

**PART VI****THE OLD TESTAMENT AS THE SOURCE OF JOHN'S PROOF**

John is using more than “proof texts” to provide an underlying theology. He is using no less than the complete plot of the Biblical story from Genesis through to its fulfillment in the first and second coming of Jesus. Thus, one must understand, not just the individual passages he quotes, but the meaning of the context of the passages within the plot. These will formulate the single Biblical storyline that moves solely toward Jesus of Nazareth.

**Psalm 2: The Sole Access To The Father - The Son (5:12-13)**

Frequently I ask my seminary classes, what does the title the “Son of God” or the “Christ” mean? Even though many of them have progressed in their studies, blank looks are the norm. If a brave student ventures to respond, it is typically to state that the “Son of God” means that Jesus is God<sup>24</sup> or that He is the “Savior from sins.” While these are clearly true, they are not the full foundational meanings of these titles.

If the purpose of the Gospel found in John 20:31 is to prove that Jesus is “the Christ, “the Son of God,” and the purpose of his Epistle in 5:13 is to write to “you who believe in the Son of God . . .” and these titles come from Psalm 2:2, 2:7, a proper interpretation of John’s purpose of the book cannot be made without knowing the Old Testament sourced definition of these titles. These titles, the “Christ” (Psalm 2:2) and the “Son of God<sup>25</sup>” (Psalm 2:7) have a specific function in the story of Psalm 2, and knowing that function and position will explain the purpose (5:13) as well as the content of the confession (e.g., 5:1) that John desires for his readers.

***Psalm 2<sup>26</sup>: The Father Grants all things to the Son, the Christ.*** The Psalmist explains that the “Christ” (2:2), the “Son” (2:7), is the One, and the only One, through whom God the Father, residing in heaven, relates to the people of the earth. In Psalm 2:1-3, the Gentiles and their rulers rebel against God and His Christ (Heb.: מְשִׁיחַוּ). The Father then administers His wrath on them (2:4-5) through His Christ, who will execute it

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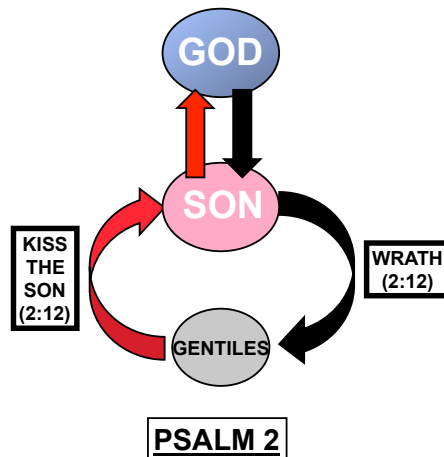
<sup>24</sup> 1 John 5:18.

<sup>25</sup> The phrase “Son of God” is also defined additionally from 2 Samuel 7:12-16 in the Davidic Covenant where God states that the Davidic King will be a “Son” to Him (7:14), meaning he would represent God directly.

<sup>26</sup> Refer to George A. Gunn, “Psalm 2 and the Reign of Messiah” in *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 169:676 (October-December 2012): 427-442.

from His throne (as King) in Jerusalem (2:6). The Father will give the Son (2:7) an inheritance, which consists of the nations who were in rebellion (2:8) for the purpose of executing judgment on them (2:9). The Psalm then ends with a warning to these Gentile rulers to escape the wrath of the Father (2:10) by reverencing God (2:11) through trusting (i.e., “kiss,” 2:12) the Son. Thus, the Son is the only means of escaping the wrath of the Father, which He will execute through the Son.

By alluding to Psalm 2 through the use of these titles, John has made the case that there is only one access to (and from) the Father, which is through, and only through, the Christ, the Son of God.<sup>27</sup> This “Christ” is the sole means of escaping the Father’s wrath and obtaining His mercy. The only thing left for the reader to find out following an original reading of Psalm 2, is who is this Christ?



<sup>27</sup> John 5:21-23 or even more familiarly, John 3:16, explains this by referencing Psalm 2.

<sup>21</sup> "For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son (Psalm 2:7) also gives life to whom He wishes (Psalm 2:12).<sup>22</sup> "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son (Psalm 2:12),<sup>23</sup> so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.

<sup>16</sup> "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son (Psalm 2:7), that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life (Psalm 2:12).

**Genesis 1—4:<sup>28</sup>****“Children Of God” And “Children Of The Devil” (1 John 3:10)**

1 John 3:10 specifically names the two contrasting character groups in this book. While all would claim (“if we say . . .”) that they are children of God, they are not. John specifies that in reality all these claimants are in one of two camps. They are either “children<sup>29</sup> of God” (the Gospel of John defined this phrase in 1:11-12 as believers in Christ) or “children of the devil” (also previously defined in John 8:40-41, 44 as those who reject Jesus). John’s Old Testament defining referent for these phrases is found in Genesis 3:15 where God prophesied two paths for all of Eve’s children. They would either chose to, like the first Adam, follow the serpent and reject the revelation of God (and thus be the “seed of the serpent”) or they would follow the revelation of God and believe in His prophecy of the new Adam to come (and be followers of the “Seed of the Woman”). This prophesied New Adam (“Seed of the Woman”), who is the very character of God, would bring the righteous character of God to these believers making them “born of God” in place of their status as “born of Adam.” They would, thus, become “children of God.” In summary, from Genesis 3:15, the “children of God” are those who embrace the Christ (“Seed of the Woman”) by belief. Contrariwise, the “children of the devil” are those who are deceived by the serpent, Satan, to reject the Christ as the means to the Father. They would feel that life (access to the Father) would come to them through other means than God’s revelation, that is, as determined by their human wisdom (e.g., good works).

The narrative of Genesis 3:14-24<sup>30</sup> (the prophecy of the division of all mankind into the “children of God” and the “children of the devil”) is followed by the story of the

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<sup>28</sup> For a more detailed explanation of the narrative of Genesis 1—4, see this author’s chapter, “Finding Jesus in the Old Testament,” in A Festschrift in Honor of Elliott E. Johnson, to be published late 2015, or at [www.BiblicalStory.org](http://www.BiblicalStory.org), “Resources,” “Articles.”

<sup>29</sup> The use of “child” or “son” or “image” as synonymous for “seed” is seen in both a physical (physical child) or obedient (child as representative, see Titus 1:4, 2 Timothy 1:2). Thus John’s use of the Son to refer to Genesis 3:15 is contextual since this One would be the “Image” of Genesis 1:26. See the use of “image” and “son” in Genesis 5:3-4 as it is interchanged (Reference the Genesis Commentary at [www.BiblicalStory.org](http://www.BiblicalStory.org), “Resources,” “Commentaries.” Notice also the use of “son” and “father” as used by Jesus in John 8:37-45. He used it in the “representative” sense, against the Pharisees who used it in genealogical sense to validate that their heritage from Abraham made them “sons.”

<sup>30</sup> This phrase “. . . the beginning” is always used in 1 John to reference Jesus’ presence in the text of the Old Testament beginning in Genesis 1:1. This phrase is evident, as well as the verbal statements “you have had” and “you have heard,” to indicate their understanding of the Old Testament canonical text, as can be seen in 2:8,

two sons of the Genesis 3:15-16 “woman.” This narrative plays out the two paths that were prophesied by God. Cain, illustrating the “seed of the serpent,” rejects the revelation of God in this future Messiah, while Abel offers a sacrifice indicating his trust in the future suffering substitute, Messiah (see Hebrews 11:4).

John uses this context of Genesis 3--4 in 1 John 3:10-12. The “Seed of the woman” (Genesis 3:15) is referenced as the “children of God,” and the “seed of the serpent” as the “children of the devil.” Then, just as Cain and Abel followed Genesis 3:14-24 to illustrate the two paths of the “Seed of the woman” and the seed of the serpent,” now in 1 John Cain and Abel are referenced in 3:12 to illustrate the “children of God” and the “children of the devil” (3:10).

John identifies each character by their “obvious” traits, that is, “do, or do not do, righteousness” (a singular noun). Then John identifies Cain and Abel by their traits as well to illustrate the “do, or not do, righteousness.” Thus whatever Cain did to make his deeds “evil,” and whatever Abel did to make his deeds “righteous,” is the key to understanding what “doing, or not doing, righteousness” is.

Returning to Genesis 4, the only “deeds” Cain did prior to the murder of his brother were his sacrifice(s). And the only “deeds” Abel did prior to his death were his sacrifice(s). Thus, one must conclude that John sees in Genesis a diametrically opposed action toward God between Cain and Abel.

Those identifying traits were that Cain’s “deeds” (i.e., his sacrifices) were evil, while his brother’s (i.e., his sacrifices) were righteous.”<sup>31</sup> Cain rejected the revelation of God regarding this coming New Adam (Genesis 3:15) by giving a sacrifice unauthorized by God’s revelation, but based on his own perception. Abel trusted in the coming Messiah as can be seen in his duplicating the sacrifice performed by God in Genesis 3:21, illustrating God’s prophecy of a substitutionary Messiah in 3:15-16. Thus, John’s point

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“an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard” (1 John 2:7). In the Gospel of John, however, “beginning” seemingly refers at times to the new creation (15:27, 16:4), which started with the appearance of the Word in the flesh (John 1:14), while at other times it refers to the original creation (John 1:1).

<sup>31</sup> This interpretation of Cain and Abel is confirmed by Matthew 23:33-35, where Scribes and Pharisees are accused by Jesus of following Cain and killing the righteous ones, and thus He calls them “seeds of serpents” (see also Luke 11:51). Hebrews 11:4 also references that Abel responded “by faith,” meaning he was responding to revelation, that of Genesis 3:15 and the prophecy of Messiah (“Faith” is always a response to revelation. It is not positive thinking.). Also Hebrews 12:24 references the “blood of Abel” as prefacing the “blood of Christ” as both died by the “strike” of the serpent on the righteous.

is that since the beginning, illustrated by Cain and Abel, the children of God and the children of the devil have always been identified by their trust in, or rejection of, Jesus as the Christ. John restates this criteria that establishes the identity of the “children of God” in 1 John 5:1, “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God . . . “

***The “Christ” as the “Seed of the Woman” who “overcomes” the serpent.***

Adam was to be the ruler of this first creation, representing (“imaging”) God over the earth (Genesis 1:26, 28). Yet he failed to represent God, and fell to the serpent’s (the devil’s<sup>32</sup>) deceit and lies. God then “walked”<sup>33</sup> in the Garden in His holiness and Adam, ashamed and fearful of judgment, tried to cover his sin and hide from God. Adam’s life was then cursed with death as his nature had come under the control of Satan to do his desires (“image”).

Following Adam’s fall, the plot proceeds to reveal God’s response to overcome Satan’s destruction of His creation (the conflict). The answer was immediate (Genesis 3:14-24). God would destroy the enemy serpent (“strike you on the head,” 3:15) through the New Adam (“Seed of the woman,”<sup>34</sup> (3:15) i.e., image (1:26)) after a delay.

During that delay of judgment the serpent and his followers would attempt to stop the New Adam by persecuting and executing (i.e., “strike Him on the heel”). But the New Adam would obediently submit to an unjust death (illustrated by the coats of skin coverings in 3:21), and in doing so this Messiah would substitute Himself for the sins of the old creation and provide an escape from the judgment of the Father through the Seed of the Woman.

John alludes to this portion, and interpretation, of Scripture frequently in the Gospel and the Epistle.

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<sup>32</sup> That the serpent is more than natural is apparent due to the fact that he perceives God and God’s philosophy, something not inherent in any “naturally” created being, as was apparent from the parade of animals before Adam (no “image”). Thus his perception of God (theology) had to be beyond the natural realm, or “supernatural.” Also, in this context, one speaks to reveal one’s character. Thus this serpent must of necessity, speak, or his character could not be known.

<sup>33</sup> The “walking” of God in the Garden of Eden is described as His “sound” or “voice,” a clear reference to the Word of God that revealed His character.

<sup>34</sup> Genesis 3:16 reinforces this, as Eve will have sorrow in conception, indicating that her children would either follow the serpent or the Messiah. In either case she would have sorrow, since if she bore a son that followed the serpent she would have obvious sorrow, since it was death. And when she bore the obedient One, the Messiah, she would have sorrow as the serpent would kill Him.

**1 John Statement:** “the devil has sinned from the beginning . . . “ (1 John 3:5)

**Similar Gospel Statement – John 8:42:** Jesus told the Pharisees that their father was the devil (i.e., “children of the Devil,” see 1 John 3:10) since they, like their father, Satan, were rejecting God’s revelation in Him (i.e., “Seed of the Woman”) and deceiving others (as the serpent did). “You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning,<sup>35</sup> and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

**Reference - Genesis 3:4:** Satan “sinned from the beginning” when he deceived Eve, having rejected God’s revelation when he stated, “Has God said . . . ” (Genesis 3:1), and lied to Eve about God’s revelation, “You shall not surely die . . .”<sup>36</sup> Eve confirms Satan’s sin from the beginning in 3:13 when she states, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

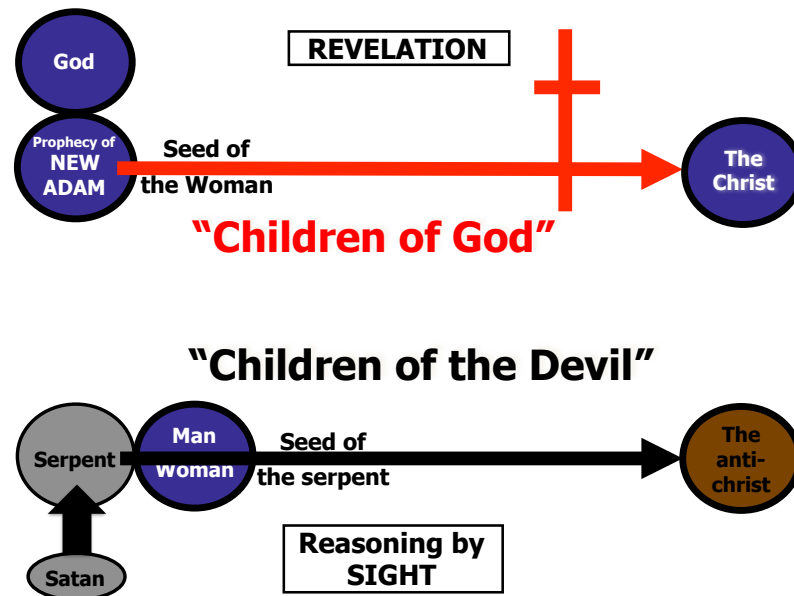
**1 John Statement:** “The Son of God came for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:5)

**Reference - Genesis 3:15:** God arrived (“walked”) on the scene to destroy the devil. He did not, at that point, execute the judgment on this evil serpent. But He delayed that judgment, prophesying that He would judge through His coming Son (*the “Seed of the Woman,” i.e., the Christ*), who “. . . will strike you (*the serpent, i.e., the devil*) on the head.” Thus, following this delay John had now eye-witnessed the Son’s arrival as prophesied in Genesis 3:15. Thus, Genesis 3:15 prophesied the arrival of the Seed of the Woman who would execute judgment on Satan. By substituting for sins, the “works of the devil” were judicially destroyed.

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<sup>35</sup> Satan was a murderer when he brought death to Adam and Eve by deceiving them. Satan similarly deceived Cain, who hated the child of God, Abel, and murdered him.

<sup>36</sup> That the exact contradiction is intended is clear from the fact that the serpent quotes God exactly except for the addition of a “not.”



*The "Children of the Devil" ("Antichrists") as the followers of Satan ("the seed of the serpent.")* The opposition to the "Seed of the Woman" (the "Christ") was the "seed of the serpent" in Genesis 3:15. This ultimate "anti"- Christ and his followers would be deceivers and liars about God (like their father, the devil, see John 8:40-41,44), and would violently oppose the Messiah and those who followed Him. John references this to show the fulfillment of this prophecy in his readers' day.

**1 John Statements:** "you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared . . ." (1 John 2:18)

"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." (1 John 2:22)

These things I have written to you concerning those (i.e., antichrists, see 2:22) who are trying to deceive you. (1 John 2:26)

"and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world." (1 John 4:3)

**Reference - Genesis 3:15:** God pointed out that there would be two opposing possibilities for those born from Adam. There would be the "seed of the serpent," who would be the followers of Satan and his ultimate follower, the antichrist. By contrast there would be the "Seed of the Woman" who would be followers of God, focusing on the ultimate Follower, the Christ. "There will be enmity between you (*the serpent*) and

the woman and between her Seed (*the Christ*) and your seed (*anti – Christ(s)*) . . . . you (*the serpent*) shall strike Him (*the Christ*) on the heel.” The way these would oppose the righteous would be to lie (oppose the revelation of Christ) and murder (kill the Christ and His followers).

In addition, the following verse (Genesis 3:16) indicated that the woman who was to bear this Messiah would have sorrow in conception. This sorrow would result because she would bear either a child of the serpent or child of God. And even though she would happily bear Messiah, the seed of the serpent would strike Him, and she would then have sorrow.

***The “Children of God” as the followers of “The Seed of the Woman.”*** The promise of Genesis was that this woman, Eve<sup>37</sup>, was to bear the Messiah (the “Seed of the Woman”). While He would strike the serpent and substitute Himself for the sins of mankind, He was also the New Adam who was perfectly righteous. Thus, like the first Adam bore those children from him and thus Satan, this New Adam would be the means by which men would be children “born from God” (1 John 2:29, 3:9, 4:7, 5:1,4,18), which was determined by trust in Christ (1 John 3:23, 4:16, 5:1,5,10,13). Since this life in Adam was dead (mortal life), they would be “born again” after God’s image (“eternal life”) into the “Family of God” (“children of God”). This “eternal life” was the righteous character of God, eye-witnessed in the life of Jesus (1:1-4), and unable to sin (3:5,6,9)<sup>38</sup>.

**1 John Statements:** “No one who is born of God does (a) sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. (1 John 3:9)

“And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. (1John 5:11-12)

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<sup>37</sup> Note that the literal Hebrew for “Eve” is “Life.” Thus Adam renamed His wife “Life,” because she was the mother of all the living. This cannot be a reference to her bearing human children since they would all die (see the genealogies of Genesis 5). Death was pronounced on her and her seed and this can be seen in the genealogies of Genesis 5. They all died. Life is the character of the Father, missing in her husband, but brought forth in the Promised Seed.

<sup>38</sup> Interestingly enough this section in 1 John is frequently misunderstood due to not understanding the progress of the Biblical story plot. The Old Testament predicted the One who would keep the Law (the character of God). Jesus appears and His life on this earth was eye-witnessed to verify that He was exactly the character of God. Thus, the life that is given to the believer is that same life, and thus it cannot sin, as had been verified by Jesus on earth.



“We know that no one who is born of God sins<sup>39</sup>; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him.” (1 John 5:18)

**Reference - Genesis 3:21:** This is indicated by Adam’s response to the curse of the ground, in which he would find his sure death (“for dust you are and to dust you will return,” 3:19). Adam responded, not to his sure death in which there was no hope, but to the promise of new life in the prophecy of the Christ (who would bring the righteous character of God to man). And so he called his wife, “Life,” a new name (formerly “woman”), which indicated his hope that she would bear this “Seed of the Woman.” Thus it was this “life” through which the New Adam would overcome the death instituted by the serpent. “Now the man called his wife’s name Eve (Hebrew: “Life”), because she was the mother of all *the* living. (Genesis 3:20)

**The Overcomer(s) as those who are resurrected to new life:** The New Adam would judge Satan’s rule over the earth. He is the “Overcomer” as He overcame His own murder by Satan through obedience to the Father and was resurrected (thus defeating the judgment of death). Now those who trusted in Him would “overcome” the judgment of death and Satan, through this new (eternal) life and forgiveness of sins. It is this new character that allows them to die for Him, proceed into the New Creation through resurrection and thus also overcome Satan’s seeming victory, that is, death.

**1 John Statements:** “I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. (1 John 2:13, also see 2:14)

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<sup>39</sup> Due to the limitations of this article a discussion of this verse and its possibilities of translation cannot be discussed fully. Suffice it to say that it should be translated as a normal present tense, since there is little, if any, any evidence in the context to justify its translation to “habitual” or the “practice” of sin. The present tense is to be translated, as is common, as a statement of equivalency. If one is born of God . . . they are sinless. It is speaking of the new character, which absolutely must not be able to sin, not even one sin, else it would be no different than the character received in Adam. This is referring to Genesis 3, where God predicted a Messiah who would remove sin and give the new character. The intent of God’s purpose in Messiah was to give believers a totally new eternal character. He did not improve the old character and make it better, or even make it to sin less, since it is totally depraved and cannot do any righteousness at all. He gave believers a character that could not sin at all, the very same character that was seen in Jesus, and will enter the kingdom, unscathed by the temptations of Satan (5:18-19).

“Who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:5)

**John’s Gospel Statement – 12:42:** "These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world." (John 16:33)

**Reference – Genesis 3:15:** The “Seed of the Woman” would strike the serpent and his seed (i.e., followers) on the head. Thus the coming New Adam would execute judgment on Satan and the world of the condemned. The New Adam (the Christ) is the overcomer of Satan and his followers, which are referenced as the old cursed “world.” Those who trust in this Messiah will receive new life (resurrection), and through resurrection will overcome the Satanic curse of death.

*Cain and Abel as the “child of the devil” and the “child of God.”* To confirm this message of Genesis 3:15, God had illustrated the innocent striking of this New Adam when he took a lamb and clothed Adam and Eve with its skin (Genesis 2:21). As the innocent lamb covered the guilty man and woman, the future Messiah would be struck to substitute Himself for the cursed, dead, world.

Dramatic narrative<sup>40</sup> plays out the declaration of the Hero (i.e., Protagonist’s philosophy in Genesis 3:15-24) through the events that follow. In Genesis 4:1, the woman through whom the hope was to come opens the narrative with the stated desire that she would bear this One (“I have born a man . . . YHWH”). Thus she bears two boys who will illustrate the two paths of Genesis 3:15. One of them would trust in the “Seed of the woman” (Messiah) to deliver him, while the other would reject the revelation of Genesis 3:15 and prefer his own (actually Satan’s) way (i.e., self-works).

Abel thus sacrificed according to God’s illustration<sup>41</sup> (Genesis 3:21) of the promise of Genesis 3:15 and thus indicated his hope in this promised Messiah. And as should be expected (since it was according to the revelation of His character), God

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<sup>40</sup> “Dramatic Narrative” is the type of narrative that strings together events into a continuous building plot. No individual event can be interpreted on its own basis, but must be interpreted only as it plays a part in the plot. The canonical narrative is of this type, and thus requires that the Cain and Abel event is part of a sequence that relies on what occurred earlier for its interpretation. Thus the “faith” of Abel is related to the revelation of God in the previous event.

<sup>41</sup> This is the “by faith, Abel” of Hebrews 11:4.

regarded his sacrifice (“For Abel’s sacrifice, God had regard,” Genesis 4:4).<sup>42</sup> By literary contrast, Cain rejected the specific revelation of God regarding this coming sacrificed Messiah, and instead approached God by offering vegetables based on his own human reasoning<sup>43</sup> (inherited from Satan). God, as would be expected, rejected Cain’s sacrifice since it was against God’s expressed character desires (“but for Cain’s (sacrifice), He had no regard<sup>44</sup> . . .” 4:5). Thus the response to the revelation of God in 3:15, 21 identified the boys clearly as either a “child of God” or a “child of the devil.” God did not decide based on some arbitrary or non-obvious criteria,<sup>45</sup> but according to their visible and direct response to the revelation of His desires of salvation in the future Christ.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See the Book of Hebrews commentary on this in Hebrews 11:4 ([www.BiblicalStory.org](http://www.BiblicalStory.org), “Resources,” “Commentaries,” “The Book of Hebrews”) where “by faith Abel” indicates Abel’s adherence to the promise of God in the sacrifice of His Christ in Genesis 3:15. Thus Abel was a believer in Messiah to come.

<sup>43</sup> The reasoning of Cain was that he was “sacrificing” the product of his career. It seemed reasonable to Cain that to give up something of his own work for God should endear him to God. Yet this was not God’s desire that it would be through one’s works or reasonable sacrifice, but through the Messiah and Cain’s sacrifice did not regard that.

<sup>44</sup> God’s “regard” was God’s desires which were given in His revelation. Since Cain had not regarded God’s desires, he could not get God’s regard. Abel did regard God’s desires, so God’s regard was automatically guaranteed.

<sup>45</sup> Some say that both sacrifices were acceptable and it was Cain’s heart that was evil (and hidden). So, in that viewpoint, it was not until God confronted Cain that Cain’s evil heart was known. However, as John says in 3:10, it is “obvious.” The “obvious” is their response to the revelation, as it is in 1 John, belief in Messiah. Also in 3:12, Cain’s evil deeds preceded the slaying of Abel, thus indicating it was his sacrifice, the only deed he did, that was evil.

<sup>46</sup> Some views have God’s confrontation of Cain as somewhat unexpected since they do not hold that Cain’s sacrifice was inadequate, and God was revealing Cain’s evil, but unseen, heart. Of course, this must be posited from the interpreter’s theology since this has no context to back it up. God is acting in total coordination with His prior revelation. He had told them the way to reflect His desires. Cain had gone a different way, and God tells Cain to do it “good” (Hebrew: טוֹב), that is, in accordance with His revelation.

Note that since this is dramatic narrative, everything in Genesis 4 follows and is integrally a result of Genesis 3. To posit that Cain’s heart was evil and hidden, yet aver his actions were perfectly acceptable, is to introduce an event into the context that has no bearing on the previous requirements delivered by God. This, of course, is contradictory to Hebrews 11:4 which declared that it was by “faith,” meaning that it was based on a revelation of God, not on attitude (although one would expect that it was attitude that resulted in his rejection of God’s revelation).

The issue was the acceptance or rejection of God's promise of Messiah in 3:15. God confronted Cain with his error and then exhorted him to do it right (3:7, lit.: "good," Heb.: טִיב). Cain's reaction was to reject God and His revelation by striking (recall Genesis 3:15, the strike on the heel of the Righteous One) God's representative, Abel, the righteous one. Cain, now aligned with the "seed of the serpent," was the first antichrist (cf. 1 John 2:18, 22; 3:12) in a long line of pretenders until the ultimate antichrist would come.<sup>47</sup>

The contrasting responses of Cain and Abel to the revelation were obvious, and were confirmed by God on the basis of His revelation of Genesis 3:15, 21. So now in 1 John 3:10 the differences in identity are "obvious."<sup>48</sup> However, instead of a belief in a coming Messiah, now one's obvious identity is belief based on the eyewitness testimony by the apostles of Jesus as the fulfillment of Genesis 3:15.

**1 John Statement:** "By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone not doing<sup>49</sup> righteousness (i.e., "(the) righteous deed",

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<sup>47</sup> Jesus makes this exact point to the Scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23:33-35. They there are called "seeds of serpents." This indicated they were like the original their fathers ("serpents") who came from the original serpent. As such, they try to kill Jesus as they had always killed the righteous, starting with Abel.

<sup>48</sup> Gingrich Lexicon, #6675 "φανερός". It carries the meaning "plainly to be seen." This meaning is that this is obvious in some identifiable way. The obvious identity of one who is not a child of God is due to the fact they do not confess Jesus as the Christ. This is the obvious identity, the confession, throughout the epistle. In addition, "does not do righteousness" is detailed in the next verse as Cain is contrasted with Abel. As shown in the short study on Genesis 4 (see also the Genesis Commentary at [www.BiblicalStory.org](http://www.BiblicalStory.org)), Cain and Abel were the illustration of those who were the "seed of the serpent" ("children of the devil") and "seed of the woman" ("children of God"), and so it is here. Thus the righteousness that Abel did was to trust in Messiah to come through his sacrifice. Cain did not do his deed of belief and so killed Abel. Thus, the obvious visible test is that the "child of God" confesses Jesus as the Christ. (See my paper read at ETS, "Are the Children of God and the Children of the Devil really obvious? (1 John 3:10)), Evangelical Theological Society, 43<sup>rd</sup> National Conference, Kansas City, MO, November 21-23, 1991, 35 pages, TREN Id: ETS-4308, OCLC #: 58479950).

<sup>49</sup> Note the translation here is literal and reflects the nature of the present participle. The present tense, while it may reflect a continuance when the context justifies, does not reflect that here as is obvious from 3:9. In addition, present tenses do not need to be translated as continuous (e.g., "continuously sin") even when the context justifies, as the context if translated accurately will reflect that continuous nature of the verb. For instance the sentence, "I am standing for hours in this line") does not need a

singular) is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.<sup>11</sup> For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;<sup>12</sup> not as Cain, *who* was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous" (1 John 3:10-12).

In 1 John 3:10, John says these “children of the devil” are identified by an action (“any one not doing righteousness” (“righteousness” is a singular noun)). The “not doing righteousness” (μη ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην) that makes it obvious (φανερὰ) is the same deed as was done in Genesis 4 by Abel. John follows the reference to doing “righteousness” by referencing Cain and Abel as defining the “doing,” or “not doing,” “righteousness,” in the following verses.

“. . . Cain, *who* was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous (δικαία)“ (1 John 3:11-12)

Note that the requirement of the “not doing righteousness” in 3:10 is illustrated by Cain’s evil deeds contrasted with Abel’s righteous deeds<sup>50</sup> in 3:12. Cain had only one activity (prior to the murder of his brother), which was the sacrifice of vegetables. By contrast Abel also did only one action that is recorded and that was the sacrifice of the firstborns (תְּבִכְוֹת, plural) of sheep. Cain’s response reflected his own approach to God apart from revelation through his own human wisdom.<sup>51</sup> Abel’s deed reflected his trust in the revelation of God’s Messiah in Genesis 3:15. Thus, like Cain, the “children of the

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“continuously, or “practicing” placed into the verbal statement to imply continuity, for the context indicates that there is continuity. Thus, verbs do not need to be altered when the context indicates it since that will be plain to the English reader.

<sup>50</sup> Note that it is wrong to assume that “righteousness” in the singular should be a collective representing many sins or a lifestyle, since not only is Abel’s single act listed as a plural (“deeds” is assumed), but also Cain’s singular evil act is also listed as a plural. Cain only did one thing prior to the slaying and that was his sacrifice. Abel was the same as he only did one thing, that is, to sacrifice. Thus their deeds were just one collective act per person, the sacrifice. Cain’s was evil, from Satan. Abel’s was righteous from God’s revelation of Messiah. The likely reason that a plural “deeds” is used is due to the fact he was likely sacrificing more than a single vegetable or animal as Abel’s sacrifice in Genesis 4 is in the plural, “firstborns.”

<sup>51</sup> This was due to the fact that he now had the “knowledge of good and evil,” which was the ability to determine what was good and what was evil from one’s own perspective, as opposed to God’s determination of that in the revelation. This is confirmed by the Book of Hebrews 11:4. There “By faith Abel . . .” indicates Abel believed in a prior revelation of God, that of the sacrificed Messiah to come.

devil” are obvious because they reject the Messiah revealed in the apostles (see 2:22, 4:2-3), just as Cain rejected the prophecy of Messiah in Genesis 3:15.

Thus, the obvious deed of “righteousness” (singular noun) in 3:10 is belief in Jesus as the Christ, just like Abel and unlike Cain who sought his own way to God.

***The Children of the Devil “go out” from God’s revelation.*** When Cain had rejected God’s confrontation regarding Cain’s evil sacrifice, God declared Cain to be of the devil and put him under the curse of the ground. In response to God’s curse of Cain in Genesis 4:11-12 (for rejecting the Messianic promise), Cain then “went out<sup>52</sup> from the presence of God” (4:16).

**1 John Statements:** “They (*the antichrists*, 2:18) went out (ἐξῆλθαν) from us (*apostles*)<sup>53</sup> for they were not of us . . . “ (2:19) “. . . Who is the liar<sup>54</sup> but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.” (2:22)

“because many false prophets have gone out (ἐξεληλύθασιν) into the world. (1 John 4:1) . . . this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.” (1 John 4:3)

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<sup>52</sup> Note here that the word “went out” in the LXX is the same used in 1 John 2:19 and 4:1 for the antichrists and false prophets. This is an allusion to Cain in Genesis. As he went out from the “presence of God,” so now these antichrists go out from the presence of the revelation through the apostles of Jesus Christ.

It should also be noted however that the lemma for “went out” is quite common and should be carefully judged as to its allusion by the similarity of contexts. For instance, Judas “went out” from Jesus in John 13:30-31, a similar context. However, Jesus came forth (same lemma) from the Father and the disciples are sent out as well. These usages seem to be similar and are based on whether one “goes out” in agreement or “goes out” in disagreement.

<sup>53</sup> While this will be dealt with later, suffice it to say that the only authoritative presence in this epistle, is the apostle(s), and thus the “us” is the determiner(s) of those who are in the group of “children of God.”

<sup>54</sup> Recall that Satan was the original liar (John 8:44) and thus when John says they were “liars” he means that they are followers of the original serpent. They “lie” regarding God’s revelation, particularly that of the “Son.”

“We (*apostles*) are from God; he who knows God listens to us (*apostles*); he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we (*apostles*) know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6).

**2 John Statement:** “For many deceivers have gone out (ἐξῆλθον) 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)

**Gospel of John Statement:** “So after receiving the morsel he (Judas) went out (ἐξῆλθεν)<sup>55</sup> immediately; and it was night. Therefore when he had gone out (ἐξῆλθεν), Jesus said, ‘Now is the Son of Man glorified, and God is glorified in Him’” (John 13:30-31)

**Reference – Genesis 4:16:** “Then Cain went out (LXX: ἐξῆλθεν) from the presence of the LORD.”

Similarly in 1 John, John says these antichrists “went out” (from God’s revelation, Jesus, now in the apostolic eyewitness) and were thus identified by the apostolic doctrine<sup>56</sup> as “children of the devil” because they rejected Jesus as the Christ.

***Satan had deceived Adam and Eve, and thus the followers will also deceive regarding the revelation of the Messiah.*** John previously had stated that these “children of the devil,” the antichrists, were trying to deceive the believers to rely on their own visible self-righteousness, just as Satan deceived Eve. Satan had lured Eve with the hope of this present, visible world. Satan and his followers offer the same temptation to these believers.

**1 John:** “These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.” (1 John 2:26)

“Do not love the world nor the things 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.” (1 John 2:15-16)

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<sup>55</sup> It is interesting that “Cain went out from the presence of God,” and in John Judas “went out” from the presence of God in the Christ.

<sup>56</sup> It was not leaving the congregation that identified them, but their response to the revelation of the apostles that identified them. Cain had responded wrongly to Genesis 3:15, 21 and that response identified him. After God confronted him, he “went out” from the presence of (lit.: “face of”) God. These antagonists in 1 John have rejected the apostolic doctrine (“gone out”) and thus it is the apostles who are identifying them as “children of the devil” for their rejection of Christ.

**Genesis:** Satan had tempted Eve to reason based on what she saw, and not on what God had said.

And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." (Gen 3:13)

When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make *one* wise . . . “  
(Genesis 3:4-6)

It is clear when one grasps John’s allusions to Genesis 1—4 that there have only been two possibilities ever by which men have attempted to approach God. One is to believe in the Seed of the Woman, fulfilled in Jesus. The other is to reject the coming, and now present, Messiah, replacing Him with works, typically of The Law.



**Jeremiah 31:31-34:**  
**The New Commandment, Forgiveness Of Sins**  
**And A New Heart (1:9, 2:3-8)**

In addition to the fundamental passages of Genesis and Psalm 2, John uses the Prophet Jeremiah (31:31-34) to point out that the Kingdom would not come without replacing the old Adamic character with a perfectly righteous character, that from God.

Jeremiah prophesied at the beginning of the Babylonian exile, one of the lowest points of Israel's history when Babylon was at their doorstep due to the absolute failure of the Israelite. Adam's character was depraved, and so he passed on a cursed heart that could not keep the commands of the Law (Old Covenant). Jeremiah prophesied the Law would be "written in the heart" under the New Covenant and thus this character of God in the Law would become the believer's character. This new character would then keep the Law because it was its very character. This was to come through the Messiah. Jeremiah also spoke of the day when God would forgive their iniquity and their sins He would remember no more.

The Adamic character could not do it, though man would advocate that he could accomplish it through an ascetic lifestyle ("we have no sin," (1:8), "we have not sinned," (1:10)). This "Law written in their hearts" was a new character that would "keep the commandments" (Deuteronomy 30:6<sup>57</sup>). Now, instead of self-effort through the Adamic character, the believer would have the actual character that wanted to keep the commandments and would do it fully.<sup>58</sup>

**"Old/New Commandment," "Old/New Covenant"**

**1 John:** "Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. <sup>8</sup> On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. (1John 2:7-8)

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<sup>57</sup> Deuteronomy 30:6 talked of the "circumcision of heart." God would do this, as opposed to Israel "circumcising their own heart" (Deuteronomy 10:16).

<sup>58</sup> This does not mean that one will practically be perfect, or even evidence in a measurable way that he is driven by this character. While the intent of the new character is for the purpose of allowing the mercy of God to flow through that character perfectly, that will not be entirely seen until the Kingdom and the return of Christ as 1 John 3:2. Until then the Adamic character will still, though judged, be operating practically and thus the believer groans to be set free (Romans 8:23).

**Jeremiah:** "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 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." (Jeremiah 31:32)

### **"Know Him (God)"**

In the verse quoted from Jeremiah, John connects the term "Know the LORD," with the New Covenant. This word "know" means that they would have an intimate relationship with God because of a common character, a character with the same desires. John references this when he states regarding the keeping of the Law. It would be done by "knowing" God, which indicates keeping through imputation in 2:3-4, the new character from God.

**1 John:** "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 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; (1 John 2:3-4)

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

**Jeremiah:** "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. (Jeremiah 31:33)

"They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD . . . (Jeremiah 31:34a)

### **"No need for anyone to teach . . ."**

Since under the Old Covenant they did not have the fullness of God revealed and placed in their heart, they would constantly have to teach the Adamic nature to behave according to the signs and symbols and the written law. Under the New Covenant, the new character is in place and the relationship is full. Thus there is no need to teach how to get the external symbols and signs and partials of the Old Covenant in one's heart. The character of God now resides there.

**1 John:** “ . . . 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. (1 John 2:27)

**Jeremiah:** "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD . . . (Jeremiah 31:34a)

### **Forgiveness of sins.**

John continues referencing the New Covenant in Jeremiah as he states that the forgiveness of sins was to come in the future in that covenant.

**1 John:** “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1John 1:9)

**Jeremiah:** "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." (Jeremiah 31:34b)

The summary of Jeremiah 31 in 1 John is simply; the failure of man to keep the commandments under the Old Covenant was witnessed throughout the Old Testament. Thus, since keeping the commandments (100%) was the requirement to enter the kingdom, God would give them a new heart, the very character desires of God, one that would keep the commandments. This, John says, has come in Christ and has been given to man in the new birth. In other words, it is the present possession of the believer, a character that does not sin.

**Ezekiel 36:25-27:  
Cleansing From Sin And A Heart To  
“Keep The Commandments” (1:9, 2:3-4)**

The Prophet Ezekiel prophesied during the Babylonian exile to those who were hopelessly dominated by these pagan Satanic captors. Ezekiel, however, looked forward to the day when Israel would receive the new character so they would not come into judgment again. This new character would be able to “keep the commands” fully, unlike the Adamic character, which could never do it and ultimately resulted in the judgment of their exile.

**Cleanses from Sin**

**1 John:** “. . . the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

<sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself<sup>59</sup>, just as He is pure. (1 John 3:3)

**Ezekiel:** “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. (Ezekiel 36:25)

**“Keep the Commandments”**

**1 John:** “By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. (1 John 2:3)

**Ezekiel:** “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <sup>27</sup> “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances” (Ezekiel 36:26-27).

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<sup>59</sup> Note here that God always did the purification. It was never done by man’s works or deeds. It was done through symbolic imputation in the Old Testament (looking to Christ) and through belief in Christ in the New.