that, when it is revealed,¹⁰⁵ we shall be like him,¹⁰⁶ because we shall see him¹⁰⁷ just as he is.

3:3 And everyone who has this hope based on it purifies himself¹⁰⁸ just as that one is pure.¹⁰⁹

3:4 Everyone who commits sin also commits lawlessness.¹¹⁰ Indeed, sin is lawlessness.¹¹¹

3:5 And you know that that one¹¹² was revealed¹¹³ so that he would take away sins.¹¹⁴ In addition, there is no sin in him.¹¹⁵

3:6 Everyone who remains in him does not sin.¹¹⁶ Everyone who sins has neither seen him nor known him.¹¹⁷

3:7 Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does righteousness¹¹⁸ is righteous¹¹⁹ just as that one is righteous.¹²⁰

3:8 He who commits sin¹²¹ has sided with the adversary,¹²² because the adversary continues to sin from the beginning.¹²³ The Son of God was revealed¹²⁴ for this purpose—so that he would destroy the efforts of the adversary.¹²⁵

3:9 Everyone who has been born of God¹²⁶ does not commit sin,¹²⁷ because His seed remains in him.¹²⁸ And they are not able to sin,¹²⁹ because they have been born of God.

3:10 By this the children of God and the children of the adversary¹³⁰ are obvious.¹³¹

Everyone who does not do righteousness is not of God,¹³² including everyone who does not love his brother,¹³³

3:11 because this is the instruction¹³⁴ that you heard from the beginning, that we love one another¹³⁵—

3:12 not like Cain. He was of the evil one and murdered his brother.¹³⁶ And why did he murder him? Because his actions were evil and those of his brother were righteous.¹³⁷

3:13 Therefore, do not be surprised, brethren, if those in the present realm¹³⁸ hate you.

3:14 We know that we have departed out of death into life,¹³⁹ because we love the brethren.¹⁴⁰ He who does not love his brother remains in death.¹⁴¹

3:15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer,¹⁴² and you know that every murderer does not have eternal life remaining in him.¹⁴³

3:16 By this we have come to know love—that that one¹⁴⁴ gave up his life for us. Thereby, we have a moral obligation to give up our lives for the brethren.¹⁴⁵

3:17 Now, the person who possesses the things of the present realm¹⁴⁶ and sees his brother in need and closes off his inner resource of compassion towards him,¹⁴⁷ how does God's love exist in him?¹⁴⁸

3:18 Little children, let us not love in thought or speech but in action and truth.¹⁴⁹
3:19 And by this we shall know that we are of the truth.

Indeed, we shall convince our hearts before Him,¹⁵⁰
3:20 because, if our hearts condemn us,¹⁵¹ we know that God is greater than our hearts and He knows all things.¹⁵²
3:21 Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.¹⁵³
3:22 Indeed, that for which we ask, we are receiving from him,¹⁵⁴ because we guard His teachings and we do the things that are pleasing to Him.¹⁵⁵
3:23 And this is His teaching¹⁵⁶—that we believe in the name of His Son,¹⁵⁷ Jesus the Messiah, and we love one another just as He gave this instruction to us.¹⁵⁸

3:24 Now he who guards His teachings remains in Him and He in him.¹⁵⁹ Indeed, by this we¹⁶⁰ know that he remains in us, by virtue of the Spirit that He gave to us.¹⁶¹

4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit¹⁶² but examine the spirits to see if they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.
4:2 By this you know the spirit of God.¹⁶³ Every spirit that acknowledges Jesus the Messiah as having come in the flesh¹⁶⁴ is from God,
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.¹⁶⁵

4:4 You are from God,¹⁶⁶ little children, and you have conquered them,¹⁶⁷ because greater is that which is in you than that which is in the present realm.¹⁶⁸
4:5 They are from the present realm.¹⁶⁹ Because they speak from the present realm, indeed those of the present realm listen to them.¹⁷⁰
4:6 We¹⁷¹ are from God. The one who knows God listens to us.¹⁷² 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.¹⁷³

4:7 Beloved, we should love one another, because love is from God.¹⁷⁴ Indeed, everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.¹⁷⁵

4:8 The one who does not love has not known God, because God is love.¹⁷⁶

4:9 By this God's love was made known among us—that God has sent His unique Son into the world¹⁷⁷ in order that we, through him, would live.¹⁷⁸
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.¹⁷⁹

4:11 Beloved, if God loved us in this way, indeed, we are morally obligated to love one another.¹⁸⁰

4:12 No one has ever seen God.¹⁸¹ If we love one another, God remains in us, and His love has achieved its intended purpose in us.¹⁸²

4:13 By this we¹⁸³ know that we remain in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.¹⁸⁴

4:14 Now, we have seen and we are bearing witness that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of mankind.¹⁸⁵

4:15 Whoever acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God remains in him and he remains in God.¹⁸⁶

4:16 And we¹⁸⁷ have come to know and have believed in the love which God has for us.

God is love,¹⁸⁸ and he who remains in love¹⁸⁹ remains in God, and God remains in him.¹⁹⁰

4:17 By this love has reached its intended purpose within us¹⁹¹ so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment,¹⁹² because just as that one is,¹⁹³ so also are we in this present realm.¹⁹⁴

4:18 There is no fear in love, but love that has reached its intended state discards fear, because fear involves punishment.¹⁹⁵ And the one who fears has not reached his intended state in love.¹⁹⁶

4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.¹⁹⁷

4:20 If someone says, "I love God," and he hates his brother,¹⁹⁸ 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.¹⁹⁹

4:21 Indeed, we have this teaching from Him,²⁰⁰ 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.

5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, whenever we love God and perform His teachings.²⁰¹

5:3 For this is the love of God, that we guard His teachings.²⁰² And His teachings²⁰³ are not difficult to carry out,

5:4 because everyone who has been born of God conquers the present realm.²⁰⁴

And this is the victory that conquers this present realm—our belief.²⁰⁵

5:5 Who is the one who conquers the present realm except he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?²⁰⁶

5:6 This is the one who came by water and blood. Jesus is the Messiah—not by water only but by water and by blood.²⁰⁷

Furthermore, the Spirit is the one who bears testimony,²⁰⁸ because the Spirit is truth.²⁰⁹

5:7 For there are three who bear testimony—

5:8 the Spirit and the water and the blood—and the three do establish one claim.²¹⁰

5:9 If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater.²¹¹ For this is the testimony of God, that He has born witness concerning His Son.²¹²

5:10 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony within himself.²¹³ 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.

5:11 In addition, this is the testimony,²¹⁴ that He has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.²¹⁵

5:12 The one who has the Son has life. The one who does not have the Son of God does not have life.²¹⁶

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.²¹⁷

5:14 Now, this is the confidence that we have towards Him, that if we ask for anything according to His will,²¹⁸ He listens to us.

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.²¹⁹

5:16 If someone sees his brother sinning a sin whose end is not death,²²⁰ he will ask and He will give him life,²²¹ to those who are sinning whose end is not death. There is sin whose end is death.²²² I am not talking about that particular sin, that he may ask.²²³

5:17 All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin whose end is not death.²²⁴

5:18 We²²⁵ know that everyone who has been born of God does not sin.²²⁶ But he who was born of God will protect him, and the evil one will not touch him.²²⁷

5:19 We know that we are from God,²²⁸ and that everyone in the present realm²²⁹ lies under the influence of the evil one.²³⁰

5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come,²³¹ 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.²³² This one is the true God and eternal life.²³³

5:21 Little children, guard yourselves from idols.²³⁴

¹ ὁ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς – John refers 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.

² περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς – This 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.

³ ὁ ἀκηκόαμεν – 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.

⁴ ὁ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὁ ἐώρακάμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὁ ἔθεασάμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν – 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 or reality. Therefore, there were three ways that John received information to substantiate the truth of the message of Jesus as the Messiah.

⁵ καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη – The description of eternal life and the way to get it was brought to light by Jesus' teaching and performance of miracles to back up his claim to be the Messiah.

⁶ καὶ ἐώρακάμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον – John as claiming to be the spokesman for God and Jesus regarding exactly what eternal life is and how to get it. Also, John has the three ways that he has interacted and continues to interact with the truth – seeing the effects in Jesus' ministry, bearing witness to it as an apostle, and proclaiming it as an apostle to others in order that they believe it.

⁷ πρὸς τὸν πατέρα – As God and the Father of the final Davidic king, Jesus, who is the Son of God (cf. 2 Samuel 7:14), He is the ultimate source and owner of the information that came to the apostles and that they passed on to others in the 1st century Roman Empire.

⁸ καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν – To us 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.

⁹ ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ' ἡμῶν – 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.

¹⁰ καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – Only the apostles can authoritatively say that their understanding of the biblical message exactly matches that of God's.

¹¹ ΜΤ – ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν – Not "our joy," because John is concerned about his readers' salvation and their persevering in holding on to the apostolic message that they first received.

¹² ἡ πεπληρωμένη – 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.

¹³ ἡ ἀγγελία (cf. 1 John 3:11)

¹⁴ ἦν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ – John emphasizes that his apostolic message comes directly from Jesus.

¹⁵ ὅτι ὁ θεὸς φῶς – Intellectual, not moral light, and, therefore, TRUTH. 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), that comes from God through Jesus as the Messiah vs. erroneous understanding of especially the Mosaic Covenant and the Messiah by Diotrephes and unbelieving Jews (cf. John 1:4-9; 3:19-21; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9, 10; 12:35-46).

¹⁶ ἐὰν εἴπωμεν – John switches to include his readers here so as to exclude Diotrephes and the false teachers who are not acknowledging the profundity of their immoral condition.

¹⁷ μετ' αὐτοῦ – with God and his teachings that have come through Jesus the Son

¹⁸ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν – which is the case with Diotrephes and the unbelieving Jews who are trying to influence John's readers.

¹⁹ ἐὰν δὲ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατῶμεν ὡς αὐτὸς ἐστὶν ἐν τῷ φωτί – John is saying that, if he and other fellow Christians are living their lives according to the truth of the NT message of Jesus and mercy in the light of human depravity, then...

²⁰ κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων – We all match God in His understanding of us as morally depraved sinners.

²¹ καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας – 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 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 that of priest and advocate at the judgment (cf. Psalm 110:4 and Hebrews – “a priest according to the order of Melchizedek).

²² ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν – 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, which is providing forgiveness and cleansing from our sin through our religious practices of repentance and offerings at the temple. Therefore, 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).

²³ ἐαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν – Anyone who refuses to acknowledge the depth of their immoral condition is engaged in moral and spiritual self-deception and are, in effect, rejecting Jesus as the Messiah.

²⁴ ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν – If we are continuing to acknowledge and groan over our continued problem of sin and guilt within the fabric of our being that 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. This is THE issue to acknowledge as a result of mostly the death of the Messiah which illustrates what we deserve from God—in addition to the simple information we can come by in our minds by sensing the depth of our sin and the guilt we feel for it.

²⁵ πιστός ἐστιν καὶ δίκαιος – God the Father is faithful to His promise that he will forgive those who own up to their humanly insoluble moral problem, and remaining faithful to His promise is obviously the right thing for him to do.

²⁶ καθάρσις ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας – 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) accountability before God, this is right near the top of THE most important concepts to understand and live.

²⁷ ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν – And therefore do not have a continuing problem of sin at the deepest level of our beings.

²⁸ ψεύστην ποιῶμεν αὐτόν – We are calling God a liar if we do not agree with Him that our sin problem is so profound that we cannot solve it even through our legalistic obedience to the Mosaic Covenant.

²⁹ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ – God’s message of truth that comes through Jesus (cf. 1:1).

³⁰ ἵνα μὴ ἁμάρτητε – so that you do not allow your natural born hostility towards God to get the best of you and you listen to Diotrefes and others with the result that you reject the true message of Jesus

³¹ καὶ ἐὰν τις ἁμάρτη – generally speaking, as part of the normal course of human existence in this life even as Christians

³² παράκλητον ἔχομεν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα – We have someone who will appeal to God the Father for mercy at the final judgment.

³³ καὶ αὐτὸς ἱλασμός ἐστιν περὶ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν – 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, thus becoming 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.

³⁴ ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ ὅλου τοῦ κόσμου – Not for Jews’ sins only but also for gentiles’ sins, thereby making it possible for Jesus to save evil gentile dogs apart from the Mosaic Covenant, which implies that Jews’ immoral condition is as evil as any gentile’s immoral condition.

³⁵ ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν – We have come to know and follow Jesus.

³⁶ ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν – 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.

³⁷ καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν – his instructions, his Torah (cf. Deut. 17:19)

³⁸ ψεύστης ἐστὶν καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν – Diotrefes 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.

³⁹ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον; cf. 1:1,10

⁴⁰ ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται – 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.

⁴¹ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐσμεν – We know that are true disciples and followers of Jesus when we embrace and live by his teachings regarding eternal life that have come from the Father.

⁴² ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν – the person who claims that he is persistently following Jesus and his teachings

⁴³ καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιεπάτησεν καὶ αὐτὸς οὕτως περιπατεῖν – Not morally perfectly as Jesus did, but pursuing 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 so that his teaching includes loving those who follow the apostolic message from Jesus on the basis of a new, inward commitment to the same values and perspective as Jesus; cf. vs. 7-11. From truth comes love.

⁴⁴ ἐντολὴν καινὴν – a new instruction, Torah (cf. Deut. 17:19). 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).

⁴⁵ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς – since you first heard the gospel (cf. 1:1)

⁴⁶ ὁ λόγος – the apostolic message and account from God through Jesus of how completely immoral human beings can obtain eternal life

⁴⁷ ὃν ἠκούσατε – either from John himself or those who had been sent out by John (cf. 3 John 3ff.)

⁴⁸ ἐντολὴν καινὴν – A new instruction, Torah, that came through Jesus 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.

⁴⁹ ὃ ἐστὶν ἀληθὲς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν – that is the truth that Jesus held and that you hold if you follow Jesus

⁵⁰ ὅτι ἡ σκοτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἤδη φαίνει – 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.

⁵¹ ὁ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι – 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).

⁵² καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶν – cf. 3 John 9-10 – “Diotrephes... does not receive the brethren..., and he forbids those who desire to do so and throws them out of the church” – Therefore, 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.”

⁵³ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι – 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.

⁵⁴ ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει – 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 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.

⁵⁵ καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν – 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.

⁵⁶ ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν καὶ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπατεῖ καὶ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία 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. They cannot recognize the truth of God’s message of mercy through Jesus as Messiah and Advocate at the judgment.

⁵⁷ τεκνία – everyone who is a “descendant” of John by virtue of believing the apostolic message that John proclaims

⁵⁸ ὅτι ἀφέωνται ὑμῖν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ – 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.

⁵⁹ πατέρες – in that patriarchal society, the older men who are respected within their families

⁶⁰ τὸν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς – the message of the gospel when you first became believers. Thus, they are in the same “light” as God.

⁶¹ νεανίσκοι – the younger generation within that patriarchal society

⁶² ὅτι νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρὸν – 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.

⁶³ παῖδια – everyone who is a “descendant” of John by virtue of believing the apostolic message that John proclaims and who is now also a child of God the Father

⁶⁴ ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα – because you have embraced God’s message of the Davidic Covenant with Jesus as his Son and final king of both the Kingdom of Israel and the eternal Kingdom of God

⁶⁵ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ

⁶⁶ μὴ ἀγαπάτε τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ – A general exhortation not to buy into and become devoted to the cultural, distorted mindset established by morally depraved human beings that would include even unbiblical Judaism and 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).

⁶⁷ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς – 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 properly the depth of our moral depravity. All three things mentioned in this verse appear in also those adhering to unbiblical Judaism.

⁶⁸ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν – 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.

⁶⁹ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου – 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 their moral depravity 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).

⁷⁰ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστίν – partitive ἐκ; not 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

⁷¹ καὶ ὁ κόσμος παράγεται καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία * οὐκ αὐτοῦ, ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα – into the next age of eternal life (cf. 2 John 2). God’s project is not ultimately the perpetuation of the present world but the creation and eternal existence of the next realm, the Kingdom of God. To count on this world 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 moral depravity that leads us to defy God, results in our passionately pursuing making more out the present existence than we should. John, here, is defining value based on longevity and God’s ultimate moral project.

⁷² 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 creates the final age of 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 (עַתְּמָה יְהִיָּה) (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 (עַתְּמָה יְהִיָּה) (ἐπ’ ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν).”)

⁷³ καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται – from all quarters of humanity, perhaps especially from the Jews, near the second coming of Jesus the Messiah and before the mass revival of the Jews (cf. Ezek. 37, Rom. 11)

⁷⁴ γεγόνασιν – Have arisen from within the Christian community, even having been 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.”

⁷⁵ ὅθεν γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν – on the basis of which we apostles can tell that we are in the end times

⁷⁶ ἐξ ἡμῶν – from us apostles (cf. Galatians 2:1-5)

⁷⁷ ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν – They traveled away 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.

⁷⁸ εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μεμενήκεισαν ἂν μεθ’ ἡμῶν – If the false teachers had continued to embrace the apostolic message, then they would have conveyed the truth instead of falsehood

⁷⁹ φανερωθῶσιν – for who they really are as false teachers

⁸⁰ ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν – because not everyone who seems to have embraced the apostolic message is an authentic believer

⁸¹ χρισμα – marked by God inwardly with a change that has produced authentic belief in the true, apostolic message

⁸² εἴτε πάντες or πάντα – 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. 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.

⁸³ οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκ οἶδατε τὴν ἀλήθειαν – 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

⁸⁴ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός – 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 they claim that the Mosaic Covenant is still the most important element of biblical teaching for anyone truly desiring to acquire God's mercy. And they probably also believe that they make themselves worthy of His mercy by their obedience to the covenant.

⁸⁵ ὁ ἄρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν – who denies that Jesus is the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant, thereby rejecting also God the Father who sent him. This is the major error of the false teachers.

⁸⁶ 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.

⁸⁷ ὁ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς – the apostolic message that Jesus is the Messiah and Son of God

⁸⁸ ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω – Make every human effort to align your pursuits with the fundamental change that God has produced in you.

⁸⁹ καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε – 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.

⁹⁰ τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον – 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. 1:1).

⁹¹ ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν περὶ τῶν πλανῶντων 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).

⁹² τὸ χρίσμα ὃ ἐλάβετε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ μένει ἐν ὑμῖν – The inward change that God has produced is permanent.

⁹³ καὶ οὐ χρειάν ἔχετε ἵνα τις διδάσκη ὑμᾶς – And God's permanent, inward change 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 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. They need no teaching from anyone who would steer them away from the apostolic message which John has 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.

⁹⁴ ἀλλ' ὡς τὸ αὐτοῦ χρίσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων – Just as God's miraculous, permanent, inner change opens their eyes up to the apostolic truth and continues to cause it to resonate in their hearts and minds as the truth and continues to cause them to love God's people who share this belief.

So here John shows the close and necessary association between God's inner change of people and the truth of the apostolic message that they hear.

⁹⁵ μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ – Make every human effort to pursue life in accordance with God's inner change and the truth that now resonates as truth.

⁹⁶ ἐὰν φανερωθῇ – when Jesus is revealed at his second coming

⁹⁷ ἵνα ἐὰν φανερωθῇ σχῶμεν παρρησίαν καὶ μὴ αἰσχυρθῶμεν 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 he will not be embarrassed by their unbelief, which would demonstrate a lack of effect in their lives of the truth which they presented to them. 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?"

⁹⁸ δίκαιός ἐστιν – God the Father

⁹⁹ πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται – Pursues 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.

¹⁰⁰ ἵνα τέκνα θεοῦ κληθῶμεν – 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

¹⁰¹ καὶ ἐσμέν – Indeed, we are children of God who pursue morality because God has birthed us spiritually.

¹⁰² ὁ κόσμος οὐ γινώσκει ἡμᾶς – 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.

¹⁰³ ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνω αὐτόν – some sort of present meaning to the aorist tense

¹⁰⁴ καὶ οὐπω ἐφανερώθη τί ἐσόμεθα – Even with the Messiah’s first coming, we did not become “good” people the way that the false teachers claim that we can be by obeying the Mosaic Covenant. Instead, we are still evil at the level of the defining essence of our moral nature. Therefore, a child of God is still a sinner who continues to demonstrate his sin in the midst of having become oriented towards God appropriately in the commitments of his heart that results in authentically believing the biblical truth and pursuing goodness.

¹⁰⁵ φανερωθῆ

¹⁰⁶ ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα – When the end finally comes and Jesus returns, true believers will be like God the Father, i.e., morally perfect, as they live in the eternal Kingdom of God.

¹⁰⁷ ὅτι ὁψόμεθα αὐτὸν καθὼς ἐστίν – 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 the event. Cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13ff.

¹⁰⁸ καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἐλπίδα ταύτην ἐπ’ αὐτῷ ἀγνίζει ἐαυτόν – In the midst of being a sinner, a person strives for moral purity with authentic belief, including loving God’s people, which is what the false teachers are not doing.

¹⁰⁹ καθὼς ἐκεῖνος ἀγνός ἐστίν – just as Jesus is morally perfect

¹¹⁰ πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ – Everyone 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.

¹¹¹ καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστίν ἡ ἀνομία – John’s definition of sin – 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

¹¹² ἐκεῖνος – Jesus

¹¹³ ἐφανερώθη

¹¹⁴ ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἄρη – Old Testament terminology, that he be able to appeal to God for forgiveness on our behalf at the final judgment.

¹¹⁵ καὶ ἁμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν – Jesus has been the only morally perfect human being in history. Maybe Diotrophes (3 John) was claiming that the rabbi Jesus was just as much a sinner as anyone else.

¹¹⁶ πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει – Authentic, persevering in belief Christians no longer 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.).

¹¹⁷ πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἐώρακεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν – 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.

¹¹⁸ ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην – In the midst of being a sinner, the one who pursues moral goodness in obedience to Jesus’ commandments to believe in him and love God’s people because of his inward commitment to the same moral values as Jesus.

¹¹⁹ δίκαιός ἐστίν – is doing what God would have him to do in the midst of being a sinner

¹²⁰ καθὼς ἐκεῖνος δίκαιός ἐστίν – Just as Jesus did/does what God would have him to do, albeit morally perfectly

¹²¹ ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν – especially the sin of 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

¹²² ἐκ τοῦ διαβόλου – sided with God’s angelic opponent

¹²³ of his existence

¹²⁴ ἐφανερώθη

¹²⁵ ἵνα λύση τὰ ἔργα τοῦ διαβόλου – cf. Hebrews 2:14, ἵνα διὰ τοῦ θανάτου καταργήσῃ τὸν τὸ κράτος ἔχοντα τοῦ θανάτου, τοῦτ’ ἐστίν τὸν διάβολον

¹²⁶ πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ – Everyone who has had his inner commitments changed by God so that they match those of Jesus.

¹²⁷ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ – A person of changed inner commitments will not reject Jesus as the Messiah and ostracize true Christians.

¹²⁸ ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει – God’s “descendants” will persevere in their belief and following God’s Torah of loving other Christians, thereby resulting in their acquiring eternal life.

¹²⁹ καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν – 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.

¹³⁰ 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.

¹³¹ φανερά – Children of God resemble God in their intellectual and moral orientation. Children of the devil resemble the devil in their moral orientation.

¹³² πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ – Does not pursue morality in the midst of being a sinner and yet with authentic belief, and therefore has been inwardly changed by God.

¹³³ καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ – Here is the second half of the central element of authentic Christianity for John, loving God’s people that corresponds to genuine belief in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God.

¹³⁴ ἡ ἀγγελία (cf. 1 John 1:5)

¹³⁵ 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 passed on to his readers 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 one another.

¹³⁶ καὶ ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ – 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.”

¹³⁷ ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια – It is this simple. Abel was a “righteous” man, and Cain was an “evil” man. 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.

¹³⁸ ὁ κόσμος – Including the religious world, in this case Jews who claim to be obeying God properly by living according to the Mosaic Covenant.

¹³⁹ ὅτι μεταβηθήκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν – That we have left 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).

¹⁴⁰ ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς – salvation by works!

¹⁴¹ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν μένει ἐν τῷ θανάτῳ – eternally condemned before God

¹⁴² πᾶς ὁ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἀνθρωποκτόνος ἔστιν – like Cain. Every false teacher or Christian like Diotrephes 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.

¹⁴³ καὶ οἶδατε ὅτι πᾶς ἀνθρωποκτόνος οὐκ ἔχει ζωὴν αἰώνιον ἐν αὐτῷ μένουσαν – Every Cain-like worshiper of God will receive God’s eternal condemnation, regardless of how fervently they worship God and claim to have eternal life.

¹⁴⁴ ἐκεῖνος – Jesus

¹⁴⁵ ὑπὲρ τῶν ἀδελφῶν – For authentic Christians, not for the “world,” because the world is passing away (cf. 2:17).

¹⁴⁶ τὸν βίον τοῦ κόσμου – the things of this world necessary for subsistence

¹⁴⁷ καὶ κλείσῃ τὰ σπλάγχνα αὐτοῦ ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ – 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

¹⁴⁸ πῶς ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ μένει ἐν αὐτῷ – 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. Thus, they lack the genuine self-sacrifice that Jesus demonstrated as the Messiah by dying for those who truly want God’s mercy.

¹⁴⁹ μὴ ἀγαπῶμεν λόγῳ ‘μηδὲ τῆ’ γλώσση ἀλλὰ 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.

¹⁵⁰ καὶ ἔμπροσθεν αὐτοῦ πείσομεν τὴν καρδίαν ἡμῶν – 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).

¹⁵¹ ὅτι ἐὰν καταγινώσκῃ ἡμῶν ἡ καρδία – 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.

¹⁵² ὅτι μείζων ἔστιν ὁ θεὸς τῆς καρδίας ἡμῶν καὶ γινώσκει πάντα – “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.

¹⁵³ ἐὰν ἡ καρδία ἡμῶν μὴ καταγινώσκῃ, παρησίαν 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 (cf. 1 John 4:17).

¹⁵⁴ *καὶ ὁ ἐὰν αἰτῶμεν λαμβάνομεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ* – 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.

¹⁵⁵ *ὅτι τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηροῦμεν καὶ τὰ ἀρεστὰ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ ποιοῦμεν* – 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).

¹⁵⁶ *ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ* – God the Father’s teaching that came through the Son, Jesus (cf. 1:1)

¹⁵⁷ *ἵνα πιστεύσομεν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* – 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.

¹⁵⁸ *καθὼς ἔδωκεν ἐντολὴν ἡμῖν* – 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.

¹⁵⁹ *καὶ ὁ τηρῶν τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν αὐτῷ* – The person who embraces God’s teaching that has come through Jesus to the effect that he is the Messiah as the most important information for human beings is also the one who continues in a committed, inward relationship with God, and God remains committed to him such that he will receive God’s eternal mercy and eternal life.

¹⁶⁰ *καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν* – apostles (cf. 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)

¹⁶¹ *ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος οὗ ἡμῖν ἔδωκεν* – A reference 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.

¹⁶² *μὴ παντὶ πνεύματι πιστεύετε* – Here “spirit” refers to both the inner purposes, i.e., the inwardness, of the people who are speaking and their message that they are presenting.

¹⁶³ *τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ* – A person’s inwardness that exists in its particular state because God has reoriented the person towards the biblical truth.

¹⁶⁴ *ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθότα* – Most commentators take this clause 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.

¹⁶⁵ *καὶ νῦν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐστὶν ἤδη* – As evidenced by the Judaistic teachers like Diotrefes who are rejected Jesus and his believers.

¹⁶⁶ *ὁμοίως ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστε* – 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).

¹⁶⁷ *καὶ νενικήκατε αὐτούς* – And you have acquired the knowledge and inwardness from God to combat and defeat the assertions and pressures of the false teachers in order that you obtain eternal life.

¹⁶⁸ *ὅτι μείζων ἐστὶν ὁ ἐν ὑμῖν ἢ ὁ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ* – 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).

¹⁶⁹ *αὐτοὶ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου εἰσὶν* – John is saying that the origin of the false teachers’ as false teachers is the present realm. They have the mindset and strength of the present realm to propagate their lies.

¹⁷⁰ *διὰ τοῦτο ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου λαλοῦσιν καὶ ὁ κόσμος αὐτῶν ἀκούει* – The “spirit” of the present realm is anti-God, and those who are of this inwardness and mindset affirm each other in their rebellion against God.

¹⁷¹ *ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν* – 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).

¹⁷² *ὁ γινώσκων τὸν θεὸν ἀκούει ἡμῶν* – 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.

¹⁷³ *ἐκ τούτου γινώσκομεν τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς ἀληθείας καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τῆς πλάνης* – 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.

¹⁷⁴ ἀγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους – 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, i.e., one’s neighbor, whether he is a Christian or not.

¹⁷⁵ καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται καὶ γινώσκει τὸν θεόν – 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.

¹⁷⁶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν θεόν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν – It is only natural that false Christians not love others properly, because genuine love requires both an inward miracle of God and a proper understanding of God.

¹⁷⁷ ὅτι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ τὸν μονογενῆ ἀπέσταλκεν ὁ θεός – 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.

¹⁷⁸ ἵνα ζήσωμεν δι’ αὐτοῦ – 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.

¹⁷⁹ ἐν τούτῳ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη, οὐχ ὅτι ἡμεῖς ἠγαπήκαμεν τὸν θεόν ἀλλ’ ὅτι αὐτὸς ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἰλασμὸν 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.

¹⁸⁰ 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. In this way, the transcendent and existential levels of reality mesh with one another.

¹⁸¹ θεὸν οὐδεὶς πώποτε τεθέαται – 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.

¹⁸² ἐὰν ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὁ θεὸς ἐν ἡμῖν μένει καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη αὐτοῦ ἐν ἡμῖν τετελειωμένη ἐστίν – 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 other believers in Jesus as the Messiah.

¹⁸³ γινώσκομεν – apostles (cf. 3:24 and 4:14, especially “we have seen...”) (cf. the language of the Upper Room Discourse in John 14)

¹⁸⁴ ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν – cf. 1 John 3:24 – 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.

¹⁸⁵ σωτήρα τοῦ κόσμου – the one who rescues humanity from the eternal condemnation of God

¹⁸⁶ 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 Diotrefes 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.

¹⁸⁷ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐγνώκαμεν καὶ πεπιστεύκαμεν – apostles

¹⁸⁸ ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν – as demonstrated by his providing Jesus as Messiah and Savior at the final judgment

¹⁸⁹ καὶ ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ – within the context, the one who has believed in God’s demonstration of love by his providing Jesus as Messiah and Savior at the final judgment, i.e., any believer, not just an apostle

¹⁹⁰ ἐν τῷ θεῷ μένει καὶ ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει – The person who has believed in God’s demonstration of love is the person who receives eternal life.

¹⁹¹ μεθ’ ἡμῶν – all Christians

¹⁹² ἵνα παρρησίαν ἔχωμεν ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τῆς κρίσεως – So that, when we stand before God at the judgment, we can have the confidence that Jesus will step forward to 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).

¹⁹³ ὅτι καθὼς ἐκεῖνός ἐστιν – just as Jesus has been and certainly still is committed to God’s project, goodness, and truth. 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.

¹⁹⁴ καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐσμεν ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ τούτῳ – Indeed, authentic believers are also inwardly committed to the same values of goodness and mercy as Jesus.

¹⁹⁵ ὅτι ὁ φόβος κόλασιν ἔχει – Whether they admit it or not, the false teachers are operating out of fear, indeed, fear of God’s eternal punishment. cf. Soren Kierkegaard’s “being in despair” in his book *The Sickness Unto Death*.

¹⁹⁶ ὁ δὲ φοβούμενος οὐ τετελείωται ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ – 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.

¹⁹⁷ ἡμεῖς ἀγαπῶμεν (αὐτόν – TR), ὅτι αὐτὸς πρῶτος ἠγάπησεν ἡμᾶς – In light of v. 20, the TR makes sense. 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.

¹⁹⁸ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ – 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.

¹⁹⁹ ὁ γὰρ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ὃν ἐώρακεν, τὸν θεὸν ὃν οὐχ ἐώρακεν οὐ δύναται ἀγαπᾶν – Talk of loving the invisible God is cheap in comparison to loving one’s visible brother.

²⁰⁰ 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.

²⁰¹ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκουμεν ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅταν τὸν θεὸν ἀγαπῶμεν καὶ τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ ποιῶμεν – By specifically obeying the teaching of God through Jesus to love those who love God through their belief in Jesus, we can know where we stand in regard to the genuineness of our belief.

²⁰² αὕτη γὰρ ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ, ἵνα τὰς ἐντολὰς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν – God’s love for human beings that he performs by changing their hearts results in their protecting for themselves the truth of Jesus as the Messiah and of loving believers in Jesus as the Messiah.

²⁰³ αἱ ἐντολαὶ αὐτοῦ – God’s teachings of believing in Jesus as the Messiah and loving believers in Jesus as the Messiah

²⁰⁴ ὅτι πᾶν τὸ γεγεννημένον ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ νικᾷ τὸν κόσμον – 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 ideas and pressures of the people who continue to rebel against God to join them in their rebellion. God has provided not only an inward change but also truth to beat back error and hostility towards God. I do not save myself. God saves me.

²⁰⁵ καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ νίκη ἡ νικήσασα τὸν κόσμον, ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν – 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.

²⁰⁶ τίς δὲ ἐστὶν 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.

²⁰⁷ οὐκ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι μόνον ἀλλ’ ἐν τῷ ὕδατι καὶ ἐν τῷ αἵματι – 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.

²⁰⁸ καὶ τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν τὸ μαρτυροῦν – 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).

²⁰⁹ ὅτι τὸ πνεῦμά ἐστιν ἡ ἀλήθεια – 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 [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.”

²¹⁰ καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν – The combination of the Spirit, Jesus’ baptism by John, and Jesus’ death verifies that that Jesus is the final, Davidic king and high priest at the judgment.

²¹¹ εἰ τὴν μαρτυρίαν τῶν ἀνθρώπων λαμβάνομεν, ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων ἐστίν – 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, the biblical answer is that it requires the supernatural work of God to cause a morally depraved human being to believe what is natural about God. Nevertheless, this belief is still as rational as believing a human being for something as simple as 1+1=2.

²¹² ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ ὅτι μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ – 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 of this message through the audible declarations of the Spirit, Jesus’ water baptism, and the cross as all mentioned in the gospel accounts.

²¹³ ὁ πιστεύων εἰς τὸν υἱὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ἔχει τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἐν ἑαυτῷ – because God has miraculously worked *within* the believer

²¹⁴ 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.

²¹⁵ καὶ αὕτη ἡ ζωὴ ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ ἐστίν – 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).

²¹⁶ 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 Diotrefes and those like him.

²¹⁷ τοῖς πιστεύουσιν εἰς τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ – i.e., to those who embrace Jesus as the Messiah by understanding all that is involved in his fulfilling this role, e.g., his life, death, offering to God, advocacy at the judgment, ruling over the eternal Kingdom of God, etc.

²¹⁸ ὅτι ἐάν τι αἰτώμεθα κατὰ τὸ θέλημα αὐτοῦ – for eternal life

²¹⁹ οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἔχομεν τὰ αἰτήματα ἃ ἠτήκαμεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ – Those who truly believe that Jesus is the Messiah also know that God will grant them eternal life according to their specific requests for it.

²²⁰ ἐάν τις ἴδῃ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτάνοντα ἁμαρτίαν μὴ πρὸς θάνατον – the sin of a brother/believer whose inwardness has been changed by God so that his “sin” will not result in eternal condemnation

²²¹ αἰτήσῃ καὶ δώσει αὐτῷ ζωὴν – eternal life and the perseverance of belief to acquire it

²²² ἔστιν ἁμαρτία πρὸς θάνατον – The sin of rejecting Jesus as Messiah from a heart of unbelief will result in eternal death and condemnation, e.g., Diotrefes.

²²³ οὐ περὶ ἐκείνης λέγω ἵνα ἐρωτήσῃ – 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.

²²⁴ καὶ ἔστιν ἁμαρτία οὐ πρὸς θάνατον – The sin that does not result in eternal condemnation is that which a believer performs, because his sin is occurring in the midst of a changed heart that fundamentally wants God’s eternal mercy.

²²⁵ οἶδαμεν – apostles

²²⁶ οἶδαμεν ὅτι πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει – The apostles 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. Thus, Diotrefes is wrong.

²²⁷ ἀλλ’ ὁ γεννηθεὶς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τηρεῖ αὐτὸν καὶ ὁ πονηρὸς οὐχ ἄπτεται αὐτοῦ – Jesus, as a person who was caused by God to exist just as believers are caused by God to believe, will protect (futuristic present tense) the authentic believer from Satan’s accusations at the judgment (cf. John 5, Hebrews 2:14ff.).

²²⁸ οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμὲν – Part of the message of Jesus as the Christ is that the authoritative apostles find the source of their authority and understanding of truth in God and his miraculous work within them.

²²⁹ ὁ κόσμος ὅλος – In John’s day, those involved in paganism and false Judaism in the Roman Empire. Today, those involved 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.

²³⁰ ἐν τῷ πονηρῷ κεῖται – By virtue of Satan’s involvement in deceiving Adam and Eve into disobeying God by eating of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, everyone since then has followed in their footsteps with the potential of being accused by Satan himself at the final judgment and incurring God’s eternal condemnation.

²³¹ οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ ἦκει – cf. 1 John 1:1-4

²³² καὶ ἐσμὲν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ – John is saying that “we,” the true apostles and not Diotrefes, reside intellectually and spiritually in the truth of who God is and what he is about through the Son, Jesus.

²³³ οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος – The man, Jesus, is the embodiment of God and the means to eternal life through believing in him as the Messiah who gave himself as a propitiatory offering in order to qualify to be our advocate at the judgment.

²³⁴ τεκνία, φυλάξατε ἑαυτὰ ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων – Warning 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, also a warning against believing in a false Jesus, i.e., perhaps saying that he was only a rabbi. Today, 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.