

2. **The walk with God (see 1:6, relationship to God) required that one has a share in His righteous character (the commandments were His character desires, i.e., life), which is through imputation by belief in Jesus Christ (2:3-6).**

2:3 And by this we (apostles) know that we (apostles) have come to know Him (the Father), if we keep His (the Father's) commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; 5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God<sup>33</sup> has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: 6 the one who says he abides in Him (the Father) ought himself to walk in the same manner as He (the Father) walked<sup>34</sup>.

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<sup>33</sup> The "love" of God is revealed in creation and in the provision of His Son to save the creation. Thus, the "love" of God is the character of God's desires. He ultimately is the One to save creation and not man.

<sup>34</sup> Note that the text has not spoken of Jesus for quite some time. To shift here from the Father to Jesus in the same sentence is awkward. One does not use a comparison sentence like this and change things. It is a simple statement. If you want to abide in God then you must walk with God. Jesus "walking" in a figurative sense is never used in the Bible. God walking is used frequently in the Old Testament. Note also in 1:5-6 that the implication is to walk with God.

The NET Bible makes the first pronoun "God" and the second pronoun "Jesus" and in fact inserts these Names in their translation instead of the pronouns, making original discovery difficult from their translation. Unfortunately this makes the translation an interpretation and sets in stone the pronoun's referent as that determined from the interpreter. They supply different referents for each stating, "the one who says he resides in God (lit.: Him), ought himself to walk in the same manner that Jesus (lit.: that One) walked." Thus they see the antagonist as claiming to "abide in God" but see the criteria as practical works, which would match those of Jesus' holy life, Thus "walking with Jesus" is walking in some similar ethical sense to Jesus, an impossible, and unattainable task. The justification for this by the NET Bible is due to a change in the pronouns from *autos* to *ekeinos* within the sentence. The claim is that *ekeinos* is always used for Jesus in the book. The difficulty with this is that John's change of pronouns is not to differentiate between the Father and the Son (cf. 1 John 3:6 where both *autos* and *ekeinos* are used for the same personality or in John 1:31 where both are used in the same sentence to reference Jesus). So the change in pronouns is from a general reference to God (He, Him) to a specific demonstrative "that One." To do more than that is to force the grammar to do more than John intended. The NET Bible states, "In fact, ἐκεῖνος occurs 6 times in 1 John (2:6; 3:3, 5, 7, 16; and 4:17), and each one refers to Jesus Christ." As this article will show, they make the same error in their proof texts as they do in verse to be proven, and thus circular reasoning. This is exactly the common error discussed in this article. Mistaking the pronouns and their referent is made due to not recognizing the Old Testament anticipation of a relationship to the Father. The

<sup>3</sup> Καὶ ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐγνώκαμεν αὐτόν, ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ τηρῶμεν. <sup>4</sup> ὁ λέγων ὅτι ἔγνωκα αὐτόν καὶ τὰς ἐντολάς αὐτοῦ μὴ τηρῶν, ψεύστης ἐστὶν καὶ ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν. <sup>5</sup> ὃς δ' ἂν τηρῇ αὐτοῦ τὸν λόγον, ἀληθῶς ἐν τούτῳ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται, ἐν τούτῳ γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐσμεν. <sup>6</sup> ὁ λέγων ἐν αὐτῷ μένειν ὀφείλει καθὼς ἐκεῖνος περιπάτησεν καὶ αὐτὸς [οὕτως] περιπατεῖν.

God's commands were the desires of His character. His character (Light, Life, 1:5) was revealed in the Old Testament to be revealed in His Christ. The commandments<sup>35</sup> however, were kept by the obedience of faith<sup>36</sup> toward God, by accepting imputed life through the Son, represented by the sacrifices of the Old Testament. 1 John 3:23 talks about the commands of God and how they would be kept by belief in the Son. In other words, the Law showed the commands of God would be kept by One, the Messiah. The rest of the people would come to keep the commands through imputation by belief in the Son and in His perfect propitiatory sacrifice. Thus, "keeping the commandments" was always 100% and was only kept by Messiah, and the rest kept them through imputation.

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referencing of these pronouns using *ekeinos* to Jesus by the NET Bible exemplifies the common error of the book as all are referencing the Father, not Jesus. This is again circular reasoning. They assign a pronoun to Jesus and then reference as proof other pronouns that they have also wrongly assigned to Jesus.

The NET Bible also claims that the "He walked" proves that it is Jesus that it is being referenced. They state regarding this verbal activity ". . . a reference to Jesus Christ is confirmed by the verb *περιπάτησεν* (*periepatesen*), an activity which can only describe Jesus' earthly life and ministry, the significance of which is one of the points of contention the author has with the opponents." However, that use of *περιπάτησεν* refers to God the Father, not Jesus. See the earlier discussion that discusses this. Again, this is circular reasoning as follows: The "He" must refer to Jesus because the purpose of the author is to determine a relationship with Jesus and thus the pronouns must refer to Jesus. Thus they assume the wrong purpose of the book based on their theology, and then they make all the references coordinate with their composed purpose, which then validates their assignment of the references. This is circular reasoning where the premise assumes the conclusion. Interestingly the commentator offers no evidence for his confirmation, only assuming its truth.

<sup>35</sup> The commandment of the Father is mentioned throughout the gospel, and is stated in John 12:50 "And I know that His **commandment** is eternal life; therefore the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told Me."

<sup>36</sup> "Obedience" here is often thought of as "good works." This is not the case. It is the obedience of faith. No one ever got righteousness by keeping the Law, only condemnation. Thus obedience here is obtaining mercy through the sacrifices (which pointed to Christ) and then due to His mercy one would act mercifully toward the brother who is in the same family of God through Christ.

<sup>23</sup> This is His (*God, the Father's*) commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He (*God, the Father*) commanded us. (3:23)

**Genesis:** Adam was commanded to “keep the garden” and not to eat of the “Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil” in a similar fashion to “keep the commandments.” When Adam failed, he denied he was anything different than God’s character by hiding and clothing himself with leaves to keep God from seeing his true changed character. Thus, the fact that Adam had not kept the command indicated his desires were different than God’s. But Adam’s desires were to deceive (like his father, the devil) God, and thus indicated a different character. When God “walked”<sup>37</sup> in the garden, it was impossible for Adam to be in “fellowship” (shared commonality) with Him, that is, reflect His desire fully.

Thus the command of God, when Adam failed, was to trust in the coming New Adam (Genesis 3:15) to keep the commands. This New Adam would forgive his sins and give him a new birth (eternal life). So, keeping the commandments is identified specifically in 3:23 (God’s commandments), by belief in the Son.

### **Excursus: “Come To Know Him” (2:3-4) Is “Come To Know The Father”**

**2:3-4** By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup> The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

Here again, frequently the views state that the One who the antagonist is claiming to know is Jesus. But in reality the antagonist is claiming to “know” God.<sup>38</sup> Thus, the issue again is who the pronoun, “Him,” references.

### **Knowing “Him” (2:3) refers to knowing the Father (not Jesus).**

In the use in 2:3ff, the “Him” pronoun grammatically could refer to 2:2,<sup>39</sup> that is Christ as the propitiation for our sins. However, the subject, from 1:5 is the relationship

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<sup>37</sup> “Walking” is an indication of belief with the one with whom they are “walking”.

<sup>38</sup> This term is not proof of a Gnostic antagonist as is so often used. The use of this term is from Jeremiah 31:34 which John quotes in 2:27. See the earlier discussion.

<sup>39</sup> Some claim that the pronouns are very difficult to differentiate between God and Jesus and that it almost seems somewhat intentional since Jesus and God perform the

with God. The mention of Jesus since 1:5 has been to establish Him as a means of that relationship (“the blood of Jesus, 1:7; the propitiation for our sins, 2:1). Thus, contextually, the issue is that Jesus is the means to “know” the Father. And with the parallel statement regarding “His” commandments in 3:23-24, the “His” must refer to God.

### **“His” Commandments refers to the Father’s.**

The question is ‘whose commandments, Jesus’ or God’s. God’s commandments occur throughout the Old Testament. Jesus’ commandments are referred to in John 14--15. But when it comes to 1 John there is never a statement that alludes to the commandments as those of Jesus. In fact the clear references (e.g., 3:23-24<sup>40</sup>) relate the source of the commandments to God, not Jesus.

**3:23-24** This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him . . .

This also would be confirmed by his statement in 2:7 that what John is referencing is an “old commandment” which you have had from the beginning<sup>41</sup>.” Thus, the “old commandment” is from the Old Testament, which relates them to God’s commandments, and of course, the “new commandment” is the belief in Jesus Christ (see 3:23).

The issue of “keeping the commandments<sup>42</sup>” is the means of having a relationship with the Father. Note that the “Abide in Him” in 2:6 is also the Father as the same phrase

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same function. However, by using that premise, the actual problem of the book is covered up, since it is essential to John’s argument to differentiate between God and Jesus in the sense that one needs the function of Jesus Christ (The Son) in order to have the Father. John insists on differentiating so that the antagonists’ arguments (the claim to have the Father without the Son) are exposed because of the necessity of The Son. Since most see the epistle as evaluating one’s relationship with Jesus (which automatically relates them to God), they do not see a critical issue in relating to God.

<sup>40</sup> The references to “commandment(s)” are 2:3, 2:4, 2:7, 2:8, 3:22, 3:23, 3:24, 4:21, 5:2, 5:3. None of these commandments are the commandments of Jesus, but are the commandments of God (although Jesus fulfilled them).

<sup>41</sup> This puts the commandment back in the first chapters of Genesis, and thus the promise of Messiah in Genesis 3:15 once more is the basis of the Old Testament including the Old Covenant which was fulfilled in Jesus.

<sup>42</sup> “Keeping the commandments” is an issue in the Old Testament which was always sanctificational, which they could not keep and necessarily needed the sacrifices.

is used in 3:23-24 and is the Father (see below). Thus also, the claim is to “know Him,” that is, the Father.

**“Know,” Defined by Jeremiah 31:34 is to know “God” (not a reference to Gnosticism).**

The use of “know” (*γινώσκω*) in 1 John has prompted some interpreters to posit a historical Christological heresy, that of Gnosticism, into the problem of 1 John. While historically Gnosticism cannot be found until the late 2<sup>nd</sup> Century (about 100 years or more after the epistle was written), its advocates postulate that there were (unsubstantiated) “seeds” of it in the first century, and thus it is called “incipient Gnosticism.”<sup>43</sup>

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Deuteronomy 28 was particularly notable as it provided blessing and cursing based on the performance of the commands.

John’s point here is that “Keeping the commandments” was always a perfect “keeping” and as such could only be kept by no one other than the Messiah (see Matthew 5:17-18). All others would fail and need to turn to Messiah as the sacrifice of the Old Covenant represented Him. Thus “keeping the commandments” would only be enabled to man through the New Covenant, which established a new heart in the believer that would keep the commandments because it was inherently the righteous character of God. This is not ethical behavior, as ethical behavior was never “keeping the commandments” (see Matthew 5:18-19), but required a perfect character that does not sin at all. One still sins due to the continuing presence of the Adamic nature as source (see 1 John 2:1-2), but has Jesus as the propitiation with the Father to forgive the sins of the old character (still present) in the Adamic nature. Thus when interpreters change 1 John 3:9 to a “continuous” present to allow the admitted sinning of a believer in 2:1-2, they do so because they do not recognize that the believer has two characters, one judged dead but still alive and one judged alive and still alive. One, the Adamic nature, still sins but is propitiated. The other does not sin and is the “eternal life” in the believer. This is all in Jeremiah 31:31-34.

<sup>43</sup> The attempts to merge Gnosticism, a late second century heresy, closer to the date of John’s writing have been varied. One of these is to identify Cerinthianism, an earlier problem, to be some sort of early Gnosticism. This pushes the date earlier due to the testimony of Polycarp (a disciple of John) who stated that John had abandoned a bath where Cerinthius entered due to this heresy. Cerinthianism is simply the rejection that Jesus died bodily on the cross, having departed His body before that event. (See Christian Classics Ethereal Library, “Cerenthus,” at <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/wace/biodict.html?term=Cerenthus,%20opponent%20of%20St.%20John> , accessed June 21, 2015.) The relationship to Gnosticism is that they are both heretical, but not synonymous (See Hall Harris, “1 John,” at [www.Bible.org](http://www.Bible.org) , “Heresies” for a discussion of Cerenthus’ heresy along with others.)

One way the proponents justify this pervasive view that Gnosticism as the main heresy of the book is from the prominent use of the word “know” (*γινώσκω*) in the epistle (25 times in the verbal form). It is from that word that the Gnostics derive their name.

Of course, an obvious difficulty exists for the interpreter because John would be defining “know” from a historical heresy found one hundred (or more) years later. In their view the use of “know” would be a subtle reference to Gnostic heresy, that is, that their higher *knowledge* made them closer to God?

First of all, it is rightly perceived that John uses “know” frequently (25 times in the verbal form) throughout the epistle. However, it is not just *γινώσκω* that he uses to communicate the word “know,” but also uses the synonym *οἶδα* (15 times) as well. Both Greek words are used interchangeably and synonymously as can be seen in 2:29 and 5:20 where they are used in the same verse with the same meaning. Thus, while *γινώσκω* appears somewhat more than *οἶδα*, the synonymous use and interchangeability would argue against John using *γινώσκω* as a literary polemic since he used another word, *oida*, unrelated as a direct allusion to the heresy, forty percent of the time. Polemic, as suggested in this case by the Gnosticism advocates, is a literary device meant to reference John’s opposition in a literary emphasis in an overused, as well as perhaps sarcastic, manner. They would propose that he takes the word (*γινώσκω*), which is central to his opposition’s prime tenets, and uses it against them by citing the correct use of the word in his theology. However, adding an unrelated word (*οἶδα*) almost one-half of the time with the intended word (*γινώσκω*) would certainly change the likelihood of this, since the use of *oida* would dilute the clarity, and certainly the impact, of this device. As weak as the Gnostic argument is, it does not have *γινώσκω* as a literary polemic.

As has been shown in this article, John is proving the Christ is the means of access to God from the Old Testament. Thus, his argument and definition for “know” would also come from that same source. In addition to Psalm 2 and Genesis 1—4, Jeremiah 31:31-34 is frequently overlooked as playing a foundational part in John’s epistle. It is clearly alluded to in 1 John 2:7-8 where the old commandment and new commandment are mentioned, as well as in 1 John 2:20, 27.

Jeremiah 31:34 "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know (LXX: *γινώσκω*) the LORD,' for they shall all know (LXX: *οἶδα*) Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

1 John 2:20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know (*oida*).

1 John 2:27 And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

In Jeremiah 31:34, the word “know” (the Lord) is a prominent and important word as it speaks of a relationship with God being fulfilled and final under the New Covenant which existed only in a partial and incomplete form under the Old.

From these verses in Jeremiah, the New Covenant child of God would “know” the Lord fully, having his sins completely forgiven and the “Law written on his heart.” This “Law written in the heart” is a figure of speech pointing out that the commandments, the character desires of God, would become the character of man as well, enabling the “keeping” of the commandments<sup>44</sup> and the inability to sin. This is the new heart given at the new birth. It is the new character, “eternal life.” The “forgiveness of sins” (1:7, 9) and “eternal life” anticipated by Jeremiah are declared by John to have come to pass in the Christ. In addition, the Gospel of John focuses on the same use of the word “know,” in John 17:1-2, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.” (John 17:3)

Interestingly, many have pondered why John uses *γινώσκω* and *οἶδα* synonymously. They are used as synonyms clearly in 2:29 and 5:20. Yet this synonymous use adds to the literary connection to Jeremiah 31:34 as exactly the same synonymous use is found in the LXX, translated from the same Hebrew word, *יָדַעַ*, thus indicating John’s source for the two terms and their interchangeability.

**Jeremiah 31:34** "And they shall not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know (LXX: *γινώσκω*, Heb.: *יָדַעַ*) the LORD,' for they shall all know (LXX: *οἶδα*, Heb.: *יָדַעַ*) Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

**1 John 5:29:** If you know (*εἰδῆτε*) that He is righteous, you know (*γινώσκετε*) that everyone also who does the righteousness is born of Him.

**1 John 5:20:** And we know (*οἶδαμεν*) that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know (*γινώσκωμεν*) Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

1 John 2:7-8 John also alludes to Jeremiah 31:31, where the prophecy was made the Old Covenant would go away and the New Covenant will replace it by putting the Old in a new heart, forgiving sins under the old heart. Thus the “child of God” would “know” God because he shared God’s character.

**Jeremiah 31:31-34:** "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I

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<sup>44</sup> This is also alluded to in Ezekiel 36:27 as a result of the new heart and new Spirit that God puts in them.

will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, <sup>32</sup> not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.

**1 John 2:7-8:** Brothers, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. Again, I write a new commandment to you, which is true in him and in you; because the darkness is passing away, and the true light already shines.

**Excursus: “Abide in Him” and “Walked as He Walked” (2:6)**

2:6 the one who says he abides in Him (the Father) ought himself to walk in the same manner as He (the Father) walked

Likely most readers would shift to the “Him” in 2:6 as being Jesus, particularly since they assume that the phrase “ought to walk in the same manner as He walked”<sup>45</sup> is referring to Jesus. (In addition in the Gospel, John 6:56, 15:1-7, uses “abide” with Jesus, and so that theology is seen as justified and is assumed to be imported here). However, as noted previously the overriding context here is that of relationship with God, the Father. Based on the previous evidence of “know Him,” and “keeping His commandments,” the “abide in Him” would also be a claim to abide in God, the Father. The parallel in 3:23-24 confirms that use of “abides in Him,” where it is God, the Father.

**3:23-24** This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us. <sup>24</sup> The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him . . .

In addition, John’s stated issue of the book of having a relationship to the Father is put in terms of “abiding in God” in 4:13-16.

<sup>13</sup> By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. <sup>14</sup> We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *to be* the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. <sup>16</sup> We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him (1 John 4:13-16).

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<sup>45</sup> In addition, see the discussion elsewhere that shows the pronoun “He” as being God the Father.



Now, most readers would say the “as He walked” refers to Jesus, but it is one of those assumptions that, while seeming to be obvious, is almost totally without substantiation. The use of “*peripateo*” (“walk”) is used only one other time in the epistle and that is of a person walking (“in the light” or “in the darkness,” 1:6,7; 2:6,11) which was shown to be synonymous with light as an attribute of God the Father, and thus one is to walk with God the Father in that case (by walking in the light, i.e., through belief in Jesus). Thus the epistle never refers to Jesus walking or to anyone walking with Jesus. Even in the Gospels (John and the synoptic gospels) there is never a use of the verb or noun, “walk,” where Jesus is walking in some symbolic or spiritual sense (i.e., holiness or purity). Thus if this is a reference to Jesus “walking” in some spiritual sense it occurs only this one time in the whole of the Bible.<sup>46</sup> On the other hand, there are multiple uses of *God* walking in the Old Testament<sup>47</sup>, particularly in Genesis 3:5 where God appears<sup>48</sup>, and others (Gen. 3:8, 5:22, Lev. 26:1, Judg. 2:17 (refers to walking as parallel to obeying the commands of the LORD, cf. also Jer. 7:23)), and 2 Sam. 6:4.

However, within the epistle’s context, “walking as He walked” is a direct reference to the statement in 1:5,7 where it was stated that “we” should “walk in the light.” That “light” is a reference (as previously shown) to God the Father and the expression of His character, which is “eternal life” (1:1-3). Thus in those verses one should walk in the revelation of the character of the Father. Now in 2:4 one should walk as He walked, again in the Father’s character. As stated in 1:5-9, the revelation of God’s character is only accessed through the perfect One, who covered sins, Jesus Christ the Righteous (1:7,10).<sup>49</sup> What John is saying is that one should “walk” in the revelation of God’s character, by trusting in Jesus Christ, the Righteous. It is through Jesus, that the believer receives the total perfection of God’s character, witnessed in the Son (i.e., eternal life), that one can have fellowship (i.e., share a common bond) with the Father. Thus again, John is pointing out that the access to the Father’s character is only through Jesus Christ.

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<sup>46</sup> Colossians 2:6 does relate one walking “in Him” as referring to walking in Jesus, but it is not saying Jesus “walked,” nor that the believer is to walk “with” Jesus as if Jesus is walking. Thus it is referring to the believer’s walk but not to Jesus as walking.

<sup>47</sup> There is a reference to God “walking” in the New Testament in 2 Corinthians 6:6 where it is a quotation from the Old Testament.

<sup>48</sup> See the reference to this Genesis event in 1 John 2:28.

<sup>49</sup> One might object here saying that “walking in the light” is walking “with” Jesus, since Jesus is that light. That would be a confusion of the figure of speech that he is using. God’s character is being revealed through the expression of His character, which is light. Thus to walk with God one must access Him through that expression. But the expression is not God, the Father, but the expression or revelation of God, the Father. This is again, confusion of the point of the book. Jesus is the access to being able to “walk with God” so as to return to the state that existed in the garden. It is very interesting that no one anywhere in the Bible is told to “walk with Jesus” using that expression, which is otherwise quite common with “the Father.”

***Genesis 3: God walking in the Garden:*** The Old Testament reference for this “walking as He walked” is Genesis 3:8, which fits in with all the other Genesis 1—4 allusions in 1 John 1:5--3:23.

They heard the sound (lit. “voice”) of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool (lit.: “spirit” or “wind”) of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence (lit.: the face”) of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. (Genesis 3:8)

Again, God’s presence appears in all of its holiness and Adam and Eve must hide since they now are not holy. They have covered themselves with leaves in a self-effort to cover their sin from God (recall, “we have no sin” (1 John 1:8) and “we have not sinned,” (1 John 1:10)) and thus could not walk with God. Immediately following was the provision of Genesis 3:15, which was to give them a new righteous character of God through the Messiah so that they could return to a walk with God. Thus, the only way one could “walk as He walked,” was to access God through His (coming) Messiah and be pure once again.

Later in Genesis 5:22 and 6:9, it is also stated that Enoch and Noah “walked with God.” This simply indicates that they were both trusting in the coming Messiah<sup>50</sup> of Genesis 3:15 which enabled them to share the hope in the future Messiah to forgive their sins.

### **3. The Old Covenant, as the New covenant, required the character of God which was the love of brother (2:7-11).**

2:7 Beloved, I (*John*) am not writing a new commandment (*believe; 3:23*) to you, but an old commandment, which you have had from the beginning (*Gen. 3:15; believe*); the old commandment is the word, which you have heard (*OT*).<sup>51</sup> 8 On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you (*believe; 3:23*), which is true in Him (*Father*) and in you (*reader*), because the darkness (*Death of Old Testament self-attempts*) is passing away, and the true light (*eternal life seen in Jesus*) is already shining. 9 The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother (*true children of God*) is in the darkness (*Old Testament self-righteousness*) until now. 10 The one who loves his brother abides in the light (*imputed righteousness*) and there is no cause for stumbling in him. 11 But the one who hates his brother (*true children of God*) is in the darkness (*Old*

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<sup>50</sup> Note that Lamech, Noah’s father, reflects his trust in the coming Genesis 3:15 Messiah in 5:29 as he refers to One who will remove the curse of the ground which was cursed in Genesis 3:17.

<sup>51</sup> Note the similarity and the likely allusion to Jeremiah 31:31-32.

*Testament self-righteousness*) and walks in the darkness (*Old Testament self-righteousness*), and does not know where he is going because the darkness (*Old Testament self-righteousness*) has blinded his eyes.

<sup>7</sup> Ἀγαπητοί, οὐκ ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν ἀλλ' ἐντολὴν παλαιὰν ἣν εἶχετε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς· ἡ ἐντολὴ ἡ παλαιὰ ἐστὶν ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε. <sup>8</sup> πάλιν ἐντολὴν καινὴν γράφω ὑμῖν, ὃ ἐστὶν ἀληθὲς ἐν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία παράγεται καὶ τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινὸν ἤδη φαίνει. <sup>9</sup> Ὁ λέγων ἐν τῷ φωτὶ εἶναι καὶ τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ μισῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν ἕως ἄρτι. <sup>10</sup> ὁ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ μένει καὶ σκάνδαλον ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν. <sup>11</sup> ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ ἐστὶν καὶ ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπατεῖ καὶ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει, ὅτι ἡ σκοτία ἐτύφλωσεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτοῦ.

Love of brother was an essential commandment of the Law as it was demonstrated by God fully in Genesis 3:15 where God's New Adam would die for the brother. This is fully explained in Cain, the seed of the serpent like the false teachers and the antichrist, and Abel, like the Seed of the Woman, the apostles and believers.

**Jeremiah 31:31-34:** The Old Commandment is the Old Testament, which anticipated Messiah to cover their sins. The New Commandment is now the Old Commandment fulfilled in Jesus (Jeremiah 31:31-34), which as 1 John 3:23 states, to believe in the Christ.

**Genesis:** Cain hated his brother, Abel, by murdering him. The reason that he murdered Abel was because Abel's sacrifice (4:4) indicated a trust in Messiah (Genesis 3:15, 3:21) and Cain accessed God through his own works (4:3). Thus, as predicted in Genesis 3:15, Cain persecuted and killed the righteous one, and so today the children of the devil are identified by the fact that they hate the true children of God through their trust in Messiah.

Thus, Cain, like Adam hid from God, was walking in darkness (rejecting the character of God, yet still insisting he was right). He was a "seed of the serpent", since he, like the serpent rejected God's revelation. Thus, in 1 John, the implication is that these false teachers who reject the Christ are also walking in darkness as they reject the ones who follow the revelation (i.e., the Christ). Thus, since the Christians are correct, then the hate that the so-called brothers have for the believers reveals that they are not correct and that they are indeed children of the devil. Stated another way, it is clear that those who believe in the Christ are children of God. When those who claim to be lovers of God but hate the true children of God it shows they are not of God.

This parallel in 1 John to Cain is massive. Cain responds to God, "Am I my brother's keeper?" The statement by itself is telling. To use the term "brother" and then argue that one has no relationship (e.g., to help and look after,

to care for) is contradictory. This is what John is saying. The prophecy of Genesis 3:15 showed that God would send the ultimate Man, who would sacrifice Himself for the brother; thus love of brother was the character of God even to the sacrificial death of ultimate Son of God.

**John's Gospel:** The foundational dissertation on this subject of how one tells that a person is not a child of God because he does not love the brother is in John 15:17—16:4 where Jesus tells them that the fact that they hated Him was an identification of being a child of the devil (see also John 8). Then He said that they will hate the apostles because they carry the Word of Jesus, and thus they hated Him for that reason, they will hate the apostles for that reason. So, the issue is that a hate of the apostolic word is a hate of Jesus word, which shows they hate the righteous ones as Cain hated Abel.

**B. The readers as children of God need to reject the deception of the antichrists (seed of the serpent) and their deception from Satan, just as in Genesis 3, Adam and Eve rejected God's revelation for the deception of the serpent (2:12-28).**

From this point on to the end of the chapter, the Genesis allusion demonstrates their parallel (actually fulfillment) situation with respect to revelation. The first woman (Genesis 3) was deceived by Satan to be lured by her sight (2:15-7) and now the antichrists (2:18,22), who follow the serpent (thus "seed of the serpent") and are, like Satan, deceiving the believers. If the believers listen to the antichrists, then the apostles, like Adam and Eve, will be ashamed at the coming of God for judgment for the believers have not abided (2:28).

**1. The readers have already accomplished the fulfillment of Genesis (2:12-14).**

12 I am writing to you, little children (*teknia*),  
because your sins are forgiven you for His name's  
sake.<sup>52</sup>

13 I am writing to you, fathers,  
because you know Him who has been from the  
beginning  
(lit.: . . . you know the (*ton*) from beginning).<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> This indicates initial belief. The reference is made more clear by referring to 1:7, 9, 2:1).

<sup>53</sup> "Know Him Who has been from the beginning". "From the beginning" has two possibilities. Either from the beginning of creation (Gen. 1) or the beginning of the new creation (John 1:1ff., cf. John 16:4, i.e., the beginning of Christ's ministry which is the presence of new life on earth). It appears to be determined by the object related to "the beginning". If it seems to modify Jesus then it appears to say that He was from the original creation described in the Old Testament in Genesis 1 and following. If it relates

I am writing to you, young men,  
because you have overcome the evil one<sup>54</sup>.  
I have written to you, children (*paidia*),  
because you know the Father.<sup>55</sup>  
14 I have written to you, fathers<sup>56</sup>,  
because you know Him who has been from the  
beginning.  
I have written to you, young men<sup>57</sup>,  
because you are strong,  
and the word of God abides in you,  
and you have overcome the evil one.

<sup>12</sup>Γράφω ὑμῖν, τεκνία, ὅτι ἀφέωνται ὑμῖν αἱ ἁμαρτίαι διὰ τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ. <sup>13</sup>γράφω ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. γράφω ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν. <sup>14</sup>ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, παιδία, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν πατέρα. ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, πατέρες, ὅτι ἐγνώκατε τὸν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς. ἔγραψα ὑμῖν, νεανίσκοι, ὅτι ἰσχυροὶ ἐστε καὶ ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει καὶ νενικήκατε τὸν πονηρόν.

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to a character's relationship with Jesus then it seems to be that it is from the beginning of His ministry or the beginning of the full revelation of the light. Thus here, it appears to be saying that the fathers were those who had known Jesus as the fullness of the Old Testament (i.e., "the beginning").

<sup>54</sup> "Overcome the evil one" is defined in John 16:33 as Jesus. However in 1 John 5:5 the way the believer participates as an "overcomer" of the evil one, is through belief in Christ. This is due to "Seed of the Woman" being prophesied to overcome the serpent in Genesis 3:15. The one who overcomes is the one who participates in Christ (imputed righteousness), the Genesis 3:15 Overcomer, and receives the new life which Satan cannot affect since it is the character of Christ who overcame Satan.

<sup>55</sup> "Knowing the Father" is a reference to Jeremiah 31:34 and also here in 1 John 2:4.

<sup>56</sup> The "fathers" reference here is in close proximity to "the Father". As the 'children of God' they are to be imitators through belief in Jesus Christ. God taught this to them in the commandments that reflected the Father. Now the fathers are expected to teach their children (Deut. 6:5ff.), which was the function of spiritual fathers as opposed to natural fathers.

<sup>57</sup> The reference to 'young men' is also a family reference, yet it is emphasized by the fact that they are strong. While the fathers are known for their teaching, and the children are known by their being "born" in the family, the young men are known by their ability to fight. Thus the exhortations in Deuteronomy are to those who were able to make war with the seed of the serpent. These young men are thus persevering in the belief against the antagonist.

By the listing of items, these readers are believers in the family of God (children, young men, fathers), which is why they are called by family names. These are those who have already decided to accept the true revelation of God in Jesus Christ to be in the family. The progression encourages them to become strong by abiding in the word and rejecting the deception of these antichrists. The reference to family members is back to the “children of God” title. This makes them “children of God” through believing in the “Seed of the Woman” (Genesis 3:15) and now fulfilled in believing that Jesus is the Christ.

The fathers are those who have understood the proof of the Christ from the Old Testament and thus have taught their “children” who have received forgiveness of sins through the message of the Christ. Thus they also know the Father. The “young men” are those who have grown up and competed with the deception of Satan and won through overcoming by the blood of the lamb. They have thus, abided in Him.

**2. The readers are exhorted to reject the deceit of the antichrists, who are following Satan, as he deceived the first woman (2:15-17).**

2:15 Do not love the world<sup>58</sup>, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.

<sup>15</sup> Μὴ ἀγαπᾶτε τὸν κόσμον μηδὲ τὰ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ. ἐάν τις ἀγαπᾷ τὸν κόσμον, οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ πατρὸς ἐν αὐτῷ. <sup>16</sup> ὅτι πᾶν τὸ ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ, ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῆς σαρκὸς καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία τῶν ὀφθαλμῶν καὶ ἡ ἀλαζονεία τοῦ βίου, οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀλλ’ ἐκ τοῦ κόσμου ἐστίν. <sup>17</sup> καὶ ὁ κόσμος παράγεται καὶ ἡ ἐπιθυμία αὐτοῦ, ὃ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.

Satan led Adam and Eve into sin and the world was cursed. Thus the world represents the lusts that came from Satan. This old self listens to its own lusts and craves this life’s success and self-righteousness as

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<sup>58</sup> The world is the old creation that became cursed in Adam. Adam and Eve had evaluated everything on what they could see and their human reasoning as opposed to revelation. Now the believer is exhorted to avoid Eve’s mistake. They will be tempted by Satan to put their hope in what they see, even though it is passing away (Gen. 3:15).

opposed to recognizing that one needs the new life in Jesus Christ through His imputed righteousness.

The three items listed are the three things that Eve considered in evaluating the word of God through Satan's temptation.

<i>Readers</i>	<i>The First Woman</i>
<i>"Love the world"</i>	<i>"Temptation of Satan"</i>
<i>"Lust of the eyes"</i>	<i>"saw that it was good for food"</i>
<i>"Lust of the flesh"</i>	<i>"a delight to the eyes"</i>
<i>"Boastful pride of life"</i>	<i>"desirable to make one wise"</i>

Satan had victory in overcoming Eve so that those who were born from Adam (Cain) would in a similar fashion be tempted and would in the same way fall.

**3. The readers are not to be deceived by those who are like Cain and reject the revelation of God in the Christ (2:18-23).**

2:18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we (apostles) know that it is the last hour.

<sup>18</sup> Παιδιά, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν, ὅθεν γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν.

19 They<sup>59</sup> went out from us (apostles), but they were not *really* of us (apostles); for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but *they went out*, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.

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<sup>59</sup> It seems best in the context to see that these were Jewish antagonists. As Jews they would have claimed to be "Children of God" (cf. Deut. 14:1 contrast with Deut. 32:5, 20, also see John 1:11-13). Thus, John says that the decisive determination of the "children of God" and the "children of Satan" is the rejection of the revelation identified with the apostles; which is the Old Testament fulfilled in Jesus. The antagonist has the Old Testament but, as is the testimony of this book, they should know the Christ from the pages of the Old Testament story.

19 ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθαν<sup>60</sup> ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν· εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μεμενήκεισαν ἂν μεθ' ἡμῶν· ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσὶν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν.

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. 21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth. 22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

<sup>20</sup> καὶ ὑμεῖς χρῖσμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ οἴδατε πάντες. <sup>21</sup> οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκ οἴδατε τὴν ἀλήθειαν ἀλλ' ὅτι οἴδατε αὐτὴν καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεῦδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν. <sup>22</sup> Τίς ἔστιν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ Χριστός; οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα

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<sup>60</sup> The “went out” here is normally used for identify the “source, as in, they were a member of a group (“us”), and then they left (e.g., “went out” from) the group (“us”), thus identifying themselves as not actually a true member of the group. However, the “us” here is the apostles (not the reader’s congregation as most make it). Thus the apostles were the source, so the antichrists could not have been a member of that group, so it is clearly not saying that these “antichrists” were once apostles.. It is only used here and 4:1 in 1 John. In 2 John it is used in 1:7. The Old Testament allusion here is referring to Genesis 4:16 where Cain “went out” from the presence of God due to his rejection of the revelation and his murder of his brother. Thus the “going out” of the deceivers is like Cain moving from the presence of God (the revelation of His character) into the cursed world to align their life with it. In other words what this is saying is that, like Cain, these antichrists (“they,” false teachers) were confronted the apostolic doctrine (“us”), like Cain was confronted by God’s presence. And like Cain “went out” from God’s presence, these antichrists “went out” from the apostolic doctrine.

The group would be those claiming to be “Children of God.” They are divided up by the apostolic doctrine, and those who reject Jesus, went out.

<sup>16</sup> Then Cain **went out** from the presence of the LORD, and settled in the land of Nod, east of Eden. (Genesis 4:16)

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets **have gone out** into the world. (1 John 4:1)

<sup>7</sup> For many deceivers **have gone out** into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ *as* coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. (2 John 1:7)



καὶ τὸν υἱόν. <sup>23</sup> πᾶς ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει, ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει.

The antichrists (“they”) are the seed of the serpent, deceivers. Genesis 3:15 promised there would be the “seeds of the serpent”<sup>61</sup> in the world and an ultimate seed of the serpent (the antichrist) at the final end.

These antichrists, who say they are “children of God,” are not (like Cain), because they deny Jesus, saying, “Jesus is not the Christ” (like Cain’s sacrifice) (2:22). And like Cain, “went out” from the presence of God, these antichrists (“they”<sup>62</sup>, 2:19) “go out” by rejecting the apostolic doctrine (“us,” 2:19), denying Jesus as the Christ (2:22).

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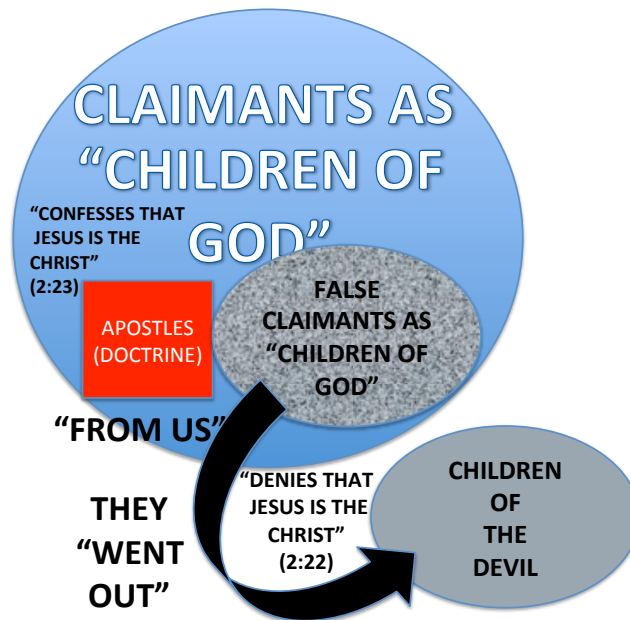
<sup>61</sup> Matthew 23:33 refers to the Pharisees as “seeds of serpents” with the “serpents” being the fathers who killed the prophets. They would have followed the original “serpent” (Satan).

<sup>62</sup> 1 John 2:19 is used very commonly as a proof text to show that people who profess to be Christians, and then left the church, were never true Christians. Typically this is applied to people whose habitual behavior is suspect or who abandon the church for other doctrines or even reject Christ. However, this is not at all the context of this verse and cannot be used to fit that category. The “they” are antichrists who are “deniers of Jesus as the Christ” (2:22) and not professors of Christianity. They deny Christ, thus do not claim to be Christians, nor have ever claimed that.

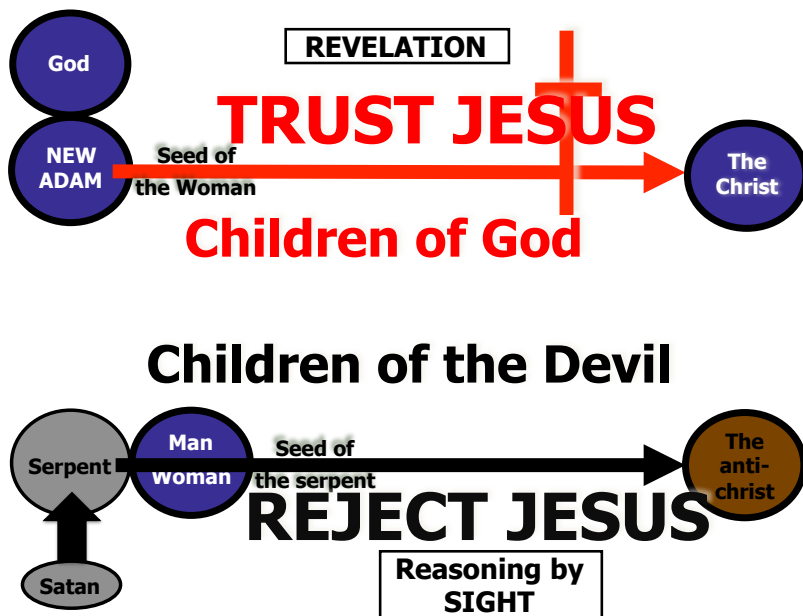
What these antichrists are claiming (or professing) is that they are “children of God,” but denying Jesus Christ as the way. This was like the Pharisees in John’s Gospel John (8:37-44), and these here are likely Jewish law-keepers (see Deut. 14:1) in First John. John’s point is that they (antichrists) are not “children of God” as they claim. And the proof of that is that they rejected the apostolic doctrine (see 4:6 where it says the same thing.)

Also, this errant view also claims the “us” is the church instead of the apostles (see 1:1-3, 4:6) or apostolic doctrine. Obviously if John (an apostle) is writing to the church to keep it from being deceived, the church cannot be the determiner of who is a “child of God” (since they can be deceived, as many churches clearly are). The apostles are the only determiner stated in the book (4:5-6).

A parallel passage in 1 John that uses all the same terms is 4:1-6. There the false prophets are the spirit of antichrist and are identified as the ones who teach the world to deny Jesus as the Christ. They also “went out” into the world from the apostolic doctrine. This is not identifying a false professing Christian, but one who claims to be a “child of God” apart from Christ. They claim they are children of God but who access God some other way than Jesus (e.g., the Law, good works).



In the parallel passage in 4:1-6 the false prophets (synonymous with the antichrists) “went out” into the “world (4:1, 2 John 1:7). The verb “went out is derived from Cain, who “went out” (Genesis 4:16) when confronted by the revelation of God. In other words, the antichrists were confronted by the revelation that was held by the apostles and rejected it. This revealed, like Cain, that they were not “children of God.”



The readers are believers and as such know the truth of the Messiah as access to the Father, but the followers of Satan are identified

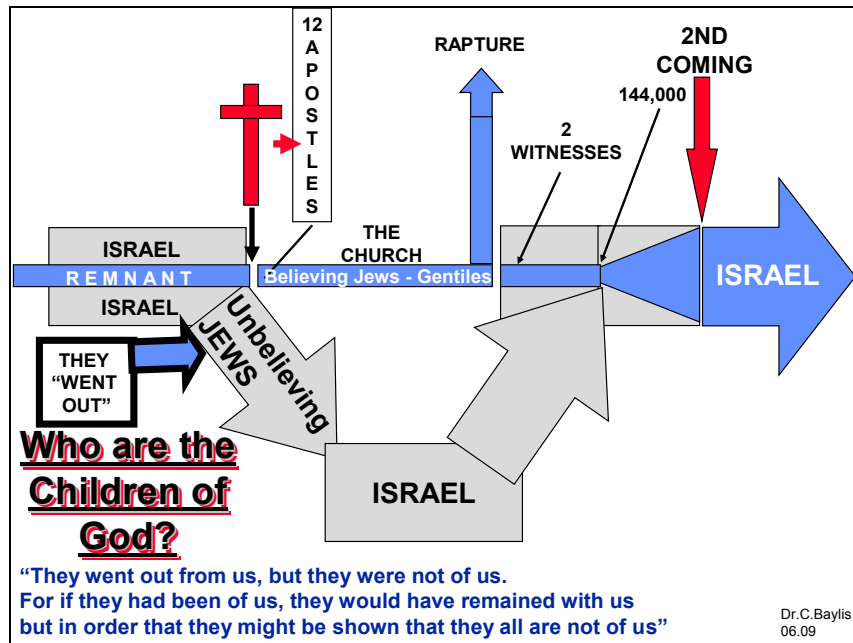
by their denial of the Son as access to the Father. The Son and the Father go together, since the Son is access to the Father

These antichrists, who say they are children of God, are not because they deny Jesus, saying, “Jesus is not the Christ” (2:22). And like Cain, “went out” from the presence of God, these antichrists (“they,” 2:19) are identified by their rejection of the apostolic doctrine (“us,” 2:19), as they deny Jesus as the Christ (2:22).

The reader is warned to continue in the revelation through the apostles regarding belief in Jesus that the apostles (see 1:4) might not, like Adam and Eve, be ashamed of these non-abiding believers at the coming of God when He appears in the Christ for judgment and escape of the righteous.

The evidence that the antagonist is antichrist is that he disagrees with the revelation of the apostles (2:19, “us”), which agrees with the revelation of the Old Testament and the eyewitness account of Jesus. Since they “went out” from the apostolic revelation it showed that they were antagonists, as the apostolic revelation of Jesus (and that of Jesus) separated the “children of God” from those who were simply claimants of that title.

The other uses of “went out” to be used of the deceivers is that they “went out” into the “world (4:1, 2 John 1:7). Thus, they went out (as Cain) from the revelation of God. In other words, they were confronted by the revelation that was held by the apostles and rejected it. What John pictures as the group from which they went out is the group of all the claimants of the title “children of God.”



The readers are believers and as such know the truth of the Messiah as access to the Father, but the followers of Satan are identified by their denial of the Son as access to the Father as they go together, the Son as access to the Father

### Excursus: "They went out from us . . . " (2:19)

*"They went out from us for they were not from us, for if they were from us they would have abided with us, but in order that they might be revealed that they all were not from us" (1 John 2:19).*

Probably one of the most quoted verses in 1 John 2:19, this verse is errantly proffered that there are those ("they") within the Christian congregation ("us") who have professed Christ as their Savior but not truly believed. In this view, since all those in the church profess Christ as part of the requirement for membership, true identity is known when these leave the congregation,<sup>63</sup> typically because of an evil lifestyle or denial of

<sup>63</sup> This is normally referred to as "head knowledge" or academic knowledge wherein a professing Christian has at some time trusted in Jesus Christ, but his habitual and evil works have identified him as a non-Christian, and thus he must not have had "heart" (or true) trust. While beyond the scope of this article, there does not appear to be any Scripture that ever questions "trust" as being false. If one "trusts" or "believes" in the Scripture they are in every case to be a true believer to the degree they do, and based on the content they know. The opposite of "trust" is "denial." Any level of faith appears to be effective to the degree to which it is expressed. Thus initial faith in the Scriptures is valid regardless of how much as long as its content is based on the truth of Jesus Christ.

some Christological tenet<sup>64</sup> even to the point of total rejection of Jesus as the Christ. Yet, simple logic, the immediate context, as well as the Old Testament allusions, fail to support this interpretation.

**The “us” is the apostles, not the professing Christian congregation<sup>65</sup>.**

Most commentators from the commonly held views hold that the “us” is the church<sup>66</sup>, or more specifically the congregation, of professing Christians.<sup>67</sup> Yet the “us,” or “we,” has been shown to be apostles since they are the ones who set the criteria (i.e., apostolic doctrine, see 1:1-4, 4:5-6) for determining the truth against the claimants (see 4:6).

In addition, logically the “us” cannot be the congregation since John is writing the church to keep them from being deceived and thus departing from the faith themselves. Thus, if the church members are the ones subject to deception, they can hardly be the absolute determiner of true or false professors.<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> On the face of it, this seems to be a semantic way around the “eternal security” problem created when a professing Christian abandons the faith, even after a period of time where they seemed to be “Christian,” and had a habitually consistent lifestyle. Since this view believes in good works as confirmation of salvation, this creates a problem when one who seems to have confirmed their salvation by good works for a while, then abandons the faith. So, in order to avoid the problem of their doctrine of eternal security or election (i.e., once saved, always saved; or the elect must persevere), they logically must declare that these were never saved. If isolated out of its context, this verse gets regularly used for that sole purpose, yet in context, is dealing with those who have never professed salvation through Christ, never claimed to be Christian. So these interpreters are in a totally different category.

<sup>65</sup> In addition, the reader, or the congregation to whom John is writing is typically addressed in the second person plural, “you.”

<sup>66</sup> The NET Bible sees this as the congregation, “The opponents departed from the author's congregation(s) and showed by this departure that they never really belonged.” Dr. Daniel Wallace states, “The immediate occasion for this epistle is that the false teachers had left the church (2.19), but were harassing the church and enticing it from a position outside: (Daniel Wallace, “1 John,” *www.Bible.org*, 1 John: Introduction, Argument, and Outline, “Occasion.” (Accessed July 4, 2015)).

<sup>67</sup> They see the use of the pronoun “us” throughout the epistle as usually the addressed congregation (4:7), but at times may be apostolic (4:6).

<sup>68</sup> This is rather obvious from the New Testament epistles, most of which were written to churches being led astray, who were not holding strictly to the apostolic doctrine, which was why the letter had to be written.

**The “they” are Antichrists (2:18, 22), who were never professors of Jesus since they deny (saying), “Jesus is not the Christ.”**

First of all, by just following the grammar it is clear that the “they” is clearly the “antichrists” of 2:18 and 2:22. These are defined as deniers (*saying*),<sup>69</sup> “Jesus is not the Christ.” Thus these are not professing Christians by definition. Nor is this a description of those who have strayed down some road of a sinful lifestyle. Nor does the text allow for enlargement of the wording to include some Christological error. It simply and clearly describes someone who does not, nor ever has, embraced Jesus as the Christ. The term “anti-christ” by definition says that. “Antichrists” are those who are the “seed of the serpent,” who by context of Genesis 3, opposed the “Seed of the Woman,” or the “Christ.” Thus these “seed of the serpent” are the “anti-christs.” Thus the context as well as its defining basis in Genesis 3 rejects the view that this is a problem of false professors of Christianity.

Here the problem of these common interpretations rears its head. Since their premises are based on an errant interpretation, their conclusions must also be errant. Since these common interpretations wrongly apply the “us” to the congregation, they then make a natural conclusion that John must be dividing the professing Christian congregation into true and false confessors of Jesus Christ.<sup>70</sup> Then because the interpreter does not see another possibility<sup>71</sup> than the professing “congregation” (or in

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Simple logic rejects this tenet. If there were false professors in the group, then logic would allow that those professors could be the very ones who are the determiners of the churches (false) doctrine and thus the determiners of the true “children of God.” Thus, the church cannot be the basis or tester of false doctrine or of false professors, as they themselves are too variable and easily deceived (which is what prompted the letter). Note that in Third John this is exactly the case. A doctrinal misfit (an unbeliever) is in charge of the church and is throwing out believers and even rejecting the apostles. Thus the ones leaving are the true believers while the ones staying (determiners) are the false teachers. John will not even attend the church, thus making him one who is outside this local church. Thus, the church is not the determiner, but the apostolic doctrine.

<sup>69</sup> The form of the verse makes it a direct quotation, and thus “saying” is added.

<sup>70</sup> It is possible to have deniers of Jesus as the Christ in the congregation as can be seen by the second and third epistles of John as well as the seven churches of Revelation 2—3. Some of these churches had unbelievers (deniers of Jesus as the Christ) in their membership. However in the First Epistle, the obvious situation is that John is emphatic about the fact that he is writing to believers, and in fact, confirming that they are believers. There is no hint in the book that the actual addressed readership is being questioned about their own confession.

<sup>71</sup> That the congregation as the group is not valid is seen in 3 John where Diotrophes is one who rejects the apostolic teaching and rejects the brothers, all clear

some cases, the congregation formed from the apostles<sup>72</sup>) in 2:19, he then must alter the plain meaning of 2:22 where the “they” who went out “deny (*saying*), “Jesus is not the Christ,”” to include an evil lifestyle or denial of some Christological tenet. This is necessary since (again, logically) it would be quite obvious that a denier of Jesus Christ would not be a professing “Christian,” since it is self-confirming (i.e., who would be questioning, since they admit it?). Yet, the grammar of 2:22 is quite simple and does not imply any deviation other than a clear (verbal) denial of Jesus.<sup>73</sup> The struggle of these views becomes self-evident as most commentators do not admit that the simplicity of the grammar indicates a simple denial of Jesus as the identifying characteristic of these antichrists. Thus, having denied this simplicity (“Jesus is not the Christ”) because it opposes their view they must either enlarge it with their own information (e.g., include a perceived historical Christological heresy), or simply pass by it without explanation since it does not fit their conclusions.

### **The Old Testament basis for 2:19: Genesis 3—4:**

The whole context of 1 John 2:15—28 is alluding to Genesis 3—4. The readers are urged to avoid the deceit of the antichrists to lure them to trust in the visible, materialistic, old cursed world (2:26) as Eve did (2:15-17). These antichrists have now appeared (2:18) as predicted in Genesis 3:15, and as the “seed of the serpent” they deny

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testimony that he, as the leader of the congregation, is not embracing Jesus in any sense as the Christ. “For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire *to do so* and puts *them* out of the church.” Another example is the Church at Laodicea in Revelation 3:20: where it is clear that some members of these churches are deniers, not of some narrow heretical doctrine, but that Jesus is the Christ.

<sup>72</sup> This view is held by Zane Hodges, “The Epistles of John: Walking in the Light of God’s Love” (pages 108-110). Note, however, as is common between the two views, they make the same error, thinking that these antichrists had at one time been professing believers in Jesus as the Christ, which contradicts 2:22.

<sup>73</sup> Since the sentence does not infer any deviations from the obvious fact that these antichrists want nothing to do with Jesus, the interpreters, in order to solve the incongruity (i.e., professors who deny their profession?) have searched for some deviation within their Christology that might explain what appears to be a clear denial of Jesus Christ, but yet still be a professing Christian (a seeming insolvable contradiction). Thus, they must say that a denier of Jesus Christ is a denier, not of the Name of Jesus as the Christ (which is the way the text reads), but of some essential narrow Christological doctrine. This allows them to still have a profession, but not a true (i.e., accurate) one. This explains why Gnosticism is input into this even though there is no evidence that this heresy existed at the time of John’s writing, nor that anything in the grammar allows anything but a blatant denial of Jesus as the only access to the Father.

the Christ as access to the Father (2:22). They, like Cain (Genesis 4:16), have rejected the revelation of the Christ revealed in the apostolic doctrine and “gone out” from the apostles and their doctrine.<sup>74</sup> Thus 2:19 is affirming that the issue is that the claimants of the identity as “children of God” (“they”) reject (“go out from”) the apostolic doctrine (“us”) and thus are clearly identified by their denial of Jesus Christ.

### Validation in 1 John 4:1-6.

A parallel passage to 2:18-26 occurs in 1 John 4:1-6 which confirms the interpretation of 2:19 to that of the “Children of God” view in that it reflects a rejection of the apostolic doctrine (“us”) by unbelievers in the Christ (“they”). The “false prophets” in 4:1-6 are parallel to the “they” in 2:19 and are, like 2:18, the antichrist. And like the “they” in 2:19, have “gone out” into the world. In 4:6, the basis of the separation is clearly the apostolic doctrine. It is that doctrine which separates those false prophets, antichrists, and the world, from those who are truly in God’s family.

- In both passages John alerts them to the fact that the prophecy of the antichrists (Genesis 3:15, “seed of the serpent”) is being fulfilled in their day.
  - 2:18:** you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour.
  - 4:1:** of which you have heard that it (the *spirit* of the antichrist, 4:3) is coming, and now it is already in the world.
- In both passages “they” (“antichrists”) have rejected the apostolic doctrine (“us”) and were shown to be (“went out”) false claimants to the “Family of God.”
  - 2:19** “they (antichrists, 2:18) went out from us,”
  - 4:1** because many false prophets (the *spirit* of the antichrist, 4:3) have gone out into the world
  - 4:5-6** They (false prophets (4:1), antichrists (4:3)) are from the world; therefore they speak *as* from the world, and the world listens to them. <sup>6</sup> We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.
- In both passages, the “children of the devil” (“antichrists, 2:19, 4:3) are identified by

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<sup>74</sup> One might question how they have “gone out” from the apostles if they were never a part of the apostolic group, i.e., never saved. Observing the allusion to Cain solves this. He was confronted by God, but rejected and thus “went out.” Here the false teachers were confronted by the apostolic doctrine, but rejected and also “went out.”



their rejection of the apostolic doctrine that Jesus is the Christ prophesied in the Old Testament.

**2:22-23** Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. <sup>23</sup> Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

**4:2-3** By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; <sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist

### **Conclusion:**

They went out from us because they were not of us . . . is identifying the “they” (2:19) as the antichrists who claim (profess) to have access to God but do not because they reject the apostolic doctrine (“us”), which is that Jesus is the Christ. Thus, this passage confirms that John’s purpose is to identify the true “Children of God,” or those who actually have access to the Father. The criterion is, very simply, those who trust in Jesus as the Christ.

### **(End of Excursus)**

4. **The readers are believers and as such know the truth of the Messiah from the Old Testament and the eyewitness of the apostles and need to stay faithful to their belief so that the apostles will not be ashamed of the unfaithful believers as Adam was when God appeared for judgment as He will appear for judgment (2:24-28)**

24 As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life. 26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. 27 And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. 28 And now, little children, abide in Him, so that

when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>24</sup> ὑμεῖς ὁ ἠκούσατε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω. ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνη ὁ ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε, καὶ ὑμεῖς ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε.<sup>25</sup> καὶ αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἣν αὐτὸς ἐπηγγείλατο ἡμῖν, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον.<sup>26</sup> Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν περὶ τῶν πλανώντων ὑμᾶς.<sup>27</sup> καὶ ὑμεῖς τὸ χρῖσμα ὃ ἐλάβετε ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ, μένει ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε ἵνα τις διδάσκη ὑμᾶς, ἀλλ’ ὡς τὸ αὐτοῦ χρῖσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων καὶ ἀληθές ἐστὶν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ψεῦδος, καὶ καθὼς ἐδίδαξεν ὑμᾶς, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ.<sup>28</sup> Καὶ νῦν, τεκνία, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ, ἵνα ἐὰν φανερωθῇ σχῶμεν παρρησίαν καὶ μὴ αἰσχυνοῦμεν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ.

God walked in the garden in Genesis 3 and, of course, was walking in perfect holiness (“light” in John’s terms). However, Adam had to hide since he had sin and had rejected God and was due for judgment. Thus God came into the garden for judgment. Yet the judgment on Adam and Eve and all those who came from them was delayed as God promised to send the Seed of the Woman (the Christ) in Genesis 3:15 to deliver those who would believe in Him out of the old creation. Now God will finish His judgment and come again, but this time it will be in the Promised One who will execute judgment on the serpent (Satan) and his followers.

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<sup>75</sup> There is an obvious question here as to the state of the “child of God” who does not continue to hold what was from the beginning. Of course, systematic theology dictates that eternal life is simply that and cannot sin and thus cannot be taken away. In fact, John will argue exactly that point in chapter 3. Thus, he is applying the Adam and Eve’s case to the believers, who, if they join the antagonists, will become like Adam and the apostles will be ashamed of them at the judgment. This is regarding the apostasy of the believer. While some do not hold that it is possible, the very context of the book holds that it is, otherwise why implore them to not do it? So, a believer is eternally secure, and will not come into judgment of hell, even for apostasy. Yet the shame which is indicated here is the opposite of joy in the presence of Christ.

Does the example of Adam and Eve require a soteriological parallel? The answer is that this initial belief does not remove the believer from the possibility of following Satan in the future. The same simple (and single) source of sin continues. David is an example of this as he sins like Eve (“sees that she is good . . . and sends to take her . . .”) and sins like Cain (murders the righteous one trying to cover his sin since Uriah was a very testimony exposing David’s sin).

The question of shame at His coming is not limited to John but is covered in the synoptic Gospels.

Thus, while John speaks of His coming he is speaking of God's coming in the Christ to execute the judgment that never came when He walked in the garden. The believer thus is exhorted to stay in His trust in the Seed of the Woman, now in Christ, so that the apostles<sup>76</sup> might not be ashamed by the believer's failure at the coming of Christ.

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<sup>76</sup> The actual pronoun is "we" thus indicating "the apostles. It is a reference to 1:4 where the apostles' joy is complete because the believers hold their message, because they are a family.