

## 1 John 4-5 • Chapter Study

### Intro Coffee Maker

As we begin, want to read Rev. 2:1-5

“To the angel of the church of Ephesus write, ‘These things says He who holds the 7 stars in His right hand, who walks in the midst of the 7 golden lampstands: <sup>2</sup> “I know your works, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil. And you have tested those who say they are apostles and are not, and have found them liars; <sup>3</sup> and you have persevered and have patience, and have labored for My name’s sake and have not become weary. <sup>4</sup> Nevertheless I have *this* against you, that you have left your first love. <sup>5</sup> Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.

That church, **Ephesus**, was John’s **base**. It’s where he spent his last yrs.

There’s a good chance what he wrote in 1 Jhn was **prompted** by what he witnessed in the church.

And a good part of his warning here in 1 Jhn **was** heeded.

They were zealous for **right doctrine** abt Who Jesus was.

They committed themselves to **holiness & staying busy**.

But they **faltered** in the most important priority – Love.

And Jesus calls them on it.

Ch3 ends w/the reminder that **real love is manifested** in actions that bless others.

Ch4 drills down on that . . .

### Ch. 4

<sup>1</sup> Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

BCUZ John loved his readers, he **warned** them. Sometimes love requires we say a hard thing.

John tells them **to be on guard**. Not everyone who **claims** to speak for God **does**.

False prophets & teachers are out there, so we must put what we hear to the test.

The question is: What **test** do we apply? What **criteria** does John intend us to use?

In a word **Scripture**.

While John’s warning in v1 is general, the following vs make clear he has **a specific error** in mind.

We’re not **exactly** sure what heresy John was dealing w/ but we can make a good guess.

As we covered a cpl wks ago, **Docetism** was an **early form** of what later became known as **Gnosticism**;

which was a major challenge to the Church in the 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> Cs.

**Docetism** was a mish-mash of various Middle Eastern religions.

It **combined** the dualism of Greek philosophy,

the secret rituals of Eastern mystery cults

& wrapped it all in Xian terminology.

They used Xian terms because it was a popular & spreading movement.

They hoped by adopting words Xians used they could snag converts.

They **wanted** converts because to advance in Docetism, you had to pay the guru-teacher to learn their secret knowledge.

Docetists said that all matter was unalterably evil while the spiritual realm was good.

So, **Jesus** was just a really good man, upon whom a Spirit-being named **Christ** descended at his baptism.

So, **get this** Jesus was **not** Christ.

He was just a man; the earthly vehicle **for** Christ, right up to Gethsemane.

Then just prior to his arrest, the Christ-Spirit **departed** from Jesus so that what hung on the cross was just a broken human being.

The Docetists considered the union of Jesus & Christ to be nothing more than an example of moral perfection.

They claimed anyone who’d proven him/herself properly **enlightened**, could, like Jesus, have the Christ-Spirit (consciousness) descend on them.

And of course, pay the full amount, & they’d share the secrets that brought the qualifying

enlightenment.

John **nuke**s that whole idea because it **guts the Gospel**

<sup>2</sup> By this you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God,

<sup>3</sup> and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the *spirit* of the Antichrist, which you have heard was coming, and is now already in the world.

John is **emphatic**: Jesus & Christ are 1 & the same.

Anyone who denies this is not from God!

John sees in the denial of the **humanity** of Christ a sinister conspiracy that will culminate in the deception of the last days & will **focus in the career of the antichrist**.

As soon as the TRUTH was embodied in the Person & Work of JC, the father of lies set about to dismantle it.

The ancient heresy of Docetism & its later cousin Gnosticism **has been revived in our time**.

Gnosticism went out of existence in the 5<sup>th</sup> C & remained a dead religion until the late 19<sup>th</sup> C when it resurfaced in what's called the Science of Mind movement.

You may have heard of it as **Christian Science** or **Religious Science**.

As it grew, it shed its association with the "church" & became the **New Age Movement**.

And they've gone whole-hog for the old Gnostic teachers & writings.

All these groups say the Christ-spirit, or **Consciousness**, is **waiting** to descend on those who've proven themselves worthy.

The stage is set for the Antichrist to step forward, claiming he's the **modern embodiment** of the Christ-consciousness.

Then seems to give evidence of his enlightenment by performing signs & wonders in sight of the world, just as the Ap Paul says he will in 2 Thess 2.

We must heed John's warning.

<sup>4</sup> You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. <sup>5</sup> They are of the world. Therefore they speak *as* of the world, and the world hears them. <sup>6</sup> We are of God. He who knows God hears us; he who is not of God does not hear us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

John lumps humanity into 2 camps; those who belong to God & those who are of the world.

Just as the fam of God lives by the rules of His Kingdom, the people of the world live by the rules of the world.

**We** have an agenda; **they** have an agenda.

**Our agenda** is to see Christ's reign extended over all.

Their goal is to **throw off His rule** & establish man as sovereign over Earth, **independent** of God.

Now John cycles back to the imperative of love.

<sup>7</sup> Beloved, let us love 1 another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.

This is at the same time incredibly simple & deep.

God is love!

So, those alive in Him will **operate** in love.

That's not to say there won't be moments when their love falters.

Because they occasionally step out of life in the Spirit, love won't ALWAYS be their motive.

But ultimately, **they'll return** to love.

And love will be the well-spring that nourishes them.

To **know** God is to love.

Where there's **no** love, the knowledge of God is absent.

When John says "God is love," it's important we don't make the mistake of **equating God** w/love so that we could turn it around & say "Love is God."

That's not at all what John means.

He does not **EQUATE** God & love.

He means love is so much a part of God's nature, all **genuine** love finds its **origin** in Him.

He's the **source** of it.

So, wherever you see real love, it's an expression of the presence of God.  
Where love is **lacking**, God's **not** being encountered.

<sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him.

John gets down to the nitty-gritty of **defining love**.

You want to know what love looks like? Look at the person & work of Jesus Christ.

God's love for us was **demonstrated** most perfectly in the Incarnation.

<sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins.

Love begins w/God, not us.

His love enables ours.

If not for God's love, we'd never **know** love.

[Ken Graves' illustration – man to maggot / God to man]

<sup>11</sup> Beloved, if [since] God so loved us, we also ought to love 1 another.

John hits it again: Being God's people means being a people who are **like** Him.

<sup>12</sup> No 1 has seen God at any time. If we love 1 another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. John's concern is to give his readers a definitive guide for knowing who REALLY belongs to God.

The test is love.

We can't see God because He's a Spirit.

The evidence of being in fellowship w/Him is that we love each other.

It's like the tube on the outside of a coffee-maker.

Our love for 1 another is like that tube.

Our love for God is unseen, but our love for 1 another is the register or gauge that reveals the fervor & intensity of our love for God.

Now John sums up vs1-12

<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> And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* 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> And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. <sup>17</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world. God is in heaven. We're here on Earth.

**As** He is in heaven, we're to be **expressions** of that here.

When we are, we have confidence when judgment comes, we'll be ready & eager because it'll be a time of reward rather than condemnation.

I teach History at CCS.

Prior to a test, I tell them what to study.

As I lecture, I give them clues of the kind of things they're likely to see on the next quiz.

Tests are made up from questions on the quizzes.

The **Final** is made up of questions from the tests.

You & I will face a kind of **final exam**.

Our lives will be tested, not for punishment. Jesus already faced that for us at the Cross.

Our judgment is for rewards.

And here John tells us what to study to be ready to face the test – **LOVE!**

I often looked forward to a test in school.

I knew the material & saw the test as an opportunity to get an "A."

**This is the kind of confidence** we can have as we stand before our Master to give account as stewards – not w/fear, but w/bold confidence because we've been moved by the Love of God.

<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. <sup>19</sup> We love Him because He first loved us.

V18 goes w/17. The fear John means here is the fear of God's judgment.

But we can extend it to freedom from *all fear* once we understand the nature of God's all-consuming love.

Do you remember when you learned to ride a bike.

Chances are, before ever getting on it, you were a bit scared.

The 1<sup>st</sup> few trips down the street were filled w/anxiety.

But the more you did it, the easier it got till fear was a thing of the past.

Experience leads us to greater levels of freedom from fear.

That's the perspective John gives here.

Since we have confidence when thinking about the **greatest** of all moments Standing before God, how can **any** challenge we face here on Earth shake us?

<sup>20</sup> If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? <sup>21</sup> And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also.

Don't even need to explain this.

The child of God will love the people of God. It's that simple.

Ch. 5

John now **returns** to the challenge raised by the Docetists abt who Jesus was.

<sup>1</sup> Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.

John again links Christ w/Jesus; they are 1 and the same person.

And God the Father & God the Son are united; you can't love 1 w/o loving the other.

John added that 2<sup>nd</sup> part bcuz the Docetists insertd a long line of spirit-beings btwn God & Christ.

<sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. And what's John just told us God's command is in the last v of ch4? LOVING 1 ANOTHER!

<sup>3</sup> For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. How important we take this to heart **God's commands are *NOT* burdensome!**

They're not because EVERY 1 OF THEM IS GIVEN TO PROTECT & BLESS US!

They're not the heavy obligations & joy-killing drag the devil tries to cast them as.

**All** of the commands of God have 1 goal; **that we'd FLOURISH!**

The **chief command**, the 1 thing God calls us to that **sums up** all other commands is to love Him & 1 another.

John sees a **new kind of humanity** is possible because of faith in Christ.

<sup>4</sup> For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.

In 2:15-17, John set **the world** in opposition to God & His people.

By **the world**, he means that system of rebellious mankind, under the control of the devil.

"Victory" in v 4 is the Greek word "nike" (nee-kay).

It spoke of a victory obtained in a military operation, athletic competition, or courtroom.

It always involved **some kind of conflict** or test in which 1 side was pitted against another.

John sees the Family of God in a contest **w/the world**.

Our victory in this contest is **guaranteed by our faith** in Christ because He's already overcome.

John is thinking of Jesus' words in John 16:33 -

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

**Illustration:** Are you a good swimmer?

How about if we dropped you 20 miles offshore?

Maybe you're pretty good in a pool or along the shoreline playing in the surf, but if we dropped you 20 miles out, you'd never make it to the beach.

But now, let's say a Coast Guard ship came along & just as you were going under, reached out & hauled you in.

As long as you **abide in that boat** – you're safe.

In fact, that ship can sail all over the world, & you'll be secure; as long as you stay in the boat!

Jesus saved us from drowning in an ocean of sin.

As long as we abide in Him, we're secure, though we still live in the midst of a corrupt world.

<sup>5</sup> Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? <sup>6</sup> This is He who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth.

This is another jab at the Docetists.

If you turn to the commentators for your own study on v6, you'll find them tied in knots trying to figure out what John means by **water & blood**.

I'm not going to go into all the various theories now.

Let me just cut to the chase & say we ought to use John's own Gospel as the guide for figuring out what he meant.

So much of 1 John is tied to his Gospel, it's smart to do the same here.

So, in Ch3, in His conversation w/Nicodemus, Jesus spoke of the imperative of being born again.

He referred to birth by water & the Spirit.

**Birth by water** meant natural birth when we enter the world.

**By the Spirit** happens by putting our faith in Christ. That's how we're born **AGAIN**.

John refutes the Docetists here by saying Jesus IS the Christ.

And contrary to their idea that the Christ descended on Jesus at His baptism – He was in fact BORN in Bethlehem when Jesus was born.

Then, contrary to the idea the Christ **left** Jesus in Gethsemane hrs before he was crucified, The Christ also went to the Cross to die for our sins.

Now if you have an NIV or other modern translation, as you follow along as I read, you may not have the same text.

<sup>7</sup> For there are 3 that bear witness // in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these 3 are 1. <sup>8</sup> And there are 3 that bear witness on earth: // the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these 3 agree as 1.

Starting at the words “in heaven” in v7 thru “on earth” in v8 the text was **NOT** written by the Ap John.

Now – before you get upset w/me: When have you EVER heard me say something in the Bible doesn't belong there?

I say it now – bcuz the science of Textual studies has made it clear this was added much later.

It wasn't an attempt at fraud; **it was a scribal error**; & we know when it happened.

You need to know that **even conservative scholars** w/the highest view of the Bible agree this part of the text is spurious.

It's a well-known passage called the **Comma Johanneum**.

These words occur in **no** Greek manuscript **prior to the 14<sup>th</sup> C**, except for one 11<sup>th</sup> C & a 12<sup>th</sup> C manuscript in which they've been **added to the margin** by a **different** writer.

The earliest controversies to challenge the Church dealt w/the nature of JC; was He God, man, or **both**?

If these words **were** a part of John's original letter, WHY were they **never** quoted in the debates of the 4<sup>th</sup> thru 7<sup>th</sup> Cs?

They're **NEVER** quoted in the writings of the early church fathers.

They most certainly WOULD HAVE BEEN because they're **explicit** in defining the Trinity!

**All the rest** of 1 John is quoted **repeatedly** – but not these words.

Understand this: If you destroyed every NT on the face of the earth, you could recompile the entire text **just from the writings of the Fathers** – except this passage!

In all *ancient* translations; Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopian, Coptic, Armenian, Slavonian, & so forth, this passage **isn't** included.

It only appears in **late** versions of the Latin Vulgate.

These words were a note written in the margin of a late manuscript.

When that manuscript was *copied*, the copyist inserted them *into* the text itself, assuming the note was an *emendation* by the *prior* copyist, that the lines had been inadvertently left out when copying from the prior manuscript, so when the copyist realized his error, he, or an editor, added them to the margin.

This 1 copy was then copied again & again until a minor tradition of this text had arisen.

This gets rather technical now but I offer it for those who dig this kind of stuff . . .

The real problem began in **1520**, when the great scholar **Erasmus** produced a new & accurate edition of the

Bible in ancient Greek.

He wanted to produce a standard Grk text of the NT for scholars to work from.

But when they compared Erasmus' Grk text to their Latin translation which included the **CJ**, they noticed he left it out & criticized him for it.

He said it wasn't in **a single ancient Grk manuscript** but that if 1 surfaced, he'd amend his text.

Guess what; a manuscript w/the suspect words appeared.

Though Erasmus knew it was a fraud, he couldn't **prove** it.

So, keeping true to his promise, he added the lines to the **1522** edition of his Grk NT.

He added a footnote, saying he suspected the manuscript of being a fraud meant to embarrass him.

That manuscript, the *Codex Montfortii* is on display in the library of Trinity College, Dublin & is recognized as a forgery.

Erasmus's Greek text became 1 of the premier sources for the translators of the KJ Bible.

No one here should be concerned about the reliability of their Bibles.

The field of NT studies is so advanced, w/so much manuscript evidence, Bibles scholars have great confidence that our text of the NT is solid and reliable.

The text ought to read -

<sup>7</sup>For there are 3 that bear witness - the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these 3 agree as 1.

Really that makes far more sense when we remember the **context** & what John is dealing with Docetism.

He gives 3 proofs of their error. The Spirit of Truth, the **water** of Jesus's **birth** & the **blood** of His **cross**.

<sup>9</sup> If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son.

In a court case, the witness of a human being is considered grounds for establishing a fact.

How much more ought we accept the testimony of God who sees all & cannot be fooled?

God's testimony is that Jesus is His Son. That ought to be enough!

<sup>10</sup> He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; he who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed the testimony that God has given of His Son.

While Christians agree with the Father's testimony regarding His Son, those who do **not** believe in Christ are really saying God is a liar.

Not a very smart thing to do.

<sup>11</sup> And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.

How did we **get** eternal life? God GAVE it!

We didn't earn it or work for it – God **gave** it!

This word "gave" is in an *indicative aorist*.

*Indicative* means it's a *certain fact*, & *aorist* refers to *simple completed action*.

It's a *done deal*.

God gave us life! But where? last part of v11

and this life is in His Son. <sup>12</sup> He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

The gift of eternal life God offers comes wrapped in a package called JC.

If you are "in Christ", you have eternal life.

If you **haven't** put your trust in Christ, then you **lack** eternal life.

All you possess is biological life & a measure of soulish life.

But you are missing out on **real** life.

<sup>13</sup> These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may *continue to* believe in the name of the Son of God.

John uses a **different word** for "know" here in v13 than he's used before in the ltr.

Up till now it's been a word that means to **know by personal experience**.

**Here** it means an **intuitive kind of inner awareness**.

This knowledge is no less **real** than experiential knowledge, but it's more **intimate** because it's a knowledge that **merges w/our personality**.

An illustration may be helpful.

Just as there's a difference btwn knowing **about** someone & actually knowing them **personally**.

We can go even deeper; a whole **category** deeper & say that we know someone **SO** personally that **their person** has **altered** our person; their **personality** revises, edits, corrects yours.

There are people you know **about** – but don't know **personally**.

There are people you know **personally** – casual friends.

**Then** there are people, not many, a few – who you know **so well**, so **closely**, they've shaped your way of thinking & living.

THAT'S the word John uses here.

Because we're part of God's family, both He & His people **alter** us & makes us more like Him.

John writes so this process of intimate knowledge & abiding faith may go on.

<sup>14</sup> Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

John can make such a sweeping promise because he knows if we're as wrapped up in God as described in the previous vs, all we'll ask for is **already** God's will.

His point here is to **encourage us to pray such prayers!**

To dream big dreams & ask God for big things.

<sup>16</sup> If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin *which does not lead* to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not *leading* to death. There is sin *leading* to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. <sup>17</sup> All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not *leading* to death.

This is another difficult section to interpret.

The question is, what does John **mean** by "sin leading to death?"

When we're faced w/a challenge like this, we interpret the obscure by the light of what's clear.

There's only 1 sin God can't forgive – Rejecting Christ.

Faith in Christ is the condition for ALL forgiveness.

God can forgive any & every sin because of what Jesus has done.

The only sin He can't forgive is the 1 that makes all forgiveness possible.

So, keeping all John has written in mind, what He's saying here is that

When we see a brother or sister in sin, we ought to pray God will give them victory over it.

However, not everyone who claims to be a brother *is*.

As John has made clear, their lifestyle will prove it.

When we pray for the lost, we don't pray for their **sin** to be forgiven, we pray for **them** to be forgiven.

We pray for their salvation!

John says it's God's will to give His children victory over sin.

As we pray for 1 another in this regard, God will help us overcome.

Seeing someone overcome sin & move into a sanctified lifestyle is evidence of eternal life.

But on the reverse – **no victory** over sin is evidence of a **lack** of eternal life.

So we're to pray for our brothers & sisters to gain victory over sin.

But when it comes to praying for the **lost** – we pray for salvation, not victory over individual sins.

John ends by saying while all sin is unrighteousness, not all sin is evidence of a lack of life.

Christians sin – but they also show victory **over** sin.

The next verse bears out what we've just said about vs16&17.

<sup>18</sup> We know that whoever is born of God does not sin [lit = keep sinning habitually]; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked 1 does not touch [lay hold of] him. <sup>19</sup> We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies *under the sway of* the wicked one.

John again divides the human race into 2 camps.

<sup>20</sup> And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know 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.

Jesus said He is the Way, Truth & Life.

Apart from Christ we are lost in darkness.

Please remember that as you pray for the lost.

No matter how intelligent they may be,

how many degrees they've earned,  
what their IQ is or how many lofty volumes they've read  
Apart from the indwelling Spirit of God, they're spiritually blind & deaf.  
Pray that their eyes & ears would be opened and that their hard hearts would be made soft.

<sup>21</sup> Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

2 Sundays back