

Staying true to the word

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human flesh.

To set matters straight, John assured his readers that what they had received from the beginning was true. John's epistle, however, is far more than a warning against Gnostic heresy. Its truths about light, love, and righteousness are needed in every age. Whatever a new false teaching or a new temptation confronts the church, this letter helps to keep us on course.

QUESTIONS
LNO NEW COMMANDMENT (1 John 2:7-8)

1. Why was the commandment to love not "new?" (1 John 2:8)

John was not telling his readers anything they did not already know; it is no innovation but an old commandment which they had been taught from the beginning" (Bruce, The Epistles of John, Erdmans). Jesus told His disciples in John 13:34-35, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."

2. What did John mean by "the beginning" (1 John 2:7)?

For Christians, the command to love was "and old commandment," one that they had known "from the beginning." By "beginning," John did not mean the beginning of the world but the beginning of the gospel message as proclaimed by Christ during His earthly minister. (See: Mark 1:1, and 1 John 1:1.)

3. In what sense was

John's commandment "new?" (1 John 2:8)

In this verse, "new" does not mean "more recent," but rather "superior, new and better in quality" (Richards, The Victor Bible Background Commentary, Cook).

In a perfect sense, the "new commandment" that John mentions in this verse was realized in Christ-the incarnate Word of God.

What was "true in him" is true in believers as well. No Christian can claim that his love is as complete as Christ's love. Nevertheless, we learn to love God and one another because we have experienced Jesus' love (see 1 John 4:11, 19).

II. NO DARKNESS (1 John 2:9-11)

4. In what sense is the darkness past? Who is the true Light? (1 John 2:9)

With Christ, a new era has dawned "the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining" (v. 2:8). Christ is the "true light which gives light to every man coming into the world" (John 1:9). That being so, we might expect that Christ would have been welcomed by people wanting to escape sin's darkness.

Instead, "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him" (v. 11). This was because "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (v. 3:19). Hence, those who receive Christ become "children of God" (v. 1:12), "the children of light, and the children of the day" (1 Thess. 5:5).

5. How did John use the words "light" and "darkness?" (1 John 2:11)

Light and darkness are used in this epistle as symbols for righteousness and sinfulness, respectively. That being so, the person who hates his Christian brother is walking in darkness, that is, is living in sin apart from Christ's light.

Just as darkness keeps us from seeing where we are and where we are going, so it is with the person who harbors hatred in his heart. Such a person has been blinded by his own sin.

"Hate destroys any window for light from God. To live without loving one's brother means to deny oneself the presence of God and the reality of fellowship with the community of faith" (Barker and Kohlenberger, eds., Expositor's Bible Commentary, Zondervan).

6. If someone hates his Christian brother, what does this indicate? (1 John 2:11)

If someone hates his brother in Christ while claiming to walk in the light, there is strong evidence that this person is not a true believer and that he has grossly misunderstood the heart of the Christian message.

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Now the serpent was more subtle than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman: "Ye hath God said, ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1) We do not see Adam present in this conversation at all. Adam knew the mind of God and knew what would happen if he ate of the forbidden tree. Knowing the mind of God, Adam would not have dared stand there and go along with the Devil's plan. In all that conversation between Eve and the serpent we don't see Adam present. And Eve misquoted the Lord in her answer to the serpent. The Devil had her going his way when she misquoted God. See how crafty he is. And you think Adam would not have called the serpent a liar if he had been standing right there beside Eve? So the Devil got Eve (beguiled her) to eat of the forbidden tree and he left off the scene. I do not know how long it was before Eve approached Adam. But when Eve ate of the tree, she immediately became naked, and she could no longer have fellowship with the Lord God because she now is a sinner in rebellion and hating the Lord God. In Verse 6 we find these words; "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat." There is no mention of the serpent there in that event. Now, the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible itself. The greatest representative the Lord ever had on earth had something to say about the temptation and fall there in the garden; "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." (1 Tim 3:14) The Devil was not about to make his presentation in the presence of the man who knew the mind of God and take the chance that Adam would spoil his plan to lead the human race down to hell. Do you think he would have? Our thinking is just so shallow.

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