

First Epistle of John II

Fred R. Coulter—June 4, 1994

I don't think we really have understood or realized how important this epistle is for us today, because history is repeating itself right before our eyes, right in the Churches of God. Now let me read from *An Introduction to the New Testament*, just a little bit more about the background:

The author is clearly intent upon refuting doctrinal errors which are threatening. But the final aim of the writer is practical. Safety of the readers whose establishment in the faith, in the face of these errors is his chief aim and makes it necessary that these errors be refuted.

Now, this is exactly what we are going through today. Now, let's understand something concerning John. Let's go to the book of Revelation, chapter two, for just a minute. And let's connect the writings of John with a very important function of the church at Ephesus. The church at Ephesus was where John finished his ministry. He died in Ephesus. He was temporarily exiled to the island of Patmos, just off the coast from Ephesus, when he was given the vision for the book of Revelation. But notice one of things that they did: Revelation. 2:2: "I know your works, and your labor, and your endurance, and that you cannot bear those who are evil..." Now we are going to see many contrasts:

- good and evil
- light and darkness
- righteousness and sin
- commandment-keeping and not commandment-keeping

—because the whole book of 1-John is a study in, what you might say, *radical contrasts*. One on one hand, one on the other hand as we will see.

"...and *that* you did test those who proclaim *themselves* to be apostles, but are not, **and did find them liars.**" We're also going to find in the book of 1-John many Scriptures which reference to *truth*, which reference to *light*, which reference to *liars*—because all of these things are coming in and attacking the brethren *from within*.

Let's continue on from this *Introduction of the New Testament*:

The problem of the exact nature and identity of the false teachings being controverted in the epistle... [that is, they're *being discussed* there] ...are actually the form or forms of gnosticism.

And that's what I said last week. The reason John went through and showed how many things we are

to know, we are *to comprehend*, we are *to understand*, to combat gnosticism. And "gnosticism" means: *one who knows, who has been enlightened by the divine illuminating one*. And that's exactly the same thing that is happening in the Church today.

Gnosticism was a philosophy of religion.

Now, doesn't that tie right in as we went through in Col. 2 and philosophy and all those things? *Yes!*

Gnosticism professes not to be hostile to the Gospel.

Now, that is a very key important thing to understand. Today, the changes, which are being made in the Truth of the Word of God, profess that they are not hostile to the Word of God.

They say this is *new enlightenment*, this is *new teaching*. But it is an attempt to interpret Christian doctrines from a higher **philosophical** standpoint.

Think of that now. That's exactly what we've been told.

And in reality, it disintegrates and destroys them. Gnosticism has two guiding principles, which run through all their teaching. The first principle was the supremacy of the intellect and superiority of enlightenment and conduct. The Gnostics laid claim to a superior knowledge, which was the privilege of the few—they were the **knowing ones**.

Now, people are told today, that for your faith in God you don't need to understand theology, you leave that to the theologians. So John is coming along, saying in the Epistle of 1-John: 'No, there are basic principles we need to follow.' There's right, there's wrong; there's light, there's darkness; there's good, there's evil; there are lies, there's truth; there's the Spirit of Truth; there's a spirit of error. And ***the whole Epistle of 1-John is based upon the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error***. And this is the same thing which led to the Catholic Church.

The superior insight to which they laid claim led naturally to a sense of pride in themselves as the elite of Christendom, which fostered an unbrotherly contempt for unenlightened members of the Church.

Now, that's another way of saying, they just looked upon the members of the Church to be used, abused and tattooed and pray, pay, stay and obey.

For them, spiritual excellence consisted not in a Holy light, but in a superior knowledge, which enabled a man to rise above the earthbound chains of matter, into heavenly truth. John insisted on the innate relationship between **doctrine** and **conduct**.

And boy, I tell you, that's where we are today in the Church and that's what the Epistle of John is all about—**doctrine** and **conduct! truth** and **light!**

A second guiding principle of the Gnostics was its view that *spirit is good*...[That is, **any kind** of spirit.] ...and matter is inherently evil. These two were regarded as the perpetual antagonism or hostility. And if matter is absolutely evil, it followed that there was no true incarnation of the Son of God.

Now you know why John wrote what he did. Let's go to 1-John 4:1. Now we know why—and we are told almost the same thing today—that what Moses saw was not God, but a physical manifestation of what He wanted Moses to see. So it's the same thing here. Those who believe in that kind of 'glob' of a god in the sky, **do not believe that Christ came in the flesh**. Because God would have nothing to do, or spirit rather, would have nothing to do with something that is fleshly, **because the flesh is inherently evil**.

Now, 1-John 4:1: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit... [now, you see why this is important] ...but be testing the spirits... [now didn't we read what they were doing there in Rev. 2—trying, testing the prophets, the apostles, whether they were speaking the truth or not] ...whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.... [Which means also that then they are being inspired and led by false spirits.] ...By this *test* you *can* know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God" (vs 1-2). Now, this means not just a special form of flesh, not a different kind of flesh that we have, but that **He came exactly in the flesh that we have**. Some of the false spirits will say, "Oh, we believe Jesus came in the flesh, but He didn't have the same kind of flesh that you did, because God can't manifest Himself in the same kind of flesh that human beings have. So He was just really a spirit who looked like flesh." And we're hearing the same doctrines today, even within the Church of God.

"And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God. And **this is the spirit of antichrist**, which you heard *was to come*, and even now it is already in the

world" (v 3). And by saying, not just in the world, he's meaning in the Church—**from within**.

Two solutions to this were proposed. One view was that Christ did not have a real human body, but only appeared to have one. This theory is known as the 'theory of Docetism' which means *just to appear, appear to have flesh*. The other view is that Christ was a separate being from Jesus. And, it denied the virgin birth of Jesus but recognized that He was pre-eminent for righteousness, prudence and wisdom, and He taught that the Christ Spirit came upon Him following His baptism and empowered His ministry but left Him before He was crucified."

Now, what is one of the things of the New Age religion today, in the world? *You can receive the Christ Spirit*—in any religion that you are in, because Christ merely means *Messiah*. And another variation of that is: since God is 'glob' in the sky, and God is everywhere at all places at all times and in everything that there is, therefore you now have God in you and your job is through mediation, transcendental meditation, to find the Christ in you, because you have Christ in you. *And this is all a part of the doctrine that is coming upon the churches today*.

Now, let's look at some contrasts here. Let's go to 1-John 4:6—here is the whole basis for the book of 1-John. "We are of God... [Now, we have to know that. And those who are of God do know that.] ...the one who knows God listens to us; the one who is not of God does not listen to us. By this *means* we know the Spirit of the Truth and the spirit of the deception." That's the whole basis for writing this book. So that you can see and understand the difference between the Spirit of Truth—as inspired of God, the Truth of the Word of God *vs* spirit of deception, which has—as I coined the phrased here recently—'the *tinkle* of Truth.'

Now, let's look and see how all of these things are combined and how they work out. Here's the foundation of true Christianity, which I'll read for you. Now, based upon the Spirit of Truth—the **Spirit of Truth**, children of God—it's based on these following things:

1. life
2. truth
3. love
4. Spirit of God, a begettal from the Father
5. commandment-keeping
6. true knowledge
7. living and abiding in God's way
8. Jesus Christ spiritually dwelling in each Christian

9. eternal life

Here's the *spirit of deception*—and we find that John talks about the children of the devil. The *spirit of deception* is based:

1. darkness
2. lies
3. hatred
4. spirit of the devil

—and I wonder what it means, *the spirit of the devil*?

Let's go back to Ephesians 2, and let's see that the counterfeit spirit of the devil can actually work within a person. So I would have to say it's a counterfeit begettal. So that's why I have number four *spirit of the devil*.

Ephesians 2:2: "In which you walked in times past according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working within the children of disobedience" And John contrasts this, as we will see, the children of God *vs* the children of the devil. So therefore, *spirit of the devil*?—begettal of the devil.

5. commandment-breaking or transgression

Did not John have to re-define sin? *Yes he did!* What's the Scripture you can think of in 1-John which defines sin for us? 1-John 3:4 (KJV): "Sin is the transgression of the law." Now what is so fantastic about this is that John is showing us that for long-time Christians to re-gather themselves out of the mist of this kind of deception, they've got to go back to the clear contrasts.

6. false knowledge—*gnosis*
7. living and abiding in the devil and deception
8. the devil spiritually motivating his children
9. eternal death

So those are the contrasts that we are going to see all the way through the book of John. Now let's look at some of these as we are to have the affectingness in Christian living. Here are the conditions of Christian living that we find and we're still just doing the survey of 1-John. Let's begin in 1-John 1 and let's look at the conditions for Christian living. I think it's something that he listed it the way he has listed it, because so many people today, in talking to some of them, their minds are just kind of—I don't know how you would describe it—just kind of *fogged over*—the veil.

1-John 1:5—so he goes back and declares the message from the beginning: "And this is the message that we have heard from Him and are declaring to you: that **God is light**... [and where it

says that God is light, it means that's defining God's *glory*, God's *righteousness*, God's *truth*, everything about God is contained in the word *light*.] ...and there is not any darkness in Him at all. If we are proclaiming that we have fellowship with Him, and we are walking in the darkness...[and darkness personifies everything that Satan the devil stands for] ...we are lying to ourselves and we are not practicing the Truth" (vs 5-6). Do we not have the same example of that today? *Yes!* What are some of those examples? *Well, other people who don't keep the commandments of God as we do, they're Christian and can be saved, too.* We'll see a little bit later concerning commandment-keeping. And they also say, 'Well, a person really does not have to be baptized to receive the Holy Spirit of God.' So, what is happening, the darkness is coming in—*they are walking in darkness*. And the darkness is created by lies and they are not practicing the Truth.

"However, if we are walking in the light, as He is in the light, *then* we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, His own Son, is cleansing us from every sin" (v 7). So, what do we have here?

The first point of Christian living is *walking in the light*. We'll expound more on that when we go through verse-by-verse. The second point is *repentance*. What is the 'tinkle of Truth' to replace repentance? First of all, let's ask the question: What is repentance? *To admit you're wrong*—correct. What else? *To change, to stop doing it.* *Repentance* is also a *profound confession to God* of the sinfulness of sin—is it not? *Yes, it is!* And repentance is a *total commitment* to go God's way, rather than the way of the flesh. Now the *tinkle of Truth* is: 'Well, we have to turn from our human ways.' That is not an incorrect statement. But it does not enunciate or tell us plainly *to repent*.

Now notice what John says here: "If we say that we do not have sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the Truth is not in us. If we are confessing our own sins... [so not only do you have to repent and turn from them, but you have to confess them—and that's part of the repentance, and sometimes that's hard to do.] ...He is faithful and righteous that He may forgive us our sins, and that He may purify us from all unrighteousness" (vs 8-9).

Now, let's come to 1-John 2. What do you do after you repent? What is it that you do? Once you find out that you're a sinner—and sin is, as we have said, "the transgression of the law"—what is it then you are to do after you've repented? *You get up and you walk in God's way; you walk in the light and you keep the commandments*—correct? *Yes!*

Notice what he says here concerning commandment-keeping. So yes, Christian living—number 3—involves **commandment-keeping!**

1. **Walk in the light**
2. **Repent of your sins**
3. **Keep the commandments**

1-John 2:3: “And by this *standard*... [and I’ll explain why I translated it that way a little later] ...we know that we know Him: if we are keeping His commandments.... [Then comes the contrast. John is saying, ‘Now, I want to make it absolutely, abundantly clear, because there are a lot of people going around here, claiming that you can know God and you don’t have to keep His commandments.’] ...Anyone who says, ‘I know Him,’ and is not keeping His commandments, is a liar and the Truth is not in him” (vs 3-4).

So therefore, Christians today, when they have this muddled, fuzzy, blanked-over thinking—fogginess of mind—they have to get back to the absolute contrast. In other words, if anyone comes along and says that commandment-keeping or the keeping of the law does not affect your salvation, you know he’s a liar! And Rev. 2 says, we are to **test** those lies. We are to **prove** that they are wrong. We are to **preach** the Truth and **expose** the error—and that’s what John is doing here because the whole book, the whole Epistle of 1-John is based on the Spirit of Truth vs the spirit of error. So all the way through, we’re going to see these contrasts.

Next, after you walk in the light and repent and keep the commandments of God, then what are you to do? **You are to come out of the world!** Now, you might want to put in your margin there, right next to 1-John 2:15 put Rev. 18:4, which says: “come out of her My people”—that is out of greater Babylon, *the worldly system*.

So John is doing the same thing here, in 1-John 2:15—the next requirement for Christian living, constant Christian living: after walking in the light, after repenting of your sins—on an ongoing basis; and keeping the commandments of God.

4. Then v 15 says: “**Do not love the world...** [come out of the world] ...nor the things that *are* in the world.... [Then he gives the contrast again—doesn’t he? Notice how that everything that John writes is comparing the extreme contrast: light and darkness.] ...If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

Now, questions:

- Can anyone get into the Kingdom of God without loving God?

- Can they get into the Kingdom of God without having the love of God *in* them?
- *No they cannot?*

Therefore, we can conclude that good sincere people in other religions do not have salvation, because their goodness and sincerity is of the world.

- Does the world have its goodness? *Yes!*
- Does the world have its standard? *Yes!*

And the reason why the Apostle John is writing this way is because he is combating the degrees of subversion of the mind. That’s exactly what we see in the world; and that’s exactly what we see within the Church. We are being subverted in the world into a **one-world government** bit-by-bit-by-bit-by-bit—law-by-law, by statute, by enactment, by treaty. Now, if they all of a sudden brought on the total one-world government we would reject it. So, it’s the same way with perverting the **Truth of God**. You pervert it a little here, a little there, a little change on emphasis, a re-wording of something. So John is saying, ‘Look, you gotta strip all of that aside and I want you to know that the one who does not have the love of the Father, the Father is not in Him’—if they’re loving the world.

Now, what is happening in one of the largest denominations of the Church of God today? They’re trying to define themselves the way the world wants to label them. So recently a person said, ‘Well, how would I tell someone not in the Church what we are as a church?’ So the answer was: ‘Well, you can tell them we are not Catholic and we are not Jewish. However, most people would lump us in with Protestants.’ Have you ever heard the Church of God call itself Protestant? So here’s a little subversion bit-by-bit. To subvert a mind, to subvert a person, to pervert a mind, to pervert a person is done a little at a time. And the only way this can be stripped away is to show the sharp, extreme contrasts—and that’s exactly what John is doing.

4. **We’re to come out of the world**

5. **Keep the faith and teachings through the Holy Spirit**

Let’s pick this up here in 1-John 2:20: “But you have *the* anointing from the Holy One, and you have knowledge of all things... [now, to know everything does not mean to know everything in the world, but these are long-time Christians who have known everything concerning the facts of salvation.] ...*pertaining to salvation*. I did not write to you because you do not know the Truth, but because *you have known*, and *you understand* that not one lie comes from the Truth” (vs 20-21). Then he compares that with the, with the liar and the antichrist.

6. We are to *live as the children of God*

So as you see what I'm doing here, I'm going through and outlining the whole flow of the chapters. 1-John 3:1—we're to live as the children of God. He says: "Behold!... [Now, this is a very interesting Greek word, which means *to comprehend and see and understand with the mind.*] ...What glorious love the Father has given to us, that we should be called the children of God!" (vs 1-3). And that's how we are to live as the children of God! So that's why John is stressing this so *profoundly*.

- God has called you *to be* His children.
- God has called you *to be* in the first resurrection.
- God has called you *to be* in His family and *to be* exactly as Christ is.

—so we're to live as the children of God.

Verse 4: "Everyone who is practicing sin is also practicing lawlessness, for sin is lawlessness." Now in the *King James*, the word 'lawlessness' is *transgression of the law*. But it really means *against law*—'anomos' in the Greek. How can a person be against law? *By saying we don't have to keep the commandments*. Or by people saying, 'Well, this commandment is not important' or 'that commandment is not important.' But, what did Jesus say concerning the commandments of God? *'If you love Me, keep My commandments.'* That's true. What else did He say? Sinning is more than just breaking a law. *Sin is against law*.

Let's go to Matthew the fifth chapter. And isn't it absolutely amazing, you would never have believed it, that in the Church of God—but I do now after hearing what they're saying, and I believe it now after going through and really studying deeply into the Epistle of 1-John—how that when Christians have been in for a long time and they get relaxed and they get used to everything and then they get philosophical and they get knowledgeable, and they have all these great ideas. And now the greatest thing is the love of God—which it is—and then everything just comes all apart bit-by-bit and people just don't even know what sin is. And the next thing you know *they're going against the commandments of God*. And it starts out with simple things.

What is one of the first things that, that is dropped in obeying God's way? What is one of the first things that people do? *They start eating unclean meats*—right? *Yes!* Then the Sabbath doesn't become important. And then all of these other things just start falling in. So here in Matthew 5:17, let's see what Jesus said concerning the commandments of God: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish,

but to fulfill" And there are two things this verb means:

- 1) Jesus Himself was going to fulfill those things which pertain to Himself
- 2) Jesus was going to make the law much more full, to fill the requirements of the commandments and laws of God higher, *to a higher standard*.

Verse 18: "For truly I say to you, until the heaven and the earth shall pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no way pass from the Law until everything has been fulfilled. Therefore, whoever shall break one of these **least** commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever shall practice and teach them, this one shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (vs 18-19).

Let's come back here to 1-John 3:4: "Everyone who is practicing sin... [living in sin] ...is also practicing **lawlessness** [against law]... [So, what they do, they justify breaking God's laws, and that is sin. So, we are to **reject** that.] ...And you know that He appeared in order that He might take away our sins, and in Him is no sin. Everyone who is dwelling in Him does not *practice* sin... [Now, we'll see a little later there is a sin, which is not a sin unto death. But, you are not practicing and living in sin.] ...anyone who is *practicing* sin has not seen Him, neither has known Him" (vs 4-6).

The next comparison is the comparison *between the children of God and the children of the devil*. Verse 7: "Little children, do not allow anyone to deceive you; the one who is practicing righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. The one who is practicing sin is of the devil because the devil has been sinning from *the* beginning. For this purpose the Son of God appeared that He might destroy the works of the devil. Everyone who has been begotten by God is not practicing sin... By this *standard* are manifest the children of God and the children of the devil. Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, neither is the one who does not love his brother" (vs 7-10).

7. We are to *reject the spirit of deception!*

1-John 4:1-6 (we already covered that earlier). All the rest of the way through it shows that we are to love God and love the begotten children of God. 1-John 4:7: "Beloved, we should love one another because love is from God; and everyone who loves has been begotten by God, and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God because **GOD IS LOVE**" (vs 7-8).

Now, let's come all the way down here to 1-John 5:13, which is what you might say another *purpose statement* for the Epistle of 1-John. "These

things I have written to you who are believing in the name of the Son of God in order that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue* to believe in the name of the Son of God.” So that’s the whole reason:

8. *To have eternal life!*

Now, I’m going through and surveying first so you will get an overall foundation of going through the Epistle of 1-John—so we can take it step-by-step.

Now, one of the things that the Epistle of 1-John is and helps us do, is *to think*; because God wants us *to think* and God wants us *to know*. And there are certain things that, as we go through, we will see very clearly that he summarizes a statement. And in the *King James*, it is translated: “by this,” *here by or here in*. This comes from two Greek words, which literally translated are: *in this* or *by this*. And the two Greek words are: ‘en toutoo.’ I will show you where I translated this.

Epistle of 1-John 2; again, we’re still surveying some of these verses so that we can understand more clearly. Now, when we do start going through, then we’re going to find how really profound that this first epistle of John is. 1-John 2:3: “And by this *standard*...” By what standard? Let’s look at that just a little bit. What is a *standard*? *That we are knowing Him if we’re keeping His commandments.* “By this *standard*.” So I supplied the word *standard*. See it in italics? “By this *standard*.”

Now let’s come down to the last part of v 5: “...By this *means* we know that we are in Him.” How? Back up a couple of sentences and let’s begin at the first part of v 5: “On the other hand, *if* anyone keeps His Word, truly in this one the love of God is being perfected [made complete]. By this *means* we **know** that we are in Him.” So we have a means whereby we **know**.

Now, let’s go to 1-John 3:10—everyone of these places in the Greek it has ‘en toutoo.’ “By this *standard* are manifest the children of God and the children of the devil. Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, and neither is the one who does not love his brother.” So there’s a *standard*. Here’s a *thinking standard* with the Spirit of God that we are to make a judgment in our lives, knowing what we are to know and understand—and apply it in some practical knowledge in this manner.

(go the next track)

1-John 3:16—you might want to put in your margin there: John 3:16—and I think it’s interesting that both of these 3:16s match up very closely—don’t they? 1-John 3:16: “By this *very act* we have known **the love of God**, because He laid down His

life for us... [That is the act of knowing the love of God.] ...and we ourselves are [obligated] to lay down our lives for the brethren.” Now, we’ll get into that much more when we come to it in the verse-by-verse study.

Verse 19: “And in this *way* we know that we are of the Truth... [now, that says a lot—doesn’t it? That we are to **be knowing** that we are of the Truth.] ...and *He* shall assure our hearts before Him, that if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and knows all things” (vs 19-20). And obviously then, ***we are to repent and He will forgive.***

Now, v 24: “And the one who is keeping His commandments [is abiding] dwells in Him... [and that means *remains* and *lives* in Him] ...and He [Christ] in him... [that person who’s keeping the commandments] ...and by this [very thing] we know that He is dwelling in us: by the Spirit which He gave to us.” So all of these begin to tie in. I tell you I am absolutely amazed what this book of 1-John contains.

1-John 4:2: “By this *test*...” That is testing the spirits, as we’ve already covered—*we are knowing*.

- Verse 9: “In this *way* the love of God was manifested toward us: that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, so that we might live through Him.” *In this way*—all of these remember are from the Greek ‘en toutoo.’
- Verse 13: “[In this way] By this *standard* we know that we are *dwelling* in Him, and He is dwelling in us: because of His own Spirit, *which* He has given to us.”
- Verse 17: “By this *spiritual indwelling*...[because what I did, I summed the other verses which were before it] ...By this *spiritual indwelling* [of God’s Spirit] the *love of God* has been perfected [made complete] within us...” And should be continually perfected in us.

1-John 5:1: “Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been begotten by God; and everyone who loves Him Who begat... [and the One Who begat was the Father] ...also loves him who has been begotten by Him. [In this way] By this *standard* we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and are keeping His commandments” (vs 1-2). So that helps summarize many of the things we covered last time about what we are to know.

Thank you, someone pointed out I missed one, which is 1-John 4:10: “In this *act*... [that is in God manifesting Christ for us] ...is THE LOVE...” *So in this or here by.*

Now the reason I'm doing so many verse-by-verse surveys is because I want us to have a grasp of how profound the Epistle of 1-John really is, and how much meaning is in it, and how that this is for us today in the time and circumstances in which we are living. And I hope that it's going to go a long way in helping some of the brethren who have gone through so much to recover themselves.

Next time we will do some more word-by-word studies, but let's begin right at the first, the very first verse—1-John 1:1—and in this we will see quite a few things. Now let's take this all the way down to verse four. And as I am reading this, I want you to think how much this parallels the Gospel of John, the first chapter—which we will go to the Gospel of John and do a little comparison. As a matter of fact, in a lot of things there are a lot of comparisons and carryovers from the Gospel of John to First John. And in many of the verses it's clear that the readers already have in the Gospel of John, because he makes summary references to what he has written in the Gospel of John right here in the epistle.

1-John 1:1: “That which was from *the* beginning... [now, we're going to look a little bit about the beginning here.] ...that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our own eyes, that which we observed for ourselves and our own hands handled, concerning the Word of life.”

Now, let's go to the Gospel of John, chapter one—so just hold your place here—and we'll be going back and forth quite a little bit. And we're going to see the *tremendous* parallels that are here. The Gospel of John 1:1 starts out almost the same: “In *the* beginning was the Word... [So we have the beginning—in both cases John is referring back to the beginning. And *the beginning* in the Gospel of John] ...In *the* beginning was the Word... [and that Greek tense is such that it could actually mean '*before* the beginning.'] ...was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

And we're going to see what it's so important that only God could actually, by manifesting Himself in the flesh and becoming like we are, could only be the sacrifice which would cover the sins of all mankind. Because God is the One Who created everything. God is the One Who made us. God is the One Who gave us the nature we have, by sentencing Adam and Eve to 'the law of sin and death,' put us in a state of vanity, which is says there in Rom. 8 that the 'creation was made subject to vanity.'

- Only God can save us from that
- Only God can save us from the devil
- Only God can save us from our sins

So that's why he makes it very clear that *the Word was God*. Now here in the Epistle of 1-John it is called 'the Word of Life.' Now let's compare that with the Gospel of John 1:2: “He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and not even one *thing* that was created came into being without Him. In Him was life...” [So he emphasizes it in the epistle: 'Word of Life.'] ...In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in darkness...” (vs 2-5). Now, we're going to see the same parallel in the epistle of *light and darkness*.

Now let's go back to the Epistle of 1-John 1:1 and let's look just little more closely. Notice, he says here—let me read it again: “That which was from *the* beginning, that which we have heard...” Now he didn't say 'that which I have heard.' In the first chapter he uses *we*. Beginning in the second chapter he uses *I*. Who are the 'we'? What did the 'we' do? Let's see what they did.

“...we have heard, that which we have seen with our very own eyes, that which we observed for ourselves and our [very] own hands handled...” (v 1). Who are the ones that this applies to only? *The apostles!* So therefore, many people feel that the Epistle of 1-John 'in the beginning' was a writing by *all* of the elderly apostles. There may have been Matthew there; there may have been Andrew there; we don't know who was there. Now also, how many people were there that saw Jesus Christ, after He was resurrected?—it's a lot more than people think.

Let's go to 1-Corinthians 15. How many people could qualify, at the maximum number? We know the apostles did. Remember what Jesus said to Thomas? When Thomas first heard of the resurrection, he said, 'I won't believe it until I stick my hands in His wounds.' So Jesus appeared and said, 'Thomas! Come over here, I want you to see, put your hand in My side.'

1-Corinthians 15:3: “For in the first place, I delivered to you what I also had received: that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures; and that He was buried; and that He was raised the third day, according to the Scriptures; and that He appeared to Cephas, *and* then to the twelve. Then He appeared to over five hundred brethren at one time, of whom the greater part are alive until now, but some have fallen sleep. Next He appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all He appeared to me also, as one who was born of a miscarriage.” (vs 3-8). So the only ones that this could apply to the 'we' would be the apostles and the maximum number would be that group of a little over 500 people. So it's amazing when you really get into studying the Scriptures, and you really think about it, the verses can tell you a whole lot more than we have understood.

Now let's come back to the Epistle of 1-John 1:2 All the way through this section, he is referring to *we*. "(And the Life... [which was Christ—in Him was Life] ...was manifested, and we have seen, and are bearing witness, and are reporting to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us)..." Now, 'manifested' means *revealed in the flesh; to be revealed spiritually and mentally; to have seen Him after He was resurrected*.

Now, 'bearing witness'—what is *bearing witness* mean? 'Bearing witness' means that *you are testifying as an eyewitness such as in a court case*. You are officially 'bearing witness' and testifying that what you are saying is absolutely the truth. "...and are reporting to you the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested to us" (v 2)

So again, this ties right in: 'In the beginning was the Word and the Word was *with* God,' which was with the Father. Now, v 3: "That which we have seen and have heard we are reporting to you... [Now, what is important about 'reporting'? I wish we had reporting in the news today. What is important about 'bearing witness' and 'reporting'? *That means you are conveying only what you've seen and heard and learned*. You are not creating fables, that's what's so very important. **You are reporting what God wants you to have.**] ...in order that you also may have fellowship with **us** [*vs them*]...." And 'them' are, as we've already seen, the antichrist; false teachers. So he's saying, 'Brethren, we want you to have fellowship with us because:

- we have *handled* the Word of God
- we have *seen* the Word of God
- we've *observed* the Word of God
- we are bearing witness and testifying to the Truth of the Word of God
- we are *testifying* to you that He was with the Father
- and we want you to have "**fellowship with us**" (v 3).

Now notice the next most important thing concerning *fellowship*: "...and truly **the** fellowship... [that's important in the Greek and that's why I translated it that way, because it's a particular kind of fellowship, called 'THE fellowship.' Namely:] ...—namely, **our** fellowship—*is* with the Father and with His own Son Jesus Christ" (v 3). This tells us how important the Sabbath is. Let's ask a couple of questions here:

- Can people get together and fellowship and have a good time by just being together? *Yes!*

- Can people also fellowship in a church setting, but they are 'playing church'? *Yes!*
- And what is so deceptive about that? *Because they think that their fellowshiping is righteousness. And they think that because they come to a certain church or a certain congregation or a certain building and they're fellowshiping with certain people that everything is all right!*
- But what is the basis of our fellowship? *The basis of our fellowship is **with the Father and with His own Son Jesus Christ!***

That is the *true* fellowship. That's why He says, "and truly the fellowship—namely, our fellowship—is with the Father and with His own Son Jesus Christ" (v 3).

How important is this fellowship to God? Most people have never realized it, but how important is this fellowship with God? Let's go clear back to the beginning—Genesis 2—and let's see how important this fellowship with God is. And we will see that it is so important that God created and blessed and set aside and made the Sabbath day Holy. That's how important it is.

Genesis 2:1: "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made" (vs 1-3). God's fellowship with us is so important that He created the seventh day Sabbath for us. And it's so important for people to understand that God has preserved—through all time—the Sabbath. When we understand that our fellowshiping is first with God the Father and Jesus Christ, and that this is the day that God has made as a *Holy assembly* so that we fellowship together and with God primarily; then we understand *the true fellowship*. And that's how you understand the difference between going *to* church and *playing* church and going *to* church *to be taught of God* and *fellowship with God* and *fellowship with the brethren* because the Spirit of God is in them. A massive complete difference.

Let's go to Mark, the second chapter, and we'll have a little bit more to say about the Sabbath. I'm going to have to give a whole basic, *basic*, *basic* sermon on the Sabbath—but we'll just sort of review it here in a little bit.

Mark 2:27 should be a basic memory Scripture that we have all learned, that we have all

memorized, that we all understand, that we put it in practice and realize the powerful message that He [Christ] gives here. Mark 2:27: “The Sabbath was made for man...” That’s why God made it, He made it *for man* that

- he could *fellowship with Him*
- that mankind could *learn from God*
- that mankind could *learn of God’s way*
- God’s laws
- God’s commandments
- God’s love
- learn how to change their lives
- to direct their lives
- repent
- grow
- change and overcome.

—all of those are a function of fellowshiping with God.

“...and not man for the Sabbath...” I mean, man cannot come along and say, ‘Well God, one day in seven is good enough.’ Or that ‘I’ll be righteous on Sunday.’ *God is not there on Sunday!* That’s just a plain fact. God, in His mercy, because some people are not against Him on Sunday... But how can you say that? How can you say you’re not against God and yet keep Sunday—when God says the Sabbath is His and the Sabbath was created for man? You see the conflict that this brings up? You see how this becomes *against law* or *lawlessness*? Because God is the One Who’s created and made and decided which day is the Sabbath. That’s why it says it was ‘made for man.’ That’s why it says, ‘and not man for the Sabbath.’ For man to decided what he would do. “Therefore, the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath” (v 28).

Now the Sabbath is so important because God puts His presence in it. Let’s go to Isaiah 56:1, and this is a prophecy of the end-time; and this is a prophecy of when the salvation of God is going to come. As we are reading this, let’s also understand that the judgment of God is also upon the house of God. So that’s why this becomes very important. Isaiah 56:1: “Thus says the LORD, ‘Keep your judgment, and do justice: for My salvation *is* near to come, and My righteousness [is near] to be revealed.... [And are we not living in those days? *Oh, yes, absolutely we are!*] ...Blessed *is* the man *that* does this, and the son of man *that* lays hold on it; that keeps the [one day in seven] from polluting it” (vs 1-2). That comes to church on Sunday if it’s his hearts desire. That the blood-brother, Ishmael, can come to his mosque on Friday; or the Jews can come on the Sabbath and totally pollute it by not fellowshiping with God and Christ.

NO! He says: “Blessed *is* the man *that* does this, and the son of man *that* lays hold on it; that **keeps the Sabbath from polluting it**, and keeps his

hand from doing any evil” (v 2). That’s the whole purpose of it: So that every week we’re going to *learn of God’s way*; we’re going to be *refreshed in God’s way*; we’re going to be able, with God’s Spirit, to let Him *lead us and guide us and bring us into the greater understanding and truth and righteousness*.

Verse 3: “Neither let the son of the stranger, that has joined himself to the LORD... [Who is the ‘son of the stranger’? Who is the ‘stranger’ in terms of the Old Testament in relationship to Israel? *Stranger* is what they call a Gentile. Are Gentiles to keep the Sabbath? It’s what he says.] ...son of the stranger, that has joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, ‘The LORD has utterly separated me from His people... [No, because God doesn’t want the Gentiles separated from His people. That’s the whole basis of the New Testament Church.] ...neither let the eunuch say, “Behold, I *am* a dry tree.”’ Speak, saying, ‘The LORD has utterly separated me from His people: neither let the eunuch say, “Behold, I *am* a dry tree.”’ For thus says the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, and choose *the things* that please Me...” (vs 3-4).

Now, hold your place right here, we’ll come back, and let’s go to the Epistle of 1-John, chapter three, and let’s see how the Word of God is living and powerful and, it says and means exactly the same thing. 1-John 3:21: “Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us... [and isn’t that what he’s saying in Isa. 56? ‘Don’t say this in condemnation of yourself that you’re a dry tree. Don’t say this in condemnation of yourself that I’m a Gentile and cut off from the people of God. Don’t be saying that. Don’t be condemning yourself.’] ...*then* we have confidence toward God. And whatever we may ask we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and practice those things that are pleasing in His sight” (vs 21-22). Now isn’t that exactly what he’s saying back here in Isa. 56: ‘...that keeps My Sabbaths and choose the things that please Me and take hold of My covenant...’ So right here is a whole prophecy of the New Testament. Right here is a summary of what God wants us to do in the New Testament—contained in the Old.

Isaiah 56:5: “Even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.” And could we not go through and show that Jesus said, ‘In My Father’s house are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you.’ And didn’t He say to the churches, ‘I will give you a new name. I will give you the name of the Father and of My name and of the city, New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven.’ There it is prophesied right here.

Verse 6: “Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD... [Notice what they are to do:] ...to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, and takes hold of My covenant...” So for the New Covenant, brethren, Sabbath-keeping is vital for the covenant because ***God fellowships with us in the New Covenant on the Sabbath day.*** And yet, the Churches of God that we have known in the past are casting it aside. And some are even saying that there is salvation in other religions. So you see how profound this is.

Let’s come to Isaiah 58:13—and here’s a little remembrance of Sabbath-keeping again, so that we can have the fellowship with God. “If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath, *from* doing your pleasure **on my Holy day**... [because

- God wants to *fellowship* with you
- God wants to *visit* with you.
- God wants to *dwell* in you

—so therefore we have to do His pleasure.] ...and call the Sabbath a delight... [not a burden] ...the Holy of the LORD, honorable; and shall honor Him, not doing your own ways, nor finding your own pleasure, nor speaking *your own* words.” And hasn’t Sabbath fellowship, without fellowshiping with God, degenerated into this kind of thing? *Yes, it has!*

And you know and I know that when you fudge and don’t keep the Sabbath the way that you do and you get in the habit of doing many things of your own pleasure, your own way on the Sabbath, what happens? Well, God is not fellowshiping with you the way that He wants to, and so the Sabbath doesn’t mean as much to you. And when God does not immediately come down and do some sort of correcting—like lightening out of the sky to give you a bolt of lightening to zap you, to wake you up—since He doesn’t do that, it just becomes foggy and thin and less important. And that’s what’s happening to too many of God’s people.

But, He says, “If you will not find your own pleasure nor speak your own words, then shall you delight yourself in the LORD... [And one of the whole purposes of 1-John was to bring the ***joy of the Lord***, the ***joy of conversion***. And you can’t ***joy in God*** unless you fellowship with Him and do so on the Sabbath day.] ...and I will cause you to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father: for the mouth of the LORD has spoken *it*” (v 14). Again, another guarantee of salvation and all this goes right back to the true fellowship with God the Father and with Jesus Christ.

Now, it’s the same way with the Holy Days. And I think it’s very interesting with the Holy Days, that what God has done, He has buried all the Holy

Days in Lev. 23—and I think it’s a test to find out which of the commandments we think are the least. Because many times out of the least and the lowest and the smallest and the most neglected of the world, God does the greatest work.

We’ll go ahead and end here today. And we’ll pick it up next time and continue on in 1-John and go through *light* and *darkness*.

- 1-John Scriptures from *The Seven General Epistles* translation by Fred R. Coulter—except where noted
- All other N.T. Scriptures from: *The New Testament in Its Original Order—A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter—except where noted
- Old Testament Scriptures from the *King James Version*

Scriptural References:

- 1) Revelation 2:2
- 2) 1-John 4:1-3, 6
- 3) Ephesians 2:2
- 4) 1-John 3:4
- 5) 1-John 1:5-9
- 6) 1-John 2:3-4, 15, 20-21
- 7) 1-John 3:1-4
- 8) Matthew 5:17-19
- 9) 1-John 3:4-10
- 10) 1-John 4:7-8
- 11) 1-John 5:13
- 12) 1-John 2:3, 5
- 13) 1-John 3:10, 16, 19-20, 24
- 14) 1-John 4:2, 9, 13, 17
- 15) 1-John 5:1-2
- 16) 1-John 4:10
- 17) 1-John 1:1
- 18) John 1:1-5
- 19) John 1:1
- 20) 1-Corinthians 15:3-8
- 21) 1-John 1:1-3
- 22) Genesis 2:2-3
- 23) Mark 2:27-28
- 24) Isaiah 56:1-4
- 25) 1-John 3:21-22
- 26) Isaiah 56:5-6
- 27) Isaiah 58:13-14

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Colossians 2
- Revelation 2; 18:4
- John 3:16
- Romans 8
- Leviticus 23

Also referenced: Book:

Introduction to the New Testament (no author cited)

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