

August 22, 2021

“A Conquering Faith”
Lesson 3 of Unit

I John 4:2-3, 13-17; I John 5:4-5

Intro

Who is Jesus? What is the true nature of His being? Those questions are at the heart of what it means to be a Christian. There are people who say Jesus was a good person; others say He was an excellent and true teacher. Others say that Jesus is God’s Son, and has the eternal divine qualities of God also.

Today’s passages from I John deal with this question of “Who is Jesus?” and the implications of believing or disbelieving what is stated about who He is. One of the ideas that John deals with is Gnosticism (pronounced “nos – it – cism”). Gnosticism believes that there is secret and special knowledge (gnosis) that must be acquired and believed to be a “true” Christian. That knowledge was what provided salvation (as opposed to Jesus’ blood sacrifice on the cross).

Read I John 4:2-3

1. vs. 2: John provides a marker to identify those of true and accurate belief from those with a false belief

Acknowledging that Jesus came in the flesh

This is an important idea that John has dealt with before

John 1:14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”

Every spirit (every person’s spirit of belief) that agrees with this is accurate / correct

Everyone who doesn’t believe this is in error

John implies that those who don’t believe don’t have the Spirit of God

This idea of Jesus coming in the flesh is crucial to the Christian faith

If Jesus didn’t come in the flesh, he had no body to die on the cross with

He had no blood to shed

Heb. 9:22 says “without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins”

If Jesus didn’t shed His blood for our sins, once for all, we are still lost in our sins

Jesus coming in the flesh is absolutely critical for Christianity to have any validity

2. vs. 3: John elaborates on this idea of believing

Every spirit that doesn’t acknowledge Jesus is the spirit of antichrist

That which is opposite and opposed to Jesus, and therefore God

This is what the apostles taught from the beginning

Many decades later, others are teaching false ideas, differing from the apostles

The word “antichrist” occurs only 4 times in the NT, all in John’s letters

John is referring not to a single individual

Antichrist is anyone who teaches falsely or accepts false teaching

John says this spirit is “already in the world”

The world here means the sinful humanity in the world

They are currently not with Christ and oppose / reject Him

Read I John 4:13-17

3. vs. 13: John now moves to a positive indicator

How do we know that we are connected to God?

- 1) “We live in Him and He in us”
- 2) “He has given us of His Spirit”

A relationship with God isn’t only Him to us; it’s also us to Him

He gave us His Spirit to guide and teach us; we give ourselves to Him

As we do that, we “dwell in Him”

4. vs. 14: John now inserts some personal testimony

“We have seen and testify”—he means all the apostles who were with Jesus

They are witnesses of seeing Jesus, and seeing how God sent Him to earth

Jesus’ purpose was “to be the Savior of the world”

5. vs. 15: This verse offers two proofs that a person is in right relationship with God

1st: they “acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God”—confession of true faith

2nd: their actions show their faith—“God lives in them, and they in God”

This verse supports James’ point in James 2:14-26: “Faith without works is dead”

Having “faith” alone is insufficient; one must also be living in God

This means two things, according to our textbook:

1. Embracing Jesus as the authoritative Lord of one’s life
2. Rejecting any influence offered by the “spirit of the antichrist” (4:3)

6. vs. 16: John uses the word “love” 3 times in this verse

He uses the word over 30 times in this one letter!

He’s emphasizing this aspect of God “God is love”

The “we” is all who believe in the Son and accept His salvation

Our standing in God is because of the love of God shown in Jesus

This love of God shows we are in a relationship with Him

This love John talks about is based on a commitment to God through Christ

It is not based on emotion

This verse begins, “And so...”

This connects vs. 16 to vs. 15

We cannot love God unless we also acknowledge that Jesus is the Son of God

We cannot love God unless we accept the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross

7. vs. 17: Because of vs. 16 (“we rely on the love God had for us”), we have confidence

The Day of Judgment isn’t a worry for those who have placed their confidence in Christ

If we “live in Him” we will be like Him in our actions

The last phrase here says “In this world we are like Jesus”

This suggests living like Jesus did

Having a close relationship with God

Expressing God’s love to others in words and actions

Read I John 5:4-5

8. vs. 4: Here, John again develops the idea of faith and works

“Overcoming the world” doesn’t happen just by placing one’s faith in Christ

Phil. 2:12 says, “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling”

We are told to *work*, not to sit and wait on the couch for divine change to occur

Being “Born of God” gives us the resources to “work out (our) salvation”

Our text uses a nice set of ideas here:

“The faithful mind understands the truth; the faithful heart desires the truth; and the faithful will acts on the truth.”

The world’s values and ideas are completely opposite to God’s

We “overcome” the world by practicing God’s ways, in love

9. vs. 5: John connects the idea of overcoming from vs. 4 to what he says in vs. 5

In vs. 4, he says we overcome because we are born of God

Now he adds to that

“Who is it that overcomes the world?”

“Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God”

Overcoming is connected to belief in who Jesus is

If we don’t believe Jesus came in the flesh, we don’t truly believe in Him

If we don’t believe in His death, burial, and resurrection, we don’t truly believe in Him

We must believe that He is the Son of God

Not just a good man, good teacher, etc

Belief in Jesus as Son of God also carries the idea of following/obeying Him

Application: This passage deals heavily with the need to know who Jesus is, and the benefits of putting those beliefs into action. We can have victory in overcoming the world! And this only happens through faith in Jesus Christ, as the Son of God who came physically to this earth; who died on a cross, shedding His blood as an atonement for our sins; and who calls for us to follow Him as both our Savior and Lord.

Jesus proved who He was while on earth, which John and the other apostles faithfully report to all the world in their writings. Those who developed teachings contrary to what the apostles taught are showing the “spirit of antichrist”, of being contrary to what God has shown His Son to be.

Prayer: Father God, thank you for John and the other apostles who wrote the truths about who Jesus is for our benefit. Thank you for Jesus coming to the earth to live among us, for dying on the cross to save us, and for rising again in victory. Help us to accurately teach and live the truth of who Jesus is. In Jesus’ name, Amen.