

1 JOHN, VERSE-BY-VERSE

SESSION 4 | 1 JOHN 2:3-11

1 JOHN 2:3-7 | SIN NOT: BY KEEPING HIS COMMANDMENTS

- Verses 3-4 – Note: these verses were included on session 3 but are revised here. In the previous session I took the pronoun *he* to be a reference to the Father. In further study, it should be a reference to the Son.
- Verse 3 –
 - The author is seeking to get the nation to come to Jesus as Messiah (see heading, vv. 1-2). How does a Jew *know that he knows* the Messiah? He will **keep his commandments**.
 - The word **know** is γινώσκω [ginosko], to *know in the personal/experiential sense*.
 - The first use is in the present tense, a current reality.
 - The second in the perfect tense, which is used for “an action which is viewed as having been completed in the past, once and for all, not needing to be repeated.”¹
 - The standard for this knowledge is to **keep his commandments**.
 - Jesus, of course, commanded the keeping of His commandments (see Jn. 14:15, 15:10, etc.).
 - One of His commandments was to keep the Law, in totality (Mt. 5:19).
 - Often this verse is taken to mean that you are not a Christian if you do not keep Christ’s commandments. Can we in any way say, “you are not a Christian if you do not keep Torah?” This would be a ridiculous and works-based theology, so devoid of Pauline truth that it simply *should* be unacceptable to Christians. However, it is prevalent in all corners of Christendom.
- Verse 4 –
 - This epistle is an instruction manual for Jews who recognize Jesus as Messiah and want their nation to receive Him and His Kingdom.
 - In Revelation 12:17 the believing Jews are those who **keep the commandments of God**, along with the **testimony of Jesus Christ**. See also Revelation 14:12.
 - Both 1 John 2:4 and John in the Revelation teach the exact same thing.
 - It is *not* Pauline (as it is clearly works based) because it is about a *kingdom gospel* rather than the *individual gospel*.
 - If one says rejects my premise and rather says that this verse speaks of behavior after salvation and not a requirement for salvation, they are still left out of the ability to say that salvation is *not of works*, for *works are required in the equation*, simply moved places in the equation.
- Verse 5 –
 - The phrase **keepeth his word** stands as the opposite of **keepeth not his commandments** (v. 3). The one who keeps the word of Jesus is the one in whom **the love of God [is] perfected**.
 - The word **perfected** is from τέλος [telos] which is the word for taking something to its full end (like *telescope* takes vision to its full end).
 - Keeping the word of the Messiah is the only way the Jew can **know...that we are in him**.
 - To be *in Christ* is not something that belongs to the Body of Christ alone. Consider, for example, Romans 16:7.
- Verse 6 –

¹ Larry Pierce, Tense Voice Mood (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, n.d.).

- Jesus said essentially these same words in John 15:4-7.
- Note that the “WWJD” prescription for Christian living, based on passages like this one, is misguided, failing to recognize that **Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision** and that we are *not of the circumcision*.
 - For those of us in the Body of Christ, we abide by Paul’s instruction to **be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ** (1 Cor. 11:1).
- Verse 7 –
 - This verse is *decidedly unpauline*.
 - The author says, in effect, “stay the course.”
 - He wants them to keep the **old commandment which ye had from the beginning**. The questions are, *which commandment* and *the beginning of what?*
 - I think that the author is saying, *I am not giving you a new dispensation, but asking you to continue walking under the same rule you’ve been under.*
 - The **commandment** then is *the Law* which they have had **from the beginning** of their nation.

1 JOHN 2:8-11 | SIN NOT: BY KEEPING A NEW COMMANDMENT

- Verse 8 –
 - The writer moves with ease from **no new commandment** in verse 7 to a **new commandment** in verse 8.
 - This **new commandment** is **true in him and in you**.
 - It seems that the pronoun **him** must continue to be *Jesus the Messiah*. The pronoun **you** must continue to be the nation.
 - Here the author is changing the commandment of the Lord just slightly. Jesus had given a new commandment in John 13:34, to love **as I have loved you**. Now the author says, in effect, *this must be true in you*. Why? **Because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth**.
 - Here he speaks of the darkness of no Messiah, and the light of the presence and knowledge of the Messiah.
 - Compare John 1:4-5, where the darkness did not receive the light. Now the nation is told that *it is time to receive it*.
- Verse 9 –
 - The new commandment of Jesus was to **love one another; as I have loved you** (Jn. 13:34).
 - Now this epistle says that this *must be true in you* (v. 8). But I believe the author speaks of a *specific brother*, namely, Jesus Christ. Those who *hate Jesus Christ* are **in darkness even until now**.
- Verses 10-11 –
 - Elaborating on the truth and instruction of verse 9, and using the interpretation of **brother** given there, these verses instruct the nation that *abiding in the light* required *loving Jesus*.
 - On the flip side, to *hate Jesus* was to *abide in darkness*, a darkness that is debilitating to the point of *blindness*. The author surely knows that **blindness in part is happened to Israel** (Rom. 11:25).