

THE OFFICES OF CHRIST

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Introduction

The nature of the message of God:

Continuity and discontinuity - The one God, who spoke in the past, is the same God who has now spoken (Heb.1:1). However, the medium is different. At first by messengers, now by his Son, who is the same as God Himself. What God spoke in time past, still has effect today. God's word also has future effect. "In these last days" (Heb.1:2). History is moving toward a consummation/climax. "God has spoken in the present and this present is the end time." With the coming of Jesus, the end time has begun. Jesus' coming into the world ushers in the end time, for he is the final revelation of God. There is no longer a need for prophets. To see Christ is to see the beginning and the end of the end time.

Progression: In various ways God revealed himself, his power, and his character according to the need and readiness of his people. God is a revealing God (Acts 14:15-17). Revealing as much of **himself** as they could handle in a given time (1 Cor. 13:12). "It is quite impossible that a God of love should have done less than manifest Himself to man who bears His own Image, for love means nothing unless it is expressed."

In time past (before Christ came): God spoke in various ways: First, through nature, dreams or visions, a voice, moral constitution of man, the Law (Torah). Second, through his prophets. God used a childlike message (Acts 17:30-31). God led his people by the hand toward a day of maturity (Gal 4:4).

In the present: God has spoken by means of his Son. ***Last days:*** a time of responsibilities. Why do we need to heed Jesus' message? This is because Jesus is God in human flesh. As such, he is greater than any prophets who ever lived, as well as the Angels in heaven. Who can better speak to creation than the Creator Himself? No one!

Understanding the Offices of Christ

Old Testament Backgrounds:

The prophetic Office: Nabi = Prophet. Passive word: One called/One appoint. Behind the passive word was the subject: God who does the calling. The noun, "Nabi" means a prophet, one who proclaims and expounds divine revelation. The verb form, "Naba" means to show, present or express onself, to speak as a prophet. The prophet was considered the "Mouth of God" (Jer. 15:19).

Prophets were active in Israel's history, in three main periods: "the time of the dissolution of the Northern kingdom (721 BC), of the Southern kingdom 597-587), and the time of the exile

(539 BC).” “In relation to history, their message had a horizontal (the nation and the nations) and a vertical (past, present, and future) dimension. The future dimension was in the nature of warning, where the future linked with the present situation of the hearer.”¹ Therefore the emphasis of the message was twofold:

1. ***Prophecy of Judgment*** - The prophets were to warn their hearers about Approaching judgment. As they were also responsible for exhorting and counseling the people, and preaching with the intention of calling their hearers to repentance, their task included explanation of the reason for Judgment. Judgment often came because of the sin of the nation, of the king, or of a group within the nation. For instance, Isaiah warns of judgment because “the people were not putting their trust in Yahweh alone; Amos and Micah, because the people were disregarding the Law and commandments of Yahweh; Hosea, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, because of idolatry.”

2. ***Prophecy of Salvation:*** In contrast to prophecy of judgment, which resulted because of the sin of the people, prophecy of salvation was not based on the goodness of the people, but because of the love and grace of God. During and after the exile, the need of salvation became prominent for the Israelites. At this time the focus of salvation became a reality in the renewal of the relationship between Israel and God, in the eschatological King (the Messiah), in the new order of their religious life, and political liberation of the nation. As Brown puts it, “The Old Testament prophet is a proclaimer of the word, called by God to warn, exhort, comfort, teach, and counsel, bound to God alone and thus enjoy a freedom that is unique.”²

The New Testament view:

According to Collin Brown, the term prophet is used in the New Testament in the following 5 senses:

1. ***The Old Testament Prophets:*** Understood as the “Mouth of God” (Jer 15:19; Acts 3:18, 21). God is behind the passive construction in Matt. 2:17, 23. One of the aspects of Old Testament prophets often emphasized in the New Testament is the violent deaths of the prophets (Matt. 23:31, 37; Lk 13:34; Acts 7:52). In early Christianity martyrdom was integrally related to the concept of the prophet (Matt. 23:35). Jesus’ death therefore stands as the climax of prophetic martyr (Matt 23:35; Lk 11:51).

2. ***John the Baptist:*** John’s identity as a prophet is justified by his more radical Prophetic preaching of judgment and repentance (Amos 9:7 ff; Micah 3:12; Jer 63:7 ff). His preaching was aimed at moral improvement, and “at shaking the religious self-confidence of the Jews.” He emphasized baptism as a testimony of repentance which was a sign of conversion.

3. ***Jesus Christ:*** The public clearly identified Jesus as a prophet (Mk 6:15; Lk 9:8;

¹For details see, Colin Brown, The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology Vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1986), 79.

²Ibid., 79.

Matt 16:14; Mk 8:28; Lk. 7:16; 9:19). Jesus is greater than the prophets (Matt. 12:41): He does not only announce but brought salvation (1 Pet 1:10 ff; Lk 10:24). He was seen in the sense of the Prophet like Moses (Deut.18:15 Acts 3:22ff; 7:37; Matt 2:1-23; 4: 1-11; John 6:14; 7;40).

4. ***Those specially commissioned:*** Those who God commissioned and equipped to proclaim prophetic messages. Examples: Anna (Lk 2:36, others Lk 1:16; Elizabeth Lk 1:41; Simeon Lk 2:25).

5. ***Christian Prophets:*** There were people who possessed this gift (1 Cor 12; Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 14:3) Warning against false prophets suggest that there were Christian prophets (Matt 7:15; 22ff; 24:24; Mk 13:22).³

The Priestly Office: A priest according to the Old Testament practice is a person who was anointed and accepted by God to serve as a mediator between God and the people: to serve as channel of God's grace to the people and to offer sacrifices to God for the forgiveness of sin on behalf of the people. Priests conducted sacrifices and other rituals at holy places throughout the land and finally in the sacred areas of the Temple.

The duties of the Old Testament priests involved:

1. Offering sacrifices
2. Making intercessions
3. Blessing the people.
4. They also instructed the people in the Law, Customs, Rituals, and traditions of Israel.

Priests were expected to remain:

1. Holy and ritually pure
2. Marry only Jewish women who were virgins or widows
3. Without physical blemish.⁴

In speaking of the priestly office, J. H. Kurtz wrote:

The design and purpose of this priesthood was mediatorial communion, with God, mediation between the holy God and His chosen people, which had drawn back in the consciousness of its sinfulness from direct communion with God (Ex. xx. 19). Like all communion, this also was reciprocal. Priestly approach to God involved both bringing to God, and bringing back from God. The priests brought into the presence of God the sacrifices and gifts of the people, and brought from God His gifts for the people, viz, reconciliation and His blessing.⁵

³Ibid., 81-84.

⁴Jacob Neusner and William Scott Green, Dictionary Of Judaism In The Biblical Period 450 B.C.E. To 600 C.E., (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1999), 500.

⁵J. H. Kurtz, Offerings, Sacrifices, and Worship in the Old Testament, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1998), 36.

A Closer Look at the Offices of Christ

Jesus' work of redemption was made possible by assuming three important offices:

Prophet, Priest, and King. His prophetic ministry (office) extends from his birth to the Garden of Gethsemane. His priestly office extends from the Garden of Gethsemane into the tomb. His kingly office extends from the Resurrection morning to eternity. Thomas Oden writes:

Jesus first appeared as a teacher in the prophetic office; then as high priest and lamb sacrificed in his suffering and death; and finally by his resurrection received his kingdom and remains active in his office of cosmic governance, as eschatological ruler in this Kingdom.⁶

The Prophetic Office: In his ministry, Jesus first appeared primarily as a prophet. A prophet like Moses whom God has raised up from among his own people (Acts 3:22). As discussed above, a prophet serves as a channel of communication between the divine and humanity to bring to light what had been hidden. A prophet speaks for God and instructs people in God's will. Thomas Oden put it this way: "The prophetic office of Christ refers to the work of Christ in revealing fully the divine truth to humanity, proclaiming the divine plan of redemption, and calling all to accept salvation offered."⁷

Jesus did not only reveal God's will to mankind, but he himself was the revelation of God in human form (Hebrews 1:1-3; Col. 1:15). Since he himself is the truth, only he can adequately reveal the truth (John 18:37). Jesus is superior to the human prophets for the following reasons: 1. He himself is God with us (Matt. 1:22). 2. He is God's Word in human form (John 1:14). 3. As God, he has the ability to open the minds of his hearers "so they could understand the Scriptures" (Lk 24:45). 4. He revealed the true meaning of God's word (Mk 7:6, 9:12; 11:17; 14:21, 27). 5. He is the Fulfillment of all Scriptures (Matt 5:17). 6. He is the dispenser of Grace and truth (John 1:17). **Christ is both the Prophet and the message, Sender and the Sent One.**

"All the other prophets were humans speaking for God. The only mediator was the God-man speaking for God to humanity and to God for humanity."⁸

The Priestly Office: A priest, according to the Old Testament practice, is a person who was anointed and accepted by God. Christ, our High Priest, was chosen and accepted by God. Christ's being set-apart began at his incarnation (Hebrews 7:15-28, Luke 4:18-19). He was anointed at his baptism not with oil but with the Spirit (Luke 3:21-22; cf. Ps 40:6; Heb 10:5: as the heavens opened, God pronounced him acceptable, the Holy Spirit anointed him.

⁶Thomas Oden, The Word of Life, Systematic Theology: Volume Two, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992), 280.

⁷Thomas Oden, The Word of Life, 286.

⁸Ibid., 289.

Christ's priestly office has three functions:

1. To make the perfect sacrifice to God the Father by means of his suffering and death on the cross.
2. To intercede with the Father for humanity.
3. To bless humanity by redeeming them from the power of sin and death.

As such, Christ's priestly office has three dimensions: Past, present, and future:

Past Dimension: As a priest, Christ makes the ultimate Sacrifice - Christ's self-giving death on the Cross as the payment for sin is his finished priestly work (Jn 19:30, Heb.10:12). Christ offered a sacrifice, not of a lamb, but of his own body. The priest became the sacrifice. The cross on which our Lord sacrificed his life for sinful humanity, served as altar for God's perfect Lamb (John 1:29). The sacrifices offered by the Old Testament priests only covered individuals for a limited time, but Christ's Sacrifice paid the price for the sins of the whole world once and for all (Heb.10:12).

Present Dimension: Making intercessions: He prayed for his people (John 17:9). The Old Testament priests interceded for the people in the temple, but Christ intercedes for believers in the very presence of God himself. He is also prayed to as our God. Christ continues to intercede for believers (Rom 8:34 8:32). His continuing intercession for believers at the right hand of God is his present priestly work.

Future Dimension: His return in glory. Paul writes: "And so I solemnly urge you before God and before Christ Jesus who will someday judge the living and the dead when he appears to set up his kingdom" (2 Tim. 4:1).

In sum, Jesus was anointed not with oil, but with the Holy Spirit to be the true prophet, priest and king, and through these offices to rescue fallen humanity. As prophet, Christ revealed God's will; as priest he made provision for the redemption of sin; as king, he accepts the penalty and proclaims it sufficient to set mankind free.

The Nature of Christ's Sacrifice:

1. **He suffered actual pain:** He was indeed a man of sorrows (Isa.53:4; Heb 2:18).
2. **His death was voluntary:** "Jesus was not a passive victim but an active victor" (Heb. 10:9-10).
3. **He died an innocent death (Heb 7:26).** The just died for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18).
4. **By God's will/permission (Acts 2:23)** – It was in God's redemptive plans

Reasons for Christ's death:

1. **To make Peace:** The cross is a peacemaking event in divine human relationship.

For redemption: Christ's death on the cross liberates imprisoned humanity. It is intended for all, but requires faith to be received.

2. **For righteousness and Justice:** The cross satisfies God's way of making sinners right in his presence and therefore brings about redemption and justification from sin (Romans 5:6-11).

The conditions of the sacrifice:

1. It is the only sacrifice acceptable to God for the forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:11-12).
2. It is for all - Christ died for the sins of the whole world.
3. It is conditional - It is received only through faith in Jesus Christ (Eph. 2:8, Acts 4:12).

The superiority of Christ

The Superiority of Christ to Moses (Heb. 3:1-6):

We are told in this passage that believers are bond/called for heaven, just as Israel was bond/called for the Promised Land. Remember Jesus' words: "I am going to prepare a place for you" (John 16:2). There may be some troubles in the waiting period, but don't doubt his words, he who has promise is he who has paid the price for you. **Your ticket is been paid for through in his death and resurrection.** Fix your eyes on the promise and trust the one who has made the promise.

Heavenly calling: "The invitation that comes from heaven and leads to heaven." Jesus came down to invite us, he went back to receive us.

Similarities and differences between Jesus and Moses:

Similarities: Both were sent by God to lead his people: Moses, to lead Israel from Pharaoh's bondage to their Promised Land (Canaan). Jesus, to lead humanity from bondage under the Devil to the Sabbath-rest promised to those who believe (Heb. 4:3, 9). Both were faithful to their calls.

Differences: Moses is a creature, Jesus is the Creator. Moses is a servant in God's household, Jesus is the Son and Heir of God's house. Moses' work was a foreshadow of the true redemption that comes through Christ. Therefore Jesus is greater than Moses.

We have a responsibility.

Courage and Hope: Believers are called to remain faithful to the end. Faith is the requirement for entering God's promise of rest. We can endure any difficulties once we fix our eyes on our future hope (Heb.12:2).

THE UNIFYING THEME OF THE EPISTLE OF JAMES⁹

By D. Edmond Hiebert

The Epistle of James is notoriously difficult to outline. This is confirmed by the great diversity of the outlines which have been proposed. They range all the way from two to twenty-five major divisions. The epistle itself does not herald any clear structural plan concerning the organization of its contents. Hendriksen well remarks, "A superficial glance at this epistle may easily leave the impression that every attempt to outline it must fail."

This impression that the epistle lacks any unifying theme for its contents is strengthened by the peculiar practice of James of connecting sentences by the repetition of a leading word or one of its cognates. As an illustration, note 1:3-6 (NASB): "endurance" (v. 3) — "endurance" (v. 4); "lacking in nothing" (v. 4) — "if any of you lacks" (v. 5); "let him ask" (v. 5) — "but let him ask" (v. 6); "without any doubting" (v. 6) — "the one who doubts" (v. 6). See also 1:12-15, 21-25; 3:2-8; 4:1-3. The brief paragraphs, the rapid shift of thought, and the apparent diversity of themes further support the impression that the epistle is disjointed and lacks a unifying theme.

The disjointed character of its contents is stressed by scholars who view this book as simply another example of "parenthesis." "It was characteristic of parenthesis," Songer remarks, "to place together in loose organization a series of exhortations without any concern to develop one theme or line of thought in the entire writing." The term *paraenesis* or *parenesis*, derived from the Greek means "exhortation, advise, counsel" (cf. Acts 27:9, 22). As applied to a written work, the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines it as "a hortatory composition." In modern usage it denotes material characterized by ethical instruction and exhortation.

Those who view the Epistle of James as typical parenetic literature hold that no unifying theme should be expected; it should rather be accepted as a collection of miscellaneous exhortations devoid of any intentional unity. Thus Godspeed describes the epistle as "just a handful of pearls, dropped one by one into the hearer's mind." And Hunter, recalling that the epistle had been called "an ethical scrapbook," concludes that "it is so disconnected, as it stands, that it is the despair of the analyst."

⁹ Taken from *Bibliotheca Sacra*, "The Unifying Theme of the Epistle of James" is by D. Edmond Hiebert, 1978, pages 221-231. Used with permission.

But others, not yielding to despair, discern some measure of organizational unity in holding that James discusses several independent themes. Scroggie asserts that this epistle "has no one subject as have most of the Epistles, more than a dozen themes being treated almost disconnectedly," and goes on to remark, "The nature and variety of these subjects suggest that they are abstracts of sermons which James had preached at Jerusalem. Shepherd sees the epistle as consisting of "a series of eight homiletic-didactic discourses" with each discourse developing a principle theme linked together by "skillful use of word-links and thematic recapitulations." Similarly Barker, Lane, and Michaels hold that this epistle is a series of "sermonic expansions of certain sayings of Jesus" and that in it "four brief homilies or messages have been merged into one: on temptation (1:2-18), on the law of love (1:19-2:26), on evil speaking (3:1-4:12), and on endurance (4:13-5:20).

The suggestion that the contents of this book originally had a sermonic origin is very probable. But the view that Jesus, the dynamic leader of the Jerusalem church, should dispatch such a heterogeneous compilation of sermonic materials as His official message to His readers seems less probable.

Still others hold that all of the Epistle of James does indeed relate to a single theme which gives it an unobtrusive unity. This unifying thrust of the epistle is obviously ethical rather than doctrinal. Kee, Young, and Froehlich identify this unifying thrust as follows: "The whole epistle is concerned with one simple truth: It is not enough to 'be' a Christian, if this fact does not show in one's conduct." McNeile identifies this unifying thread of the epistle as "the obvious but important truth that a man's faith, his attitude toward God, is unreal and worthless if it is not effective, if it does not work practically in life." And Lenski well identifies the unifying theme of the epistle when he asserts, "This entire epistle deals with Christian faith, and shows how this faith should be genuine, true, active, living, fruitful."

The Epistle of James has much to say about faith. The noun faith, occurs sixteen times and the verb believe, three times. But a glance at the contents of the epistle makes it obvious that James is not concerned with developing a theological exposition of the nature of Christian faith. He holds that a saving faith accepts Jesus Christ as the all-sufficient Savior (1:1; 2:1), but otherwise he says but little about the theological content of such a faith. His purpose is practical rather than doctrinal.

The purpose of James is to goad his readers to recognize and accept their need for a living, active faith and to challenge them to test their own faith by the basic criterion that "faith without works is useless" (2:20). James insists that a saving faith is a living faith, proving its genuineness by what it does. But it is a misconception to assume that his purpose is simply to stress the word and deed in view of the coming judgment. The practice of mercy, giving a man what he needs and not what he deserves, will reveal that God's grace has produced a transformation in their own lives.

A PERSON IS JUSTIFIED BY WHAT HE DOES¹⁰

By Peter H. Davids

*You see that a person is justified
by what he does [works]
and not by faith alone.
JAMES 2:24*

Ever since Martin Luther, Christians have struggled with putting James 2:24 together with such statements of Paul's as "we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law" (Rom. 3:28). It appears at first glance that James is advocating a justification through works and Paul one through faith. This impression grows when we realize that each cites the example of Abraham to support his argument. Are these two authors opposed to one another? Must we choose between the two for our theology? Was Luther correct that James is an "epistle of straw" that contradicts Paul's essential insight into the gospel?

The answer to all of these questions is "No." A surface reading of James and Paul fails to understand what either author was saying. Therefore, we must examine each of the critical terms in the verse in James: "faith," "works" and "justified."

The first term James and Paul have in common is "faith." In James 2:19, the author gives a clear definition of what he means by "faith alone": "Do you believe that God is one?" This is not only the basic creed of Judaism (Deut. 6:4) but also a truth about God that Jews believed Abraham discovered. It is orthodoxy, but in James it is an orthodoxy totally separated from obedience ("You have faith; I have deeds," 2:18), an orthodoxy that demons have as well. Elsewhere James gives a different definition of faith. The faith of James 1:6 and 2:1 is that of personal commitment, which includes trust and obedience; in contrast, the faith that James sees his opponents claiming in 2:14-26 is orthodoxy without action.

Paul also has a definition of faith, which he gives in Romans 10:9-10. Faith means a commitment to a living Lord Jesus and a confession that "Jesus is Lord." This is similar to the relational trust type of faith that James refers to in Chapter 1. In Galatians 5:6, Paul goes on to state that in Christ the issue is not one of Jewish rituals (circumcision), but of "faith working through love." This faith-love pairing is not accidental, for it occurs repeatedly in Paul (see I Cor. 13:13; I Thess. 1:3; 3:6). Love, of course, is not a feeling or emotion, but loving action, that is, deeds or works. For Paul, then, faith is a commitment to Jesus as Lord that results in a life of love. If the love is lacking (as "the

¹⁰ Taken from *More Hard Sayings of the New Testament* by Peter H. Davids, 1991, pages 129-134. Used with permission.

deeds to the flesh" or "unrighteousness" show), then such a person is no heir of God's kingdom (I Cor. 6:9-10).

Since James (in 2:14-26) and Paul are using different definitions of faith, it is not surprising that they use the example of Abraham differently. For Paul (in Rom. 4 and Gal. 3), the critical issue is that Abraham was declared righteous in Genesis 15:6, which comes chronologically before the institution of circumcision in Genesis 17. Since ritual law is the issue for Paul, as we will see below, the fact that Genesis 15 comes after significant acts of obedience by Abraham (such as leaving Haran to journey to Palestine) is no problem. For James, on the other hand, the critical issue is that the declaration of actual righteousness in Genesis 22:12 shows that the faith referred to in Genesis 15:6 is not mere orthodoxy but a trust leading to actual righteous deeds, so that "[his] faith worked together with his deed and the faith was completed by the deeds" (Jas. 2:22). In other words, the two men come at the Abraham narrative from different directions, using different definitions of faith, and as a result argue for complementary rather than contradictory conclusions.

The second term James and Paul share is "works" or "deeds," the Greek word *ergon*. In the verse cited above (seen against the wider context of Jas. 2:14-26), James is clearly arguing for certain works. The two deeds he cites are (1) Abraham's offering of Isaac and (2) Rahab's hospitality to the spies. Within the Epistle he mentions other acts of charity and the control of language. These fit well with Abraham's act, for in Jewish eyes this offering was the culmination of a lifetime of obedience to God and charity toward others. The fact that Isaac was not sacrificed was seen as a declaration of Abraham's righteousness. Furthermore, Rahab's hospitality, like some of Abraham's actions, was viewed as an act of charity. We are not surprised, then, to discover that charity is the issue that begins the argument leading to our verse (2:14-17). Thus the works James is arguing for are good deeds (charitable acts, generosity).

Paul is clearly against certain works as a means of becoming righteous, but the works he is against are "the works of the law," a phrase also found in the Dead Sea Scrolls, but never used by James. The "of the law" is always present, at least in the near context, when Paul speaks negatively of works. What are these deeds? The principal one Paul mentions is circumcision, although he also speaks of the observance of (Jewish) holy days and (Jewish) dietary laws. In other words, while Paul never mentions charity and other good deeds in these negative contexts, he is against those cultic acts of the Mosaic Law that set apart a Jew from a Gentile. This fits the context of the Pauline letters, for the issue he is facing is that some Jewish-Christians are demanding that the Gentile believers become proselytes to Judaism to be saved. Paul denies there is any such need to become Jewish, although there is a need to become godly.

There is, then, no real conflict between James and Paul on the issue of works. Just as his use of "faith" is different from James's, so is Paul's use of "works" different. Not only

does Paul always use a phrase James never uses, but in places such as Galatians 5:19-21, he can list evil deeds (similar to James's list in 3:14-16) and then say, "I say to you [now] and I said to you [earlier] that those doing such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." Paul will not separate moral righteousness from eternal salvation.

Perhaps the most misunderstood of the three terms used in common by James and Paul is the Greek word group including *dikaiosyne* ("righteousness"), *dikaiosis* ("justification") and *dikaioo* ("declare righteous," or "justify"). The usual meaning of these words in the Septuagint is for actual righteousness or a declaration of such righteousness (for example, Rom. 1:17; 2:13). James invariably uses these traditional meanings (he never uses *dikaiosis*). Paul, on the other hand, often writes of God's making a sinner righteous (justifying a sinner, Rom. 2:24) or of a righteousness obtained by Christ's being given to the sinner (5:17) or of the resulting state (justification, 4:25; 5:18).

Unfortunately, the Pauline meaning (of which James may well have been ignorant) has dominated Protestant thinking since the Reformation and has been read into James by many translations (as the KJV, RSV and NIV all do in Jas. 2). This creates an artificial conflict between James and Paul. James, on the one hand, is asking how God knew Abraham was righteous when he made the statement in Genesis 22:12, and how the reader can know that the faith in Genesis 15:6 was a trust that actually made Abraham righteous. The answer is, from his deeds. And without such deeds any claim of righteousness or of faith is empty. Paul, on the other hand, is pointing out that both Jews and Gentiles are equally short of God's standard of righteous judgment, and thus the issue is how God will make the unrighteous righteous. The answer is, not through cultic ritual but through commitment to (faith in) Jesus Christ. The two authors use their terms in different ways because they address different issues.

It is clear, then, that James and Paul are moving in two different worlds. In James's world Jewish ritual is not an issue (perhaps because all of those in his church are Jews), but ethics is. His problems are with those who claim to be right with God on the basis of their orthodoxy, although they are ignoring obedience issues, especially charity. Abraham and Rahab, in contrast to the demons, demonstrate that saving faith is seen in its deeds. Paul, on the other hand, is concerned about the relationship of Jews and Gentiles in the church. His concern is that commitment to Jesus as Lord is all that is necessary for salvation. A Gentile does not have to become a Jew to enter the kingdom; those ritual deeds that marked the Jew are unnecessary. In the places where Paul does address the issue of whether a person can enter the kingdom while living in sin, he emphatically denies this is possible, agreeing with James.

Paul himself realized that he was at times misunderstood. Some misinterpreted his denial that legal ritual was needed for salvation, making it into an argument that ethical issues were irrelevant to salvation (Rom. 3:8; 6:1; I Cor. 6:12). Paul strongly repudiated these people. It is unclear whether James was contending with an orthodoxy-without-

deeds rooted in Judaism (such as rabbis would later attack) or a misunderstood Paulinism (such as Paul himself attacked). Both are possible backgrounds. It is clear that James is not attacking any actual belief of Paul's, but that Paul could endorse everything James wrote, although given his differing use of vocabulary Paul would not have said it the same way.

This verse, then, remains hard, but it is hard because its teaching is uncomfortable. God is concerned with our deeds, and they are related to whether or not we enter the kingdom. It is not hard because there is any conflict between this teaching and Paul's. The two merely sound contradictory rather than are contradictory. In fact, a lot of the apparent contradiction is due to the misunderstanding of Paul found in Luther and perpetuated by those who fail to put Paul into his proper Jewish background.

If James is dealing with a misunderstood Paulinism, then, it is probable that the sermon in 2:14-26 comes from a period before he met Paul, for it is likely that once they discussed the gospel together James would have cited Paul's own words against anyone who claimed Paul as an authority for such a twisted doctrine as James is countering.

The James-Paul issue, then, is partially a misunderstanding of Paul (stemming, as we noted, from the fact that Luther was concerned with earning his salvation through penance and pious deeds rather than with Jewish ritual, thus a reading of Luther into Paul) and partially a problem of reading Paul into James. In reality, the writings of James and Paul demonstrate a relative harmony, combined with differing spheres of ministry and thus differing perspectives (which are apparent in Galatians and Acts).

FAITH TESTED BY ITS RESORT TO PRAYER (5:13-18)

James brings his tests of a living faith to a logical conclusion by insisting that Christian faith finds its center and power in a vital relationship with God in prayer in all the experiences of life (5:13). Prayer constitutes the very heart of a vital Christian faith.

In verses 14-16a this response is specifically applied to the experience of physical sickness. The "sick," the one physically weak, is to take the initiative by summoning "the elders," the recognized leaders of the local church. Their prayer for the sick is to be offered in connection with an act of anointing with oil, probably as an aid to faith. From verse 15 it is clear that the prayer, not the oil, is viewed as the healing means. "The prayer offered in faith" (5:15) apparently denotes a prayer prayed in the Spirit-wrought conviction that it is God's will to heal the one prayed for. The sickness may be due to sin, but the construction in the original makes it clear that this is not always the case. The results of prayer encourage the practice of mutual confession and prayer (5:16a). The practice removes any possible hindrance to the free operation of God's power.

In verses 16b-18 James encourages the practice of prayer through his positive assertion of its power (5:16b) and his illustration of its mighty impact (5:17-18).

The last two verses (5:19-20) seem best viewed as forming a conclusion to the entire epistle. "If any among you strays from the truth" (5:19) seems to take a final look at the various evils which James has censured in the entire epistle. The verb "turns him back" seems best understood as relating to a believer who has erred from the path of God's truth. Such straying is a serious matter. The one acting to restore the erring one is assured that he has saved his erring brother and thereby a multitude of sins are covered, rather than exposed to open judgment (5:20).

SUMMARY

This survey of James suggests that the key which is found hanging at the front door (1:3) is indeed the proper key to unlock faith, has readily unlocked the door and given ready access to all parts of the house but it also brings into conscious display the fact of the underlying unity of the whole. Its use gives unity and coherence to the entire epistle. It displays the full harmony of this epistle with the rest of the New Testament. James, like Paul, fully believed in "faith working through love" (Gal. 5:6).

This understanding of the Epistle of James heightens its practical and timely message. The author's stern insistence on Christian practice consistent with Christian profession, his open contempt for all sham, and his stinging rebukes of worldliness in its varied forms are notes that are urgently needed in Christendom today. As long as there are professed Christians who are prone to separate profession and practice, the message of this epistle will continue to be relevant.

IS THERE A SECOND CHANCE AFTER DEATH?¹¹

By Gleason Archer

What is the meaning of I Peter 3:19, which speaks of Christ's preaching to the spirits in the prison of Hades? Did He preach the gospel to them and thus give them a chance to be saved even after they had already died? If we carefully examine this sentence in its entire setting, we shall find that it teaches no such thing—which would be quite contrary to Hebrews 9:27: "It is appointed for men to die once, and after this comes judgment."

In the NASB, I Peter 3:18-20 is translated: "For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water" (NASB). It will be observed from the above rendering that the verb translated "preached" in the KJV is not the Greek *euangelizomai* ("to preach or tell the good news"), which would certainly have meant that after His crucifixion Christ really did preach a salvation message to lost souls in Hades; but rather it is *ekeryxen*, from *kerysso* ("proclaim a message," from a king or potentate). All that v. 19 actually says is that Christ made a proclamation to the souls who are now imprisoned in Sheol (Hades).

The contents of that proclamation are not made clear, but there are just two possibilities: (1) the proclamation made by the crucified Christ in Hades to all the souls of the dead may have been to the effect that the price had now been paid for sin, and all those who died in the faith were to get ready for their departure to heaven—shortly to occur on Easter Sunday—or (2) the proclamation may refer to that solemn, urgent warning Noah made to his own generation, that they should take refuge in the ark of safety before the Great Flood would destroy the human race. Of the two options, while the first was undoubtedly a true occurrence (cf. Eph. 4:8), such a proclamation would have been made to all in Hades generally, or else to the redeemed in particular. But the second seems to be the proclamation intended here by Peter, since the only audience mentioned is the generation of Noah, which is now imprisoned in Hades, awaiting the final judgment. This verse means, then, that Christ through the Holy Spirit solemnly warned Noah's contemporaries by the mouth of Noah himself (described in II Peter 2:5 as "a preacher [or 'herald'] of righteousness." Note that "preacher" in this verse is *keryka*, the same root as the *ekeryxen* referred to above in connection with I Peter 3:19).

¹¹ Taken from *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* by Gleason Archer, 1982, pages 428-429. Used with permission.

It seems quite evident, therefore, that the passage under discussion assures us that even back in Noah's day, in His pre-incarnate state, God the Son was concerned with the salvation of sinners. Thus the entire transaction whereby Noah's family was rescued through the ark was a prophetic event, pointing forward to the gracious provision of God through the substitutionary Atonement on a wooden cross—likewise the sole instrument of deliverance from the flood of divine judgment on guilty mankind. In both cases only those who by faith take refuge in God's means of salvation can be rescued from destruction.

This relationship of type-antitype is then spelled out quite explicitly by the apostle in I Peter 3:21: "And corresponding to that [as NASB renders *antitypon*], baptism now saves you—not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal [*eperotema*] to God for a good conscience—through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (NASB). That is to say, repentance for sin and a trust in Jesus alone for salvation on the basis of His atonement and resurrection are what furnish deliverance to the guilty sinner and make it possible for him to obtain "a good conscience" based on a conviction that all his sins have been paid for in full by the blood of Jesus.

In view of the focus on the generation of Noah as corresponding to the lost world of Peter's day (and of every generation since then, we may be sure), we are forced to conclude that the proclamation referred to in v. 19 took place, not when Christ descended into Hades after His death on Calvary, but by the Spirit who spoke through the mouth of Noah during the years while the ark was under construction (v. 20). Therefore v. 19 holds out no hope whatever for a "second chance" for those who reject Christ during their lifetime on earth.

A BIBLICAL STRATEGY FOR CONFRONTING THE CULTS¹²

By A. Duane Litfin

In 1820 a young man named Joseph Smith wandered out into a field where he was allegedly visited by God the Father and God the Son. Over the next decade Smith continued to receive revelations until by 1830 he had written The Book of Mormon. Today his followers, known as the Latter-Day Saints or Mormons, number in the millions around the world.

In 1886 Mary Baker Eddy allegedly recovered from a severe injury by reading the Matthew 9 account of Christ's healing of a paralytic. Mrs. Eddy decided that she had discovered new realms of metaphysical truth and so began writing her major work, Science and Health with a Key to the Scriptures. Her followers today, known as Christian Scientists, number in the millions worldwide.

In 1879 a man named Charles Taze Russell wrote a book entitled Zion's Watchtower and Herald of Christ's Presence. Russell had left an orthodox Presbyterian background to flirt with Seventh day Adventism and then Christadelphianism. Finally he founded his own sect, the Jehovah's Witnesses, who number today in the millions around the world.

These are just three of the more virulent strains of heresy currently plaguing the world. There are many others to match them. For example, a rampant liberalism continues its century-long crusade to erode Christendom's base of sound doctrine. Of more recent origin is the popular but equally deadly heresy of Sun Myung Moon and his Unification Church. Also prominent is a trend toward the many forms of eastern mysticism through groups such as Hare Krishna or gurus such as the Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. Nor should the quasi-religious sects such as the Church of Scientology be overlooked.

Never before has the church faced such a cacophony of false teachers, each trying to drown out the pure, by-grace-through-faith good news of Jesus Christ. The spiritual battle lines are drawn, with God's people arrayed on one side and the false teachers on the other. Christians dare not ignore the battle, nor can they retreat. God has not called His church to a spirit of timidity or fear. The time has come for all who follow the banner of Jesus Christ to stand up and be counted for the Savior, in this, the most significant of all engagements.

¹² "A Biblical Strategy for Confronting the Cults" by A. Duane Litfin is taken from Bibliotheca Sacra (July-September, 1978) pages 232-240. Used with permission.

But how? By what means can Christians today effectively combat the false teachers who are so prevalent? Marching orders from above are required, an offensive and defensive strategy for confronting false doctrine and those who expose it.

The Book of Jude provides this divine direction. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Jude lays out a threefold strategy whereby Christians may confront the cults.

It is not altogether clear who wrote Jude, when it was written or to whom it was written. Probably the best estimate is that the epistle was written by the younger brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3), sometime between A.D. 75 and 90, to an audience of Jewish Christians scattered abroad. What is clear, however, is that the epistle is a brief and hastily written tract designed to combat the false teachers of the day and exhort believers to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (v. 3).

Verses 1-16 of the epistle, therefore, comprise a series of scathing denunciations of false teachers. Using some of the most vivid language of the New Testament, Jude lays bare the motives and the mischief of these men who have "crept in unnoticed" to spread their poison.

But then in verse 17 a major shift takes place. Jude turns directly to his readers and twice addresses them frontally with the words, "but you, beloved" (vv. 17, 20). This represents a change in focus for the concluding nine verses of the letter. From denouncing the false teachers, Jude now begins to instruct his readers as to how they are to respond to such men. Embedded in these verses may be found the Holy Spirit's threefold strategy for confronting the confusion of the cults.

BE PREPARED MENTALLY

The first aspect of this strategy is to be prepared mentally for the false teachers. Says Jude, "But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; that they were saying to you, 'in the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts.' These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the spirit" (vv. 17-19).

Though the identity of the immediate recipients of this epistle is not clear, the readers had been instructed by the Apostles. They had been taught that the false teachers would certainly appear and they were given a portrait of how these apostles of darkness would look. Jude says that the first step in confronting the false teachers is to hearken back to that teaching as a way of fortifying themselves mentally for the onslaught.

Jude knew that the worst thing that can happen to soldiers in a battle is for them to be taken off guard by a surprise attack. On the other hand, Jude also knew that to understand the character of the enemy and have a measure of his strength, to comprehend his tactics and possess a blueprint of his plan of attack is the best possible advantage. This is precisely what the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Apostles provide.

Recourse to this divine portrait is always the first line of defense against false teachers. Christians ought not be surprised to see an influx of heresy, but should expect it and prepare for it. The New Testament paints a detailed portrait of the future in brilliant colors for the discerning Christian, and that portrait ought to be studied diligently as a sort of biblical briefing on the battles to come.

Some, of course, argue that Christians ought to avoid studying what the Bible says about these future developments. But such an attitude is unacceptable for a simple reason: no teaching of the Scriptures, however difficult, can be ignored. It is there to instruct the reader (II Tim. 3:16) and must not be shunted to one side simply because it requires diligent study to understand accurately. God has given these truths to provide believers with an understanding of what to expect from the future, so that they can be prepared for it, and it is a dangerous thing to ignore that teaching.

To be sure, the study of what the Bible says about the future can be abused. For some, the subject is pursued to satisfy idle curiosity or to fuel discussions which are no more than "doubtful disputations." But this is no argument against the study of eschatology *per se*. God did not provide these glimpses of the future to satisfy idle minds, but rather to prepare His people for what is to come. In this way, those who have given their attention to these teachings will not be confused and taken off guard by unfolding events and the lies of false teachers, but will be prepared to see the providential hand of God guiding human history. They will be alert and ready to do battle with the enemy for the cause of their King, the Lord Jesus Christ.

BE PREPARED SPIRITUALLY

The second aspect of the believer's strategy for confronting false teachers is to be prepared spiritually. Says Jude, "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life" (vv. 20-21).

When medical authorities have reason to believe an epidemic may develop, standard procedure is to inoculate the population against it. Building up each individual's internal immunological system to withstand the infection is a major way of combating disease. This is similar to the exhortation Jude gives his readers here. The disease of false teachers is certain to arise, and the best thing believers can do to withstand the

malady is to develop their spiritual immunological resources. Jude suggests four elements for this program of immunization.

The first element in the believer's spiritual fortification against false teaching is to become a mature Christian with a mature understanding of sound doctrine. This is what Jude speaks of when he exhorts his readers to "build yourselves up on your most holy faith" (v. 20). The term faith here is clearly a reference to "the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (v. 3), i.e., the corpus of apostolic doctrine. To combat false doctrine believers must first be well grounded in sound doctrine.

In Ephesians 4:13-14 the Apostle Paul notes that the spiritually mature man is the one who is no longer a child, "tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness and deceitful scheming." Indeed, false teachers have little influence on such a man, for he has been built up with the "solid food" of sound doctrine, instead of the mere "milk" of superficial understanding. "For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil" (Heb. 5:13-14). A mature Christian with a deep understanding of sound doctrine is in a strong position to withstand false teachers.

Yet, important as a deep understanding of Bible doctrine may be, it is not enough in itself. That understanding must be accompanied by a vital relationship to God. Thus Jude cites a second element in the believer's program of spiritual fortification: "praying in the Holy Spirit" (v. 20).

An effective prayer life is crucial to any believer who would confront and withstand false teachers. It is no accident that Paul concludes his great passage on spiritual warfare with the words, "with all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit" (Eph. 6:18). To win in this battle, one must walk with God and experience the power that only such a relationship can bring. Thus he must be one who prays well, as the Lord did and as the disciples wanted to do (Luke 11:1). As Lindsell writes,

Prayer is necessary because its absence is the surest means of cutting oneself off from God, permitting the spiritual life to wither. Prayerlessness produces sterility of spiritual perception, a life without holiness, and a witness without power. Indeed, the richest of life's blessing cannot be secured save by prayer, as Christ himself taught (Mark 9:29). It is essential to the cultivation and development of the spiritual life.

The third element in the believer's spiritual fortification against false teachers is found in verse 21. Not only must a Christian be well grounded in sound doctrine and

maintain a vital relationship to God through prayer, but he must also lead an exemplary, obedient life. Jude says, "Keep yourselves in the love of God."

These words at first appear difficult to understand. How does one keep himself in the love of God? The teaching of the Lord is the key to the puzzle. In John 15:9 Jesus instructs the disciples to "abide [keep yourselves] in My love." But how were they to do that? The next verse provides the answer: "If you keep My commandments you will abide in My love." The way a believer keeps himself in the love of God is by living a life of obedience.

The first requirement of a good soldier is that he obey the commands of his superiors. It is no different with Christians in their spiritual battle. False teachers will deny the Savior (v. 4), refuse to submit themselves to proper authority (v. 8), and reject the truth (v. 10), all of which will lead certainly to their doom. The good soldier of Jesus Christ, by contrast, must be one who takes seriously Christ's commands and obeys them scrupulously.

The fourth element in the believer's spiritual fortification is that he must keep his eyes on the ultimate goal of the battle, the culmination of all things toward which human history is moving. Thus Jude exhorts his readers to "wait anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life." This is not a reference to the personal salvation of the individual so much as it refers to the events of the day of the Lord when God shall bring all of human history to its conclusion.

In a passage parallel to the Book of Jude (II Pet. 3), Peter tells his readers that false teachers would mock the apostolic teaching concerning the second coming of Christ and its concomitant events, but instructs the believers to pay no attention. Rather, they were to keep their eyes fastened on that future goal and live in light of their knowledge of its sure coming (3:11-14). This is essentially what Jude is saying to his readers as well. Believers must always see the present in light of the future, for it is only when they view the present struggle in terms of God's hand bringing all things to Himself that they are able to understand human events and respond to them adequately.

Thus the Christian who will tend to be spiritually resistant to the disease of the false teachers is the Christian who is marked by these characteristics: he combines a deep understanding of sound doctrine with a vital relationship to God through prayer, a life of obedience to the Savior, and a profound sense of anticipation of and participation in God's culminating work in history.

The third aspect of the Christian's strategy for confronting false teachers is to be prepared to step out and take the offensive in battle. So far, Jude has outlined two major aspects of defensive preparation, for until one is prepared to protect himself in battle he is not ready to take the offensive. But it is equally true that if one is unwilling

to press the battle to the enemy, even after preparing his defenses, the battle will never be won. Thus Jude exhorts his readers to contest courageously the territory for the cause of the Savior.

In international warfare, battles are most often fought over issues relating to real estate. In the believer's spiritual battle with the forces of evil, however, the contested territory is not terra firma but the minds and hearts of men and women. Thus Jude instructs his readers to do battle with the false teachers for the most precious of all earthly things, human souls.

Jude notes three classes of people Christians must deal with and he suggests three different responses. The first group consists of those who are doubting or wavering in their faith. These, Jude writes, believers ought to try to convince, reprove, or correct (v. 22).

It is not uncommon to see one who professes to be Christian flirting with error. He studies it with a frightening openness to its influence and gradually doubts begin to arise. He is perceptively wavering. His grasp on sound doctrine is slipping and he needs help. At this point, mature Christians need to step in and help him regain his balance by pointing out the error of the false doctrine and the truth of sound doctrine. This, of course, requires that the mature brother have a clear understanding of sound doctrine himself, as has already been noted. It also seems to be an appropriate place for a forceful apologetic for the truth of the gospel.

A second group of people are those who are on the verge of slipping off into apostasy. They are not merely wavering, but rather have all but embraced the heresy of the false teachers. The proper response to this group, Jude says, is to "save" them, "snatching them out of the fire" (v. 23a). This last phrase is a clear reference to either or both of two passages in the Old Testament where Israel is said to be like a "brand plucked from the fire" of destruction by Jehovah (Amos 4:11; Zech. 3:2). The reference carries with it the twin aspects of drastic action coupled with last-minute salvation.

Christians do not usually speak of one person "saving" another. Ultimately, it is God alone who saves. Yet in another sense it is possible for one man to "save" another. As James writes, "My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death" (James 5:19-20). God may want to use one person to keep another from falling into apostasy. This seems to be what Jude has in mind here.

Jude does not stipulate which tactics would be appropriate in attempting to "save" a brother and which would be going too far. Certainly there would have to be some limitations. Yet the use of drastic action is definitely implied here and Christians ought to take seriously its implications for today. Would this passage, for example, justify the

kidnapping techniques of Ted Patrick, the so-called "deprogrammer" who has attempted to retrieve many young people from the clutches of the cults? Perhaps by other biblical principles one ought to judge such an approach unacceptable. Nevertheless, Christians need to give serious attention as to how legitimately to snatch these blinded people from the fire.

The third category consists of those who are already too far gone. They have now embraced apostasy and turned their back on the truth. On these, says Jude, "Have mercy" (v. 23b).

Some believers may tend to respond to those who have rejected the truth by gloating over their certain destruction. This would be a very natural response since any form of rejection is generally painful. Yet Christians must be supernaturally motivated and such a response is unworthy of the name by which they are called. When reviled, Jesus Christ did not revile in return, but rather loved and prayed for His enemies (Luke 23:34; I Pet. 2:23). Likewise, the believer is here exhorted to have mercy on those who are headed for destruction. This does not mean, of course, that a Christian can afford to take apostasy lightly or fraternize with it in any way (II John 7-11). Indeed Jude tells his readers to be fearful of it (cf. Gal. 6:1), "hating even the garment polluted by the flesh" (Jude 23). Yet the Christian is to be merciful toward those individuals who have been caught up in false doctrine, for this is no less than the response of the Savior himself.

CONCLUSION

This brief paragraph from the Epistle of Jude provides the church with a workable strategy for confronting the false teachers. It is a strategy based on God's dual provision for the believer's spiritual welfare: (1) God has given Christians a blueprint of the enemy's plans, and (2) He has given them the spiritual wherewithal to fortify themselves against the enemy's attacks. Now the task of God's people is to prepare themselves accordingly and to press the battle to the enemy, so that the Savior's cause may be upheld and God may receive great glory to Himself. No battle could be fought for a worthier goal, for as Jude wrote, "To Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen" (vv. 24-25).

DID JUDE ERR WHEN HE CITED NON-BIBLICAL SOURCES?

By Gleason Archer

Jude 9 and Jude 14 are the passages that raise this question. Verse 9 refers to a controversy between the archangel Michael and the Devil in regard to the disposition of the body of Moses after he had died on Mount Pisgah: "But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, 'The Lord rebuke you!'" This account is not found in the Old Testament but is thought to have been included in a Christian treatise (now lost) entitled "The Assumption of Moses" (cf. Buttrick, *Interpreter's Dictionary*, 3:450), at least according to Origen (*On the Principles* 3.2.1).

It would be a logical fallacy to argue, however, that an inspired biblical author like Jude was strictly limited to the contents of the canonical Old Testament for all valid information as to the past. Both Stephen (in Acts 7) and the Lord Jesus (in Matt. 23) refer to historical episodes not recorded in the Old Testament. Apparently there was a valid and accurate body of oral tradition available to believers in the New Testament period; and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they were perfectly able to report such occurrences in connection with their teaching ministry. We are to deduce from this passage, then, that there was such a contest waged by the representatives of heaven and hell over the body of Moses.

The same observation applies to Jude 14 and the quotation from the antediluvian patriarch Enoch. In this case the pseudepigraphical work has been preserved in which this same quotation is found (though the Book of Enoch is not extant in any translation as old as the time of Jude). Enoch is quoted as predicting: "Behold the Lord has come [probably the Greek aorist *elthen* represents a prophetic perfect in Hebrew or Aramaic, and therefore it can be construed as 'shall come'] with His holy myriad's, to execute judgment against all and to rebuke all the ungodly for all their deeds of ungodliness that they have perpetrated and for all the cruel things they have said against Him as the ungodly sinners that they are."

Here we have a remarkable example of a powerful prophetic utterance coming down to us from before the time of Noah. The mere fact that Genesis does not include this statement by Enoch furnishes no evidence against his having said it. This by no means demonstrates that everything in the Book of Enoch is historically accurate or theologically valid. Much of Enoch may be quite fictional. But there is no good ground for condemning everything that is written therein as false, simply because the book is non-canonical. Even a pagan work could contain items of truth, as is attested to by Paul when he quoted Aratus's *Phaenomena* 5 to his Athenian audience (Acts 17:28).

THE LOVE GOD HATES¹³

I John 2:12-17

By Warren W. Wiersbe

A group of first-graders had just completed a tour of a hospital, and the nurse who had directed them was asking for questions. Immediately a hand went up.

"How come the people who work here are always washing their hands?" a little fellow asked.

After the laughter had subsided, the nurse gave a wise answer:

"They are 'always washing their hands' for two reasons. First, they love health; and second, *they hate germs*. "

In more than one area of life, love and hate go hand in hand. A husband who loves his wife is certainly going to exercise a hatred for what would harm her. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil" (Ps. 97:10). "Let love be without hypocrisy. *Abhor* what is evil; cleave to what is good" (Rom. 12:9, NAS).

John's epistle has reminded us to exercise love (I John 2:7-11) – the right kind of love. Now it warns us that there is a *wrong* kind of love, a love that God hates. This is love for what the Bible calls "the world."

There are four reasons why Christians should not love "the world."

1. Because of What the World Is

¹³ Taken from *Be Real* by Warren W. Wiersbe, 1972, pages 65-82. Used with permission.

The New Testament word *world* has at least three different meanings. It sometimes means the *physical* world, *the earth*: "God that made the world [our planet] and all things therein" (Acts 17:24). It also means the *human* world, *mankind*: "For God so loved the world" (John 3:16). Sometimes these two ideas appear together: "He [Jesus] was in the world, and the world [earth] was made by Him, and the world [mankind] knew Him not" (John 1:10).

But the warning, "Love not the world!" is not about the world of nature or the world of men. Christians ought to appreciate the beauty and usefulness of the earth God has made, since He "giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (I Tim. 6:17). And they certainly ought to love people – not only their friends, but even their enemies.

This "world" named here as our enemy is an invisible spiritual system opposed to God and Christ.

We use the word *world* in the sense of *system* in our daily conversation. The TV announcer says, "We bring you the news from the world of sports." "The world of sports" is not a separate planet or continent. It is an organized system, made up of a set of ideas, people, activities, purposes, etc. And "the world of finance" and "the world of politics" are likewise systems of their own. Behind what we see, in sports or finance, is an invisible system that we cannot see; it is the system that "keeps things going."

"The world," in the Bible, is Satan's system for opposing the work of Christ on earth. It is the very opposite of what is godly (I John 2:16) and holy and spiritual. "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one" (5:19, NAS). Jesus called Satan "the prince of this world" (John 12:31). The devil has an organization of evil spirits (Eph. 6:11, 12) working with him and influencing the affairs of "this world."

Just as the Holy Spirit uses people to accomplish God's will on earth, so Satan uses people to fulfill his evil purposes. Unsaved people, whether they realize it or not, are energized by "the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:1, 2).

Unsaved people belong to "this world." Jesus calls them "the children of this world" (Luke 16:8). When Jesus was here on earth, the people of "this world" did not understand Him, nor do they now understand those of us who trust Him (I John 3:1). A Christian is a member of the *human* world, and he lives in the *physical* world, but he does not belong to the *spiritual* world that is Satan's system for opposing God. "If ye were of the world [Satan's system], the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you" (John 15:18).

"The world," then, is not a natural habitat for a believer. The believer's citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20, NAS), and all his effective resources for living on earth come from his Father in heaven.

The believer is somewhat like a scuba diver. The water is not man's natural habitat, for he is not equipped for life in (or under) it. When a scuba diver goes under, he has to take special equipment with him so that he can breathe.

Were it not for the Holy Spirit's living within us, and the spiritual resources we have in prayer, Christian fellowship, and the Word, we could never "make it" here on earth. We complain about the pollution of earth's atmosphere—the atmosphere of "the world" is also so polluted spiritually that Christians cannot breathe normally!

But there is a second—and more serious—reason why Christians must not love the world.

2. Because of What the World Does to Us

"If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (I John 2:15).

Worldliness is not so much a matter of *activity* as of *attitude*. It is possible for a Christian to stay away from questionable amusements and doubtful places and still love the world, for worldliness is a matter of the heart. To the extent that a Christian loves the world system and the things in it, he does *not* love the Father.

Worldliness not only affects your response to the love of God; it also affects your response *to the will of God*. "The world passeth away . . . but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (I John 2:17).

Doing the will of God is a joy for those living in the love of God. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." But when a believer loses his enjoyment of the Father's love, he finds it hard to obey the Father's will.

When you put these two factors together, you have a practical definition of worldliness: anything in a Christian's life that causes him to lose his enjoyment of the Father's love or his desire to do the Father's will is worldly and must be avoided. Responding to the Father's love (your personal devotional life), and doing the Father's will (your daily conduct)—these are two tests of worldliness.

Many things in this world are definitely wrong and God's Word identifies them as sins. It is wrong to steal and to lie (Eph. 4:25, 28). Sexual sins are wrong (Eph. 5:1-3). About these and many other actions, Christians can have little or no debate. But there are areas of Christian conduct that are not so clear and about which even the best Christians

disagree. In such cases, each believer must apply the test to his own life and be scrupulously honest in his self-examination, remembering that even a *good* thing may rob a believer of his enjoyment of God's love and his desire to do God's will.

A senior student in a Christian college was known for his excellent grades and his effective Christian service. He was out preaching each weekend and God was using Him to win the souls and challenge Christians.

Then something happened: his testimony was no longer effective, his grades began to drop, and even his personality seemed to change. The president called him in.

"There's been a change in your life and your work," the president said, "and I wish you'd tell me what's wrong."

The student was evasive for a time, but then he told the story. He was engaged to a lovely Christian girl and was planning to get married after graduation. He had been called to a fine church and was anxious to move his new bride into the parsonage and get started in the pastorate.

"I've been so excited about it that I've even come to the place where I don't want the Lord to come back!" he confessed. "And then the power dropped out of my life."

His plans—good and beautiful as they were—came between him and the Father. He lost his enjoyment of the Father's love. He was worldly!

John points out that the world system uses three devices to trap Christians: the lust (desire) of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (I John 2:16). These same devices trapped Eve back in the Garden: "And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food [*the lust of the flesh*], and that it was pleasant to the eyes [*the lust of the eyes*], and a tree to be desired to make one wise [*the pride of life*], she took of the fruit" (Gen. 3:6).

The lust of the flesh includes anything that appeals to man's fallen nature. "The flesh" does not mean "the body." Rather, it refers to the basic nature of unregenerate man that makes him blind to spiritual truth (I Cor. 2:14). Flesh is the nature we receive in our physical birth; spirit is the nature we receive in the second birth (John 3:5, 6). When we trust Christ, we become "partakers of the divine nature" (II Peter 1:4). A Christian has both the old nature (flesh) and the new nature (Spirit) in his life. And what a battle these two natures can fight (Gal. 5:17-23)!

God has given man certain desires, and these desires are good. Hunger, thirst, weariness, and sex are not at all evil in themselves. There is nothing wrong about eating, drinking, sleeping, or begetting children. But when the flesh nature controls

them, they become sinful "lusts." Hunger is not evil, but gluttony is sinful. Thirst is not evil, but drunkenness is a sin. Sleep is a gift of God, but laziness is shameful. Sex is God's precious gift when used rightly, but when used wrongly it becomes immorality.

Now you can see how the world operates. It appeals to the normal appetites and tempts us to satisfy them in forbidden ways. In today's world we are surrounded by all kinds of allurements that appeal to our lower nature—and "the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41). If a Christian yields to it, he will get involved in the "works of the flesh" (Gal. 5:19-21 gives us the ugly list).

It is important that a believer remember what God says about his old nature, the flesh. Everything God says about the flesh is *negative*. In the flesh there is *no good thing* (Rom. 7:18). The flesh profits *nothing* (John 6:63). A Christian is to put *no confidence* in the flesh (Phil. 3:3). He is to make *no provision* for the flesh (Rom. 13:14). A person who lives for the flesh is living a negative life.

The second device that the world uses to trap the Christian is called "the lust of the eyes." We sometimes forget that the eyes can have an appetite! (Have you ever said, "Feast your eyes on this"?)

The lust of the flesh appeals to the lower appetites of the old nature, tempting us to indulge them in sinful ways. The lust of the eyes, however, operates in a more refined way. In view here are pleasures that gratify the sight and the mind—sophisticated and intellectual pleasures. Back in the days of the Apostle John, the Greeks and Romans lived for entertainments and activities that excited the eyes. Times have not changed very much! In view of television, perhaps every Christian's prayer ought to be, "Turn away my eyes from looking at vanity" (Ps. 119:37, NAS).

Achan (Josh. 7), a soldier, brought defeat to Joshua's army because of the lust of his eyes. God had warned Israel not to take any spoils from the condemned city of Jericho, but Achan did not obey. He explained: "When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and 200 shekels of silver, then I coveted them, and took them" (v. 21). The lust of the eyes led him into sin, and his sin led the army into defeat.

The eyes (like the other senses) are a gateway into the mind. The lust of the eyes, therefore, can include intellectual pursuits that are contrary to God's Word. There is pressure to make Christians *think* the way the world thinks. God warns us against "the counsel of the ungodly." This does not mean that Christians ignore education and secular learning; it *does* mean they are careful not to let intellectualism crowd God into the background.

The third device is the "boastful pride of life" (NAS). God's glory is rich and full; man's glory is vain (AV) and empty. In fact, the Greek word for "pride" was used to describe a

braggart who was trying to impress people with his importance. People have always tried to outdo others in their spending and their getting. The boastful pride of life motivates much of what such people do.

Why is it that so many folks buy houses, cars, appliances, or wardrobes *that they really cannot afford*? Why do they succumb to the "travel now, pay later" advertising and get themselves into hopeless debt taking vacations far beyond their means? Largely because they want to impress other people—because of their "pride of life." They may want folks to notice how affluent or successful they are.

Most of us do not go that far, but it is amazing what stupid things people do just to make an impression. They even sacrifice honesty and integrity in return for notoriety and a feeling of importance.

Yes, the world appeals to a Christian through the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. And once the world takes over in one of these areas, a Christian will soon realize it. He will lose his enjoyment of the Father's love and his desire to do the Father's will. The Bible will become boring and prayer a difficult chore. Even Christian fellowship may seem empty and disappointing. It is not that there is something wrong with others, however—what's wrong is the Christian's worldly heart.

It is important to note that no Christian becomes worldly all of a sudden. Worldliness creeps up on a believer; it is a gradual process. First is the *friendship of the world* (James 4:4). By nature, the world and the Christian are enemies ("Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you," I John 3:13). A Christian who is a friend of the world is an enemy of God.

Next, the Christian becomes "*spotted by the world*" (James 1:27). The world leaves its dirty marks on one or two areas of his life. This means that gradually the believer accepts and adopts the ways of the world.

When this happens, the world ceases to hate the Christian and starts to love him! So John warns us, "Love not the world!"—but too often our friendship with the world leads to love. As a result, the believer becomes *conformed to the world* (Rom. 12:2) and you can hardly tell the two apart.

Among Christians, worldliness rears its ugly head in many subtle and unrecognized forms. Sometimes we tend to idolize great athletes, TV stars, or political leaders who profess to be Christians—as if these individuals were able to be of special help to Almighty God. Or we cater to wealthy and "influential" persons in our local church, as if God's work would fold up without their good will or financial backing. *Many* forms of worldliness do not involve reading the wrong books and indulging in "carnal" amusements.

Sad to say, being *conformed* to the world can lead a Christian into being "*condemned with the world*" (I Cor. 11:32). If a believer confesses and judges this sin, God will forgive him, but if he does not confess, God must lovingly chasten him. When a Christian is "*condemned with the world*," he does not lose his sonship. Rather, he loses his testimony and his spiritual usefulness. And in extreme cases, Christians have even lost their lives! (Read I Cor. 11:29, 30.)

The downward steps and their consequences are illustrated in the life of Lot (Gen. 13:5-13; 14:8-14; Chapter 19). First Lot looked toward Sodom. Then he pitched his tent toward Sodom in the well-watered plains of Jordan. Then he moved into Sodom. And when Sodom was captured by the enemy, Lot was captured, too. He was a believer (II Peter 2:6-8), but he had to suffer with the unbelieving sinners of that wicked city. And when God destroyed Sodom, everything Lot lived for went up in smoke! Lot was saved so as by fire and lost his eternal reward (I Cor. 3:12-15).

No wonder John warns us not to love the world!

3. Because of What a Christian Is

But this raises a practical and important question about the nature of a Christian and how he keeps from getting worldly.

The answer is found in the unusual form of address used in I John 2:12-14. Note the titles used as John addresses his Christian readers: "little children . . . fathers . . . young men . . . little children."

What is he referring to?

To begin with, "little children" (v. 12) refers to *all believers*. Literally, this word means "born ones." *All* Christians have been born into God's family through faith in Jesus Christ, and their sins have been forgiven. The very fact that one is in God's family, sharing His nature, ought to discourage him from becoming friendly with the world. To be friendly with the world is treachery! "Friendship with the world is enmity with God . . . whosoever therefore will be [wants to be] a friend of the world is the enemy of God" (cf. James 4:4).

But something else is true: we begin as little children—born ones—but *we must not stay that way!* Only when a Christian grows spiritually does he overcome the world.

John mentions three kinds of Christians in a local church family: fathers, young men, and little children (I John 2:12-14). The "fathers," of course, are mature believers who have an intimate personal knowledge of God. Because they know God, they know the

dangers of the world. No Christian who has experienced the joys and wonders of fellowship with God, and of service for God, will want to live on the substitute pleasures this world offers.

The "young men" are the conquerors: they have overcome the wicked one, Satan, who is the prince of this world system. How did they overcome him? Through the Word of God! "I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the Word of God abideth in you" (v. 14). The "young men," then, are not yet fully mature; but they are maturing, for they use the Word of God effectively. The Word is the only weapon that will defeat Satan (Eph. 6:17).

The "little children" addressed in I John 2:13 are not those addressed in verse 12; two different Greek words are used. The word in verse 13 carries the idea of "immature ones," or little children still under the authority of teachers and tutors. These are young Christians who have not yet grown up in Christ. Like physical children, these spiritual children know their father, but they still have some growing to do.

Here, then, is the Christian family! All of them are "born ones," but some of them have grown out of infancy into spiritual manhood and adulthood. *It is the growing, maturing Christian to whom the world does not appeal.* He is too interested in loving his Father and in doing his Father's will. The attractions of the world have no allure for him. He realizes that the things of the world are only toys, and he can say with Paul, "When I became a man, I put away childish things" (I Cor. 13:11).

A Christian stays away from the world because of what the world is (a Satanic system that hates and opposes Christ), because of what the world does to us (attracts us to live on sinful substitutes), and because of what he (the Christian) is—a son of God. He also shuns worldliness.

4. Because of Where the World Is Going

"The world is passing away!" (cf. I John 2:17)

That statement would be challenged by many men today who are confident that the world—the system in which we live—is as permanent as anything can be. But the world is not permanent. The only sure thing about this world system is that it is not going to be here forever. One day the system will be gone, and the pleasant attractions within it will be gone: all are passing away. What is going to last?

Only what is part of the will of God!

Spiritual Christians keep themselves "loosely attached" to this world because they live for something far better. They are "strangers and pilgrims on the earth" (Heb. 11:13).

"For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come" (Heb. 13:14). In Bible times, many believers lived in tents because God did not want them to settle down and feel at home in this world.

John is contrasting two ways of life: a life lived for eternity and a life lived for time. A worldly person lives for the pleasures of the flesh, but a dedicated Christian lives for the joys of the Spirit. A worldly believer lives for what he can see, the lust of the eyes; but a spiritual believer lives for the unseen realities of God (II Cor. 4:8-18). A worldly minded person lives for the pride of life, the vainglory that appeals to men; but a Christian who does the will of God lives for God's approval. And he "abideth forever."

Every great nation in history has become decadent and has finally been conquered by another nation. There is no reason why we should suppose that our nation will be an exception. Some 19 world civilizations, in the past, have slipped into oblivion. There is no reason why we should think that our present civilization will endure forever. "Change and decay in all around I see," wrote Henry F. Lyte (1793-1847), and if our civilization is not eroded by change and decay it will certainly be swept away and replaced by a new order of things at the coming of Christ, which could happen at any time.

Slowly but inevitably, and perhaps sooner than even Christians think, the world is passing away; but the man who does God's will abides forever.

This does not mean that all God's servants will be remembered by future generations. Of the multitudes of famous men who have lived on earth, less than 2,000 have been remembered by any number of people for more than a century.

Nor does it mean that God's servants will live on in their writings or in the lives of those they influenced. Such "immortality" may be a fact, but it is equally true of unbelievers like Karl Marx, Voltaire or Adolf Hitler.

No, we are told here (I John 2:17) that Christians who dedicate themselves to doing God's will—to obeying God—"abide [remain] forever." Long after this world system, with its vaunted culture, its proud philosophies, its egocentric intellectualism, and its godless materialism, has been forgotten, and long after this planet has been replaced by the new heavens and the new earth, God's faithful servants will remain—sharing the glory of God for all eternity.

And this prospect is not limited to Moody, Spurgeon, Luther, or Wesley and their likes—it is open to each and every humble believer. If you are trusting Christ, it is for you.

This present world system is not a lasting one. "The fashion of this world passeth away" (I Cor. 7:31). Everything around us is changing, but the things that are eternal never change. A Christian who loves the world will never have peace or security because he has linked his life with that which is in a state of flux. "He is no fool," wrote missionary martyr Jim Elliot, "who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose."

The New Testament has quite a bit to say about "the will of God." One of the "fringe benefits" of salvation is the privilege of knowing God's will (Acts 22:14). In fact, God *wants us* to be "filled with the knowledge of His will" (Col. 1:9). The will of God is not something that we consult occasionally like an encyclopedia. It is something that completely controls our lives. The issue for a dedicated Christian is not simply, "Is it right or wrong?" or "Is it good or bad?"

The key issue is, "Is *this* the will of God for me?" God wants us to *understand* His will (Eph. 5:17), not just *know* what it is. "He made known His ways unto Moses, His acts unto the children of Israel" (Ps. 103:7). Israel knew *what* God was doing, but Moses knew *why* He was doing it! It is important that we understand God's will for our lives and see the purposes He is fulfilling.

After we know the will of God, we should *do it from the heart* (Eph. 6:6). It is not by talking about the Lord's will that we please Him, but by doing what He tells us (Matt. 7:21). And the more we obey God, the better able we are to "find and follow God's will" (Rom. 12:2, WMS). Discovering and doing God's will is something like learning to swim: you must get in the water before it becomes real to you. The more we obey God, the more proficient we become in knowing what He wants us to do.

God's goal for us is that we will "stand . . . complete in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12). This means to be *mature* in God's will.

A little child constantly asks his parents what is right and what is wrong and what they want him to do or not to do. But as he lives with his parents and experiences their training and discipline, he gradually discovers what their will for him is. In fact, a disciplined child can "read his father's mind" just by watching the parent's face and eyes! An immature Christian is always asking his friends what they think God's will is for him. A mature Christian stands complete in the will of God. He *knows* what the Lord wants him to do.

How does one discover the will of God. The process begins with *surrender*: "Present your bodies a living sacrifice . . . be not conformed to this world . . . that ye may prove [know by experience] what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1, 2). A Christian who loves the world will never know the will of God in this way. The Father shares His secrets with those who obey Him. "If any man is willing to do

His will, he shall know of the doctrine" (John 7:17). And God's will is not a "spiritual cafeteria" where a Christian takes what he wants and rejects the rest! No, the will of God must be accepted in its entirety. This involves a personal surrender to God of one's entire life.

God reveals His will to us through His Word. "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path" (Ps. 119:105). A worldly believer has no appetite for the Bible. When he reads it, he gets little or nothing from it. But a spiritual believer, who spends time daily reading the Bible and meditating on it, finds God's will there and applies it to his everyday life.

We may also learn God's will through circumstances. God moves in wonderful ways to open and close doors. We must test this kind of leading by the Word of God – and not test the Bible's clear teaching by circumstances!

Finally, God leads us into His will through prayer and the working of His Spirit in our hearts. As we pray about a decision, the Spirit speaks to us. An "inner voice" may agree with the leading of circumstances. We are never to follow this "inner voice" alone: we must always test it by the Bible, for it is possible for the flesh (or for Satan) to use circumstances – or "feelings" – to lead us completely astray. To sum it up, a Christian is *in* the world physically (John 17:11), but he is not *of* the world spiritually (v. 14). Christ has sent us *into* the world to bear witness of Him (v. 18). Like a scuba diver, we must live in an alien element, and if we are not careful, the alien element will stifle us. A Christian cannot help being in the world, but when the world is in the Christian, trouble starts!

The world gets into a Christian through his heart: "Love not the world!" Anything that robs a Christian of his enjoyment of the Father's love, or of his desire to do the Father's will, is worldly and must be avoided. Every believer, on the basis of God's Word, must identify those things for himself.

A Christian must decide, "Will I live for the present only, or will I live for the will of God and abide forever?" Jesus illustrated this choice by telling about two men. One built on the sand and the other on the rock (Matt. 7:24-27). Paul referred to the same choice by describing two kinds of material for building: temporary and permanent (I Cor. 3:11-15).

Love for the world is the love God hates. It is the love a Christian must shun at all costs!

DOES I JOHN 3:9 TEACH SINLESS PERFECTION?¹⁴

By Gleason Archer

In KJV I John 3:9 is rendered: "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot commit sin, because he is born of God." In one respect this otherwise adequate translation fails to bring out one very important feature of the *hamartanein* ("to sin") after *ou dynatai* ("not able"): a present infinitive in Greek implies continual or repeated action. (Single action would have been conveyed by the aorist infinitive, *hamartein*.) For this reason some of the more recent translations bring out the true emphasis by rendering it "he cannot go on sinning" (NIV). NASB draws the inference from the present infinitive *hamartanein* that the earlier *poiei* (present indicative) in "doth not commit sin" (KJV) implies "no one who is born of God practices sin," since this stands in contrast to the *hamartanein* of the later clause. This is probably justified, even though it would be wrong to say that the Greek present indicative *necessarily* implies continual action (for it often does not do so).

However, it is necessary to study carefully the sense in which this verb is meant, for even the most mature Christian is susceptible to temptation and may fall into sins of various types (even if not the more heinous sins that are considered under human law as amounting to crime). John teaches very clearly in 1:8: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us." But what he is emphasizing here is the miracle of the new birth (cf. II Cor. 5:17), by which the life of Christ takes possession of

¹⁴ Taken from *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* by Gleason Archer, 1982, pages 423-424. Used with permission.

the believers heart and draws him into a totally new relationship to God and to God's holy will. Instead of being committed to the old principle of "myself first!" he now comes under the lordship of his Savior and makes it his conscious purpose to please God because he loves Him and completely belongs to Him.

In his new capacity as "one who has been born of God" (*gegennemenos* — perfect passive participle — *ek tou theou*), the believer has God's holy seed (*sperma*) within him: and this *sperma* develops and enlarges within him like a seed within a flower pot, until it brings forth leaves, flowers, and fruit — all the while occupying more and more of the pot. The dirt in the soil may defile what touches it, but the function of the growing plant is not to soil but develop the new life and beauty that constantly proceeds from the seed. As the believer consciously abides in Christ (v. 6, *ho en auto menon*) and has his gaze fixed on Jesus (Heb. 12:2), he does not fall into sin but runs his race well, to the glory of God.

As for the special force of *hamartia* here, we should pay special attention to v. 4: 'Everyone who commits/practices [present participle] sin [*hamartian*] also practices lawlessness [*anomia*].' The Devil is then referred to as the archetype, model, and patron of lawlessness (v. 8); and it is he (and of course those who are under his control) whose business it is to practice sin as lawlessness. In other words, Scripture is distinguishing between the two great families in the universe: the children of light (1:7) and the children of darkness and disobedience (1:6).

What characterizes a true child of God is wholehearted commitment to the holy will and standard of God: what characterizes the child of this world (whose spiritual father is really Satan, according to John 8:44) is the commitment to self-seeking, self-deification, and transgression of every kind. This principle had to be stressed by the apostle in this letter, because already the antinomian heretics (who taught that a sinful life was quite permissible to the believer, because grace would cover it all) were confusing his church people: and they were losing their grasp of the holy life as the fruit of a true and living faith. John here reminds us all that the true believer is committed to a life patterned after Christ, and that as the bearer of the seed of Christ (that is, the Holy Spirit) he will constantly practice righteousness. Only the unconverted and the counterfeit will practice a self-seeking, self-asserting life of sin.

DO NOT TAKE HIM INTO YOUR HOUSE OR WELCOME HIM¹⁵

By Peter H. Davids

*If anyone comes to you and does not bring
this teaching, do not take him into
your house or welcome him.
II JOHN 10*

We recognize the problem that schismatic or heretical teaching poses to any church. People begin to listen to the deceptive teaching and may soon end up slipping away to join the sectarian group. Yet II John 10 poses a problem for Scripture readers in that it appears to contradict an important Christian virtue, that of hospitality, not to mention the virtue of love. Is it love not to welcome a person into your house, even if you do not agree with his or her beliefs? Does not hospitality extend even to non-Christians, rather than just the Christians with whom we happen to agree? Furthermore, Christians struggle with knowing how far to take this verse. Does it mean that one may not invite inside the Jehovah's Witness (or the Mormon) who just knocked at the door? Does it mean that it was wrong to say a polite "good morning" to that person? And if it does not mean that, what does it mean?

First, as we saw in our last chapter, it is clear that II John is dealing with a serious problem in the church, not simply minor doctrinal differences or even significant differences over non-central issues. A group of teachers who had left John's church did not "confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh." By this John probably means that these teachers argued that God was too holy to have become truly human, so Jesus only appeared to be a man. In fact, in one way or another his humanity was an illusion. This

¹⁵ Taken from More Hard Sayings of the New Testament by Peter H. Davids, 1991, pages 227-230. Used with permission.

is a problem combated by the Fourth Gospel (John 1:14, "The Word became flesh," as well as many references to Jesus' emotions) and two of the three Johannine Epistles. In other words, these heretics were denying a central part of the gospel rather than arguing over peripheral doctrines, important as some of these doctrines may be.

Second, we noted in a previous chapter that II John is addressed to a church (which he calls "the elect lady"). We need to understand what this church was like. It was normal until the mid-third century for Christians to meet in houses. (It was not until the mid-fourth century that house churches were outlawed and church buildings became the only legitimate place to gather as Christians.) Given the size of rooms in even a large house in those days (due to the limitations of building materials) it is unlikely that a house church would grow beyond about sixty people. In fact, there were many reasons to keep them smaller. Since most people had only their feet for transportation, several small groups conveniently located would be more accessible than a single large group. This also tended to make the churches take on the character of the neighborhood in which they were located. Furthermore, given that the meeting involved a meal (which developed into the symbolic meal presently celebrated in the Eucharist, or Lord's Supper) one would not want to crowd the room too much, for space was needed for tables and dishes of food. Finally, smaller groups enabled the church to attract less attention and thus avoid persecution as much as possible. Most house churches, then, probably served twenty to forty people.

Therefore we need to view the early church as a series of small house churches. While Paul, for example, might write a letter to the church in Rome or Corinth, that single church would in fact be made up of a group of such cells. For example, in Romans 16 Paul greets several house church leaders and their groups by name.

Third, hospitality was important to the early church. Christians would travel from place to place and need safe and wholesome places to stay. Some of these travelers were apostles, prophets or teachers. When such a person came to a church, they not only brought news of the situation of the church in other places, but they also brought a fresh stream of ministry. Lacking our easy access to books and other media, this was an important way for a congregation to increase its knowledge of the faith as it received insights and graces that initially had been given to another congregation and were now shared. We see the synagogue practice, which the early church copied, in Acts 13:15: "Brothers, if you have a message of encouragement for the people, please speak." Furthermore, the house church services were relatively informal, so discussion and questions gave many people an opportunity to share their ideas.

Therefore what II John is referring to is the need to recognize that not every traveling Christian is to be received with such warmth. If in fact it was discovered that the visitor was carrying the serious Christological heresy that John describes, the person was not to be greeted as a brother or sister in Christ (as would have been customary, often

including in those days a kiss on both cheeks). Nor should the person be received into the house church and allowed to spread false teaching there. Otherwise the whole "cell" might become infected with the distorted ideas, and they might later spread them to other house churches, making the whole city church sick (or else splitting the church into two alternative structures, both of which claimed to be the true church).

This verse, then, is not intended to apply to individual Christians greeting people at the doors of their homes, but to churches and house groups. In such contexts it is wise for leaders to be assured of the orthodoxy of visitors before giving them a platform from which they can spread their views, even the platform of an official welcome as a visiting Christian leader. Christian hospitality stops where danger to the well-being of the church begins; love does not go to the extent of endangering one's fellow Christians nor of allowing those who deny the Lord one loves to peddle their wares in that Lord's church.

READING REPORT SHEET No.1

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 199-273. Also read the following articles: "The Unifying Theme of the Epistle of James," and "A Person Is Justified By What He Does" in the Student Guide.

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Percentage of Pages Read _____ GRADE _____

READING REPORT SHEET No.2

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 277-356

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application:

Percentage of Pages Read

 GRADE**READING REPORT SHEET No.3***General Epistles***READ:** Text Book, pages 359-411, and also read, "Is There a Second Chance After Death?" in the Student Guide.Page #

 Quote:

Application:

Page #

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Application:

Page #

 Quote:

Application:

Percentage of Pages Read

 GRADE

READING REPORT SHEET No.4

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 415-505, and also read, “A Biblical Strategy For Confronting the Cults” and “Did Jude Err when he Cited Non-Biblical Sources?” in the Student Guide.

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Application: _____

Percentage of Pages Read _____

GRADE _____

READING REPORT SHEET #5

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 511-538, and also read, “The Love God Hates,” “Does I John 3:9 Teach Sinless Perfection?” and “Do Not Take Him Into Your House or Welcome Him” in the Student Guide.

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Percentage of Pages Read _____ GRADE _____

READING REPORT SHEET #6

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 511-538, and also read, “The Love God Hates,” “Does I John 3:9 Teach Sinless Perfection?” and “Do Not Take Him Into Your House or Welcome Him” in the Student Guide.

Page # _____ Quote: _____

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Percentage of Pages Read _____ GRADE _____

READING REPORT SHEET #7

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 511-538, and also read, “The Love God Hates,” “Does I John 3:9 Teach Sinless Perfection?” and “Do Not Take Him Into Your House or Welcome Him” in the Student Guide.

Page # _____ Quote: _____

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Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Percentage of Pages Read _____ GRADE _____

READING REPORT SHEET #8

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 511-538, and also read, “The Love God Hates,” “Does I John 3:9 Teach Sinless Perfection?” and “Do Not Take Him Into Your House or Welcome Him” in the Student Guide.

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READING REPORT SHEET #9

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 511-538, and also read, “The Love God Hates,” “Does I John 3:9 Teach Sinless Perfection?” and “Do Not Take Him Into Your House or Welcome Him” in the Student Guide.

Page # _____ Quote: _____

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Application: _____

Percentage of Pages Read _____ GRADE _____

READING REPORT SHEET #10

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 511-538, and also read, “The Love God Hates,” “Does I John 3:9 Teach Sinless Perfection?” and “Do Not Take Him Into Your House or Welcome Him” in the Student Guide.

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

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Application: _____

Percentage of Pages Read _____ GRADE _____

READING REPORT SHEET #11

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 511-538, and also read, “The Love God Hates,” “Does I John 3:9 Teach Sinless Perfection?” and “Do Not Take Him Into Your House or Welcome Him” in the Student Guide.

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Percentage of Pages Read _____ GRADE _____

READING REPORT SHEET #12

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 511-538, and also read, “The Love God Hates,” “Does I John 3:9 Teach Sinless Perfection?” and “Do Not Take Him Into Your House or Welcome Him” in the Student Guide.

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Percentage of Pages Read _____ GRADE _____

READING REPORT SHEET #13

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 511-538, and also read, “The Love God Hates,” “Does I John 3:9 Teach Sinless Perfection?” and “Do Not Take Him Into Your House or Welcome Him” in the Student Guide.

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Percentage of Pages Read _____ GRADE _____

READING REPORT SHEET #14

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 511-538, and also read, “The Love God Hates,” “Does I John 3:9 Teach Sinless Perfection?” and “Do Not Take Him Into Your House or Welcome Him” in the Student Guide.

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Page # _____ Quote: _____

Application: _____

Percentage of Pages Read _____ GRADE _____

READING REPORT SHEET #15

General Epistles

READ: Text Book, pages 511-538, and also read, “The Love God Hates,” “Does I John 3:9 Teach Sinless Perfection?” and “Do Not Take Him Into Your House or Welcome Him” in the Student Guide.

Page # _____ Quote: _____

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Application: _____

Percentage of Pages Read _____ GRADE _____

THE PROMISE

The Unifying Center of Scripture¹⁶

1. Genesis 22:16-18

“...and through your seed all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.”

2. Galatians 3:16-19, 29; 4:28

“The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ.” (16)

“For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed to whom the promise referred had come...” (18-19)

“If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.” (29)

“Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise.” (4:28)

¹⁶ Taken from *Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties* by Gleason Archer, 1982, page 430. Used with permission.

3. Acts 2:39; 26:4-7

"The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off--for all whom the Lord our God will call." (2:39)

"And now it is because of my hope in what God has promised our fathers that I am on trial today. This is the promise our twelve tribes are hoping to see fulfilled as they earnestly serve God day and night..." (26:6-7a)

4. Romans 4:13-17; 9:8-9

"It was not through law that Abraham and his offspring received the promise that he would be heir of the world, but through the righteousness that comes by faith. For if those who live by law are heirs, faith has no value and the promise is worthless...Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all." (4:13-14, 16)

"In other words, it is not the natural children who are God's children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring." (9:8)

5. Ephesians 2:12; 3:6

"Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world." (2:12)

"This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." (3:6)

6. 2 Timothy 1:1

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, according to the promise of life that is in Christ Jesus."

7. Hebrews 4:11; 6:13-18; 11:9-16, 39

"Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it...For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his." (4:1, 8-10)

“When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself, saying, ‘I will surely bless you and give you many descendants.’ And so after waiting patiently, Abraham received what was promised...Because God wanted to make the unchanging nature of his purpose very clear to the heirs of what was promised, he confirmed it with an oath.” (6:13-14, 17)

“By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith Abraham, even though he was past age--and Sarah herself was barren--was enabled to become a father because he considered him faithful who had made the promise.” (11:9-11)

“All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth...Instead, they were longing for a better country--a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them.” (11:13, 16)

8. 2 Peter 3:9, 13

“The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.” (9)

“But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.” (13)

9. I John 2:25

“And this is what he promised us--even eternal life.”

GNOSTICISM

One of the most dangerous heresies of the first two centuries of the church was Gnosticism. Its central teaching was that spirit is entirely good and matter is entirely evil. For this unbiblical dualism flower five important errors:

1. Man's body, which is matter, is therefore evil. It is to be contrasted with God, who is wholly spirit and therefore good.
2. Salvation is the escape from the body, achieved not by faith in Christ but by special knowledge (the Greek word for "knowledge" is *gnosis*, hence Gnosticism).
3. Christ's true humanity was denied in two ways: (1) some said that Christ only seemed to have a body, a view called Docetism, from the Greek *dokeo* ("to seem"), and (2) others said that the divine Christ joined the man Jesus at baptism and left him before he died, a view called Cerinthianism, after its most prominent spokesman, Cerinthus. This view is the background of much of I John (see 1:1; 2:22; 4:2-3).
4. Since the body was considered evil, it was to be treated harshly. This ascetic form of Gnosticism is the background of part of the letter to the Colossians (2:21-23).
5. Paradoxically, this dualism also led to licentiousness. The reasoning was that, since matter – and not the breaking of God's law (I John 3:4) – was considered evil, breaking his law was of no moral consequence.

The Gnosticism addressed in the NT was an early form of the heresy, not the intricately developed system of the second and third centuries. In addition to that seen in Colossians and in John's letters, acquaintance with early Gnosticism is reflected in 1, 2 Timothy, Titus, and 2 Peter and perhaps I Corinthians. – *NIV Study Bible*, p. 1906.

The Gnostics believe they had special knowledge of the divine, unattainable by the common individual. John emphasizes what we know about God. Twenty-one verses point out concepts the Christian can and should know about God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

I John 2:3	" We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands."
I John 2:5	"But if anyone obeys his word, God's love is truly made complete in him. This is how we know we are in him."
I John 2:18	"Dear children, this is the last hour; and as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come. This is how we know it is the last hour."
I John 2:20	"but you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth."
I John 2:29	"If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him."
I John 3:2	"Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall be him as he is."

- I John 3:5 "But **you know** that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin."
- I John 3:10 "This is how **we know** who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; neither is anyone who does not love his brother."
- I John 3:14 "**We know** that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death."
- I John 3:15 "Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and **you know** that no murderer has eternal life in him."
- I John 3:16 "This is how **we know** that life is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers."
- I John 3:19 "Then this is how **we know** that we belong to the truth and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us."
- I John 3:24 "Those who obey his commands live in him, and **we know** that he lives in us; **we know** it by the Spirit he gave us."
- I John 4:13 "**We know** that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit."
- I John 4:16 "And so **we know** and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in him."
- I John 5:2 "This is how **we know** that we love the children of God; by loving God and carrying out his commands."
- I John 5:13 "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that **you may know** that you have eternal life."
- I John 5:15 "And if **we know** that he hears us — whatever we ask — **we know** that we have what we asked of him."
- I John 5:18 "**We know** that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one does not touch him."
- I John 5:19 "**We know** that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one."
- I John 5:20 "**We know** also that the Son of God has come and had given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true — even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life."