

1 Yochanan
(The epistle of First John)

A Practical Guide for The Walk of Faith

By David M Rogers
www.BibleTruth.cc
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The first letter of John is one of the most loved letters of the New Testament. It is frequently used as a study guide in a "new believers" classroom, because of its introduction to some of the basic truths of the faith. First John (hereafter called "1 Yochanan") is well received because of its simplicity and straight talk. Yochanan used a simple, small vocabulary which is easy for everyone to understand.

Yet, in spite of the simplicity with which Yochanan wrote, this book is still greatly misinterpreted and misunderstood. As with all the teachings from Christians who take the misguided view that the Messiah did away with the Law (he clearly didn't, cf. Matt 5:17-19), they have distorted the meaning of Yochanan's message in this letter.

In fact, 1 Yochanan is easy to understand. But one must read it with an intimate familiarity with the Torah of Mosheh in order to catch the numerous allusions and references to the Instructions of the Law. When one approaches this letter without the backdrop of the Law, it reads as a mushy, well-intentioned "Love Letter" from a simple, uneducated man. But when one who is knowledgeable of the Torah of Moses reads this letter, it is clear that Yochanan had a deep, mature understanding of the meaning and purpose of the Law and its place to the covenant relationship which Yahuwah made with his people Israel.

The Introduction

1 Yochanan 1:1-4 This is what we proclaim to you: what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and our hands have touched concerning the word of life. And the life was revealed, and we have seen and testify and announce to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us. What we have seen and heard we announce to you too, so that you may have fellowship with us. And indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Yahusha Messiah. Thus we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

At the outset, Yochanan sets the tone of this letter by establishing that the message he is about to give to his readers is a message which they have had "from the beginning." He is not bringing "new truth" to the table, but is testifying to what has been "from the beginning." The truths contained in this letter are long established and well known because they are from "the beginning."

The 4th Gospel which is believed to have been written by Yochanan (John) employs the phrase, "in the beginning." There he is talking about what happened at creation:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with Elohim, and the Word was Elohim. The Word was with Elohim in the beginning. All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created. In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind (Fourth Gospel [John] 1:1-4).

Here, the writer is clearly alluding to the first book of the Scriptures, Bereshith (Genesis), which translated means, "in the beginning." Also, he uses the designation "the Word" to refer to the one who created all things. The Word is a designation for the One who spoke all things into existence. Elsewhere in Scripture, it is clearly Messiah Yahusha who created all things, and who is the subject in the Fourth Gospel chapter 1, whom he calls "the Word." For he says, "**the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**" (4th Gospel 1:14).

Furthermore, in the Fourth Gospel, the writer identifies this "Word" as the one having "life" in him, and who is the "light" of mankind. Again, in this first epistle of Yochanan, the writer uses the exact same metaphors to identify the subject of this letter. This one who was "from the beginning" was made known to the disciples when they could hear him, see him and touch him. He (Messiah Yahusha) is the "**life that was revealed.**"

So, because of the similarities of speech, words and metaphors used in the Fourth Gospel and the first letter of Yochanan, we can confidently conclude that Yochanan is taking us back to "the beginning", that is, to creation, to establish the identity of his subject. So when he states that "**our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Yahusha Messiah,**" it is easy to see that he is attributing special status to the Messiah as one who stands alongside the Father. In fact, he equates him with Elohim (he does so explicitly in John 1:1).

Yochanan's usage of the term, "beginning," in reference to the creation of heaven and earth, needs to be kept in mind as we read the rest of the letter. He comes back to utilize this term several more times in this epistle. When he does so, he uses it with the same meaning. Yochanan is referring to the way it was since the beginning of creation. Thus, the message of the Gospel which Yochanan is proclaiming is the eternal, unchanging good news which was announced "in the beginning." The Gospel has never changed. It is the same now as it was "in the beginning." Along the way, greater detail has been given, but the core substance of the Gospel has never changed. That everlasting Gospel, which Yochanan is about to describe, is that Elohim created man for fellowship and has provided a plan to restore man to that fellowship for which he was created.

The purpose of writing this letter, states Yochanan, is so that "**our joy may be complete.**" The Psalms speak a great deal about having joy in the presence of Yahuwah, based upon one's right standing before him. The fellowship we have with Yahuwah on account of the forgiveness which was purchased by Messiah's death on the tree truly brings joy to the heart as we stand before him and enjoy unhindered fellowship with the living Elohim and with his Son, and with one another.

Walking in the Light

1 Yochanan 1:5-7 Now this is the gospel message we have heard from him and announce to you: Elohim is light, and in him there is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with him and yet keep on walking in the darkness, we are lying and not practicing the truth. But if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Yahusha his Son cleanses us from all sin.

Here, Yochanan explicitly expresses that the message which was from the beginning in the Gospel. Now the Evangelical Christian interpretation of the apostle Paul's "gospel" is well known. Paul refers to the gospel in 1 Corinthians 15 and summarizes it by writing that it consists of "**the death, burial and resurrection of Messiah.**" (For a comprehensive study of the Gospel, click on [The Gospel](#).) Here, in 1 Yochanan, we get a glimpse of Yochanan's understanding and interpretation of "the gospel." His "gospel" is NOT different from Paul's gospel, but Yochanan frames it and describes it in a different way than Paul did.

Yochanan's depiction of the gospel is introduced by the concept that Elohim is light. This gospel is something Yochanan says he "**heard from him**" (verses 1 and 6) and "**was from the beginning**" (verse 1). It is rooted in the account of creation where Elohim is the source of light. Messiah Yahusha taught this message that Elohim is light. Yochanan is merely repeating the message he heard from the Scriptures and which was taught by Messiah Yahusha.

Yochanan uses simple examples to illustrate the gospel so that we do not get bogged down in terminology and figures of speech. "**Elohim is light and in him there is no darkness at all.**" Yochanan uses this easy to understand metaphor so that the content of the gospel message can be understood by everyone. Since Elohim is light and there is no darkness in him, then those who belong to him must be "**in the light**" also. Yochanan describes in very practical and observable terms what it means to belong to the family of Elohim. You can easily discern the one who belongs to Elohim as opposed to the pretender who doesn't belong to Elohim. This makes it easy to identify the hypocrite and liar. Whoever says he belongs to Elohim and still "**walks in the darkness**" is lying and is not following truth (i.e. doesn't belong to Elohim).

The one who "**walks in the light as He is in the light**" really belongs to Elohim. We (who belong to Elohim) have fellowship with the one walking in the light. In Scripture, the Torah is identified as "Light":

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path. I have taken an oath and confirmed it, that I will follow your righteous laws (Psalm 119:105-106).

The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple. I open my mouth and pant, longing for your commands (Psalm 119:130-131).

In both of these passages, Light is equated with the righteous instruction of Elohim which consists of the commands of Elohim. Those instructions reflect the righteous character of Elohim.

"**Walking in the light**" is an obvious metaphor for obeying the commandments of Elohim and living according to his instructions. Thus, the genuine follower of Messiah can easily be identified by the lifestyle he follows - he is obeying the commands of the Almighty. Likewise, the one who is walking in the darkness is easily recognized because he is NOT obeying the commandments of Yahuwah's Covenant, and thus is "**walking in the darkness.**"

Note very carefully that the Scripture teaches us that the blood of Yahusha cleanses us from all sin "**if we walk in the light.**" It does not say that his blood cleanses us from sin irrespective of our walk. Read it again, carefully: It says, "**but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Yahusha his Son cleanses us from all sin.**" There is the promise: if we walk in the light, the blood of Yahusha cleanses us from sin. There is an important condition we must meet in order for the blood of Yahusha to cleanse us from sin. We must walk in the light!

In order for the atonement of Yahusha to take effect for us, we must repent, turn from all sin and walk in the light. But are we still cleansed if we are not walking in the light? It stands to reason that if we are walking in darkness - that is, if we are continuing to transgress the Torah of Elohim - then the blood of Yahusha has not cleansed us from all sin. The condition by which one may benefit from the cleansing action of Messiah's shed blood is that one must repent; that is, turn from that sin and stop sinning. There is no other option here. Either one stops sinning and is cleansed from all sin by Messiah's blood, or he doesn't stop sinning and is not cleansed of all sin.

The popular Christian gospel message is one in which personal responsibility for one's lifestyle choices is minimalized. The gospel that is preached and taught in many churches says that in order to be "saved" all one has to do is "believe" that Jesus died for you. Having done so, God will do the rest of the work of cleansing you of sin. You pretty much don't have to worry about it any more. But that teaching removes the responsibility of the believer's personal choices.

Yochanan is teaching us that cleansing from all sin is conditional upon our walking in the light. Sin does not magically disappear when one believes in Jesus. Each of us must make a decision to stop sinning and then to act on that decision. It takes human effort to actually change one's behavior and to stop doing those things which are sin. Thus, Yochanan explains that the one who is walking in the light, that is, he is obeying the commandments of Elohim, he is the one who has been cleansed from all sin.

Confessing Sins

1 Yochanan 1:8-10 If we say we do not bear the guilt of sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous, forgiving us our sins and cleansing us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar and his word is not in us.

First, it's important to note that everyone bears sin. Even Paul wrote, "**For all have sinned and fall short of the esteem of Elohim**" (Romans 3:23). This is a fundamental truth which the Scriptures present. The story of man's sin begins early in Genesis and is documented throughout the Bible through Revelation. There is no getting around this truth. Thus, Yochanan says, if we think that we do not have sin to bear, then we are simply deceiving ourselves. The only thing we can do about our sinful state is to confront it and take action to alleviate it.

Many have misunderstood Yochanan's gospel because of the statement that "**if we confess our sins, he will ... cleanse us from all unrighteousness.**" From this declaration, many have diluted the gospel into a greatly oversimplified (and false) message of "just admit to Jesus that you are a sinner and ask him into your heart, and you will be saved." It is regrettable that people believe that kind of nonsense. As though merely acknowledging your condition will cure you from it. That's as ridiculous as thinking that just because a doctor puts a Latin name to your symptoms that you will be cured.

The term *confess* as used in the Scriptures, particularly here, means much more than merely "*admit* you are a sinner." "To *confess* one's sins" has an explicit connection with *repentance* - the turning away from sinful behavior. Yochanan is instructing us that when one turns away from sin, he will be forgiven of that sin. Admitting that you have sinned and turning away from that sin are two very different things. Admitting you have sinned is only the first step one has to take toward the action of turning away from and forsaking the sin. Once true repentance has taken place - the changing of one's behavior and actions - the person finds forgiveness.

The Torah and the rest of the Scriptures plainly teach us that *repentance* is the necessary prerequisite to receive forgiveness and restoration. Additionally, confession of wrongdoing must always be accompanied by restitution:

Speak to the sons of Israel, 'When a man or woman commits any of the sins of mankind, acting unfaithfully against Yahuwah, and that person is guilty, then he shall confess his sins which he has committed, and he shall make restitution in full for his wrong and add to it one-fifth of it, and give it to him whom he has wronged (Bamidbar [Numbers] 5:6).

It is not enough that the sin is confessed. Repentance must accompany confession and an action of restitution must follow. If the confession is not followed by restitution (or "repentance" - a change in one's behavior), then the so-called "confession" is hollow and meaningless.

Warnings about disobedience of the Covenant commandments and the need for repentance is given to all Israel:

But if you will not listen to me and carry out all these commands, and if you reject my decrees and abhor my laws and fail to carry out all my commands and so violate my covenant, then I will do this to you: I will bring upon you sudden terror, wasting diseases and fever that will destroy your sight and drain away your life. (Vayiqra [Leviticus] 26:14-16)

This text goes on to describe the punishment, rejection and exile as the consequences of transgressing and forsaking the Covenant commandments. The only solution to the problem is for the people to "confess" and "repent":

'If they confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their forefathers, in their unfaithfulness which they committed against Me, and also in their acting with hostility against Me-- I also was acting with hostility against them, to bring them into the land of their enemies-- or if their uncircumcised heart becomes humbled so that they then make amends for their iniquity, then I will remember My covenant with Jacob, and I will remember also My covenant with Isaac, and My covenant with Abraham as well, and I will remember the land (Vayiqra [Leviticus] 26:40-42).

Here, the confessing of their iniquity is understood in parallel with the the later statement of their humbling themselves and making amends for their iniquity. In other words, the confession of sin is accompanied by a contrite heart and a turning (making amends) - actions which indicate a change of attitude and behavior.

Thus, when Yochanan says that "**if we confess our sins, he will cleans us**", he is speaking in the context of the instructions of the Torah, whereby true confession that leads to forgiveness is always accompanied by a change in one's mind and behavior and then by making restitution, such that the person stops committing that sin. The person who is resolute to make his wrong right by making restitution will truly be cleansed of all unrighteousness.

Next, Yochanan writes,

1 Yochanan 2:1-2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Yahusha Messiah the righteous One, and he himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for our sins but also for the whole world.

The purpose of the writing of this exhortative letter is stated plainly by Yochanan: "**so that you may not sin.**" Thus, here near the beginning of the letter, and throughout the body of it, Yochanan is emphasizing the walk of the believer as that walk which is characterized by "not sinning." The repeated calls to "obey the

commandment" is designed to keep the disciple of Yahusha from sin. Later, Yochanan defines sin as "transgression of the Law." Thus, to obey the Law and not transgress it is to keep from sinning. This is the walk of the believer, in a nutshell.

However, when one does sin, there is a remedy. Yahusha's death on the stake is the atonement for our sins. This was the purpose of his death on the tree. He provides us a substitute for the penalty for our sin. This is what "atonement" is all about. Though everyone who sins must pay the penalty for sin, there is a ransom or "substitute" that can be made. The lamb's blood on the doorpost indicated that a lamb had supplied the full payment for the penalty of sin for Israel on the night they came out of Egypt. All the sacrifices for sin at the altar before the tabernacle were "ransoms" - substitutes for a human beings transgression of the Law. Messiah Yahusha paid the permanent full payment for sin on behalf of all who place their trust in him, and who thereby repent of their sin and proceed in obedience to his Covenant.

Identifying Who Belongs to Elohim

1 Yochanan 2:3-6 Now by this we know that we have come to know Elohim: if we keep his commandments. The one who says "I have come to know Elohim" and yet does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in such a person. But whoever obeys his word, truly in this person the love of Elohim has been perfected. By this we know that we are in him. The one who says he resides in Elohim ought himself to walk just as Yahusha walked.

Next, Yochanan gives us the first of a series of litmus tests. In a most practical and easy to understand way, Yochanan explains to us how we can be sure that we belong to Elohim: "**if we keep his commandments.**" It's just that simple. The one who claims to belong to Elohim but doesn't keep his commandments is a liar. The one who keeps his commandments belongs to Him. This is a very common question people ask: how can we KNOW that we belong to Elohim. The answer is straight forward. We know because we keep his commandments.

Modern day Christian theologians, scholars, pastors, preachers, teachers, writers and bloviaters like to complicate what Scripture makes simple. They conceal the plain meaning of Scripture by demanding that their systematic theological models apply to the interpretation of what, otherwise, would be very easy to understand. They will tell you that "what John *really* means by that is..." and "what he *really* meant to say is..." Instead of merely taking Yochanan at face value and allowing the words to mean what they say, Christian interpreters must explain away the text of Scripture and place on it an interpretation the writer never intended.

But, the writers of Scripture do not engage in those ridiculous theoretical theological speculations. Here, Yochanan means precisely what he pens. Plain and simple. The one who demonstrates love for and loyalty to Elohim by doing what He says, belongs to Elohim. The pretenders and "wanna-be"s who do not obey the commandments don't belong to Elohim. This is how we know!

Therefore, the one who claims to know Elohim and Messiah Yahusha should "*walk just as he walked.*" Ha! No one really believes this today, do they? To walk just as Yahusha walked? Surely John doesn't really mean that. If that were the case, then the true followers and disciples of Messiah would be doing and living and walking and talking the same way Yahusha did. That means they would obey the Torah - the Law of Elohim.

They would be keeping the Sabbath and the annual set-apart days. They would wear the commanded fringes on the four corners of their garments. But Christians don't do any of those things, do they?

Churchianity would do well to begin teaching their members the truth. That's right: start teaching the truth. Because all along, they have been deceiving themselves and everyone around them with all those false teachings and misleading systematic theologies which amount to nothing. Believer, just start doing what your Savior and Master was doing. Keep the commandments and don't worry about what everyone else around you thinks of you. You must walk as your Master walks or you don't really belong to Him. Christian, stop letting someone's dispensational teaching or theology dictate how you are going to live. Look at the Master. How did he live? Go and do thou likewise. It's that simple.

The New Commandment

1 Yochanan 2:7-11 Dear friends, 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 that you have already heard. 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. The one who says he is in the light but still hates his brother is still in the darkness. The one who loves his brother resides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

At first blush, what Yochanan is writing may seem confusing and contradictory: Is he teaching an old commandment or a new commandment? First he says it is not a new commandment - it's an old commandment. Then he says he has a new commandment. Yochanan insists that this new command he is issuing is an old commandment. The answer is that the old commandment is one and the same with the new commandment. The old commandment is simply being renewed.

The old commandment which Yochanan is teaching is the one which we have had "**from the beginning**" and one which you "**have already heard**." Again, as we discussed earlier, he is alluding to what was so at creation. The commandment that we have had since the beginning is *to love*. The old commandment and the new commandment are one and the same. That commandment is *to love one another*. He explains this more fully below.

This new commandment (which is also the old commandment) has practical ramifications. By observing who is abiding by this commandment and who is not, we can discern who belongs to Elohim and who doesn't. The one who hates his brother is in the darkness and doesn't belong to Elohim. The one who loves his brother belongs with Elohim. It is that simple. If you hate, you are walking in darkness. Never mind what a "believer" says and what he claims to be. Don't be fooled by his words. Watch his actions. His actions in hating his brother have identified him as not belonging to Elohim.

Overcoming the World System

1 Yochanan 2:12-17 I am writing to you, little children, that your sins have been forgiven because of his name. I am writing to you, fathers, that you have known him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young people, that you have conquered the evil one. I have written to you, children, that you have known the Father. I have written to you, fathers, that you have known him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young people, that you are strong, and the word of Elohim resides in you, and you have conquered the evil one. Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him, because all that is in the world (the desire of the flesh and the desire of the eyes and the arrogance produced by material possessions) is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away with all its desires, but the person who does the will of Elohim remains forever.

Next, Yochanan transitions from a discussion of the right kind of love -that which one has for his brother - to an exhortation about the wrong kind of love - that which one has for the things of the world. This instruction is for all believers, including "little children", "fathers" and "young people." These three categories of people summarize the three main stages of life. The "little children" include young people who are not yet mature and those people who are "young" in the faith - new believers. The "fathers" represents older, mature adults and those who are well-grounded in the faith. These are those who are role models and teachers of the right way to live. And the "young people" represents those in the teenage and young adult group who are still figuring it all out.

Yochanan is writing to these three groups of individuals because each of them has demonstrated faith in Elohim in their lives. Some have "known" the father. Others have overcome the evil. Thus, the message about not loving the world is addressed to these people who are walking in the faith and demonstrating their faith in Elohim by their lifestyle choices.

The teaching here is that one should discriminate in the focus of your love. Love your brother but do not love the things of the world. Walking uprightly requires that we prioritize and make choices. We should understand that our affection and sense of value should be focused on people and not on things. Humans were made in the image of Elohim and thus deserve proper respect and dignity - in short, they are valuable. So, we are instructed to love one another.

But the things of the world - the things we lust after and our pride - are mere objects, so we are not to set our affections on them. If someone loves the world - wealth, fame, stature, possessions - the love of Yahuwah is not in him, because love of these things breaks the first commandment - that of having no other gods before Elohim. When Yahusha once said, "You cannot serve two masters," he was talking about this principle. You cannot serve Elohim while loving the things of the world.

The desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes and the pride of life are referring to these: the ninth commandment of the Covenant which states that we should not lust after our neighbor's wife (lust of the flesh), the tenth commandment of the Covenant which states that we should not set our eyes to desire our neighbor's possessions (the lust of the eyes), and the arrogance of having an opinion of oneself as higher than of others. Making judgments of people based on wealth, color of skin, race or ancestry is nothing short of sin. Such people who have this overinflated opinion of themselves are not doing the will of Elohim and the love of the Father is not in them.

The Anti-Messiahs vs. the Anointing

1 Yochanan 2:18-28 Children, it is the last hour, and just as you heard that the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. We know from this that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us, because if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But they went out from us to demonstrate that all of them do not belong to us. Nevertheless you have an anointing from the Set-apart One, and you all know. I have not written to you that you do not know the truth, but that you do know it, and that no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but the person who denies that Yahusha is the Messiah? This one is the antichrist: the person who denies the Father and the Son. Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either. The person who confesses the Son has the Father also. As for you, what you have heard from the beginning must remain in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. Now this is the promise that he himself made to us: eternal life. These things I have written to you about those who are trying to deceive you. Now as for you, the anointing that you received from him resides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you. But as his anointing teaches you about all things, it is true and is not a lie. Just as it has taught you, you reside in him. And now, little children, remain in him, so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink away from him in shame when he comes back.

Yochanan describes the time of the writing of his letter as "the last hour." That has caused a lot of confusion on the part of his readers because some 1900 plus years later, Messiah still hasn't appeared again. In what sense, then, was Yochanan's time legitimately "the last hour"? Likely, this is merely a subjective designation of the 1st century C.E. because the prophesies of Messiah about what was to occur before his return, especially as given in Matthew 24, were already beginning to be fulfilled. Yahusha had said,

For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and will deceive many (vs. 5).

At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people (vs. 10-11).

At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Messiah!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false Messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect-- if that were possible (vs. 23-24).

Yahusha had said there would be false Messiahs, which is what Yochanan's "antichrist" means. Thus, Yochanan sees his time as the beginning of the fulfillment of those things - or, as he puts it, "the last hour."

The antichrists, or "anti Messiahs" were already appearing. How do we know who these are? And how do we distinguish between the false messengers and the true ones? Yochanan makes this perfectly clear, also. The first way we can know who are the antimessiahs is to see who remained with Yochanan and the disciples of Yahusha and who left their fellowship. The true believers stayed with those who walked and talked and lived with Yahusha. The false couldn't tolerate the true teachings and therefore left the fellowship of the disciples to start their own "version" or "sect."

Now we can argue till we're all blue in the face about exactly what the apostles' teaching was. Everybody has their own take on what they believed, and thus, we have hundreds, perhaps thousands of sects of Christianity in the world today. So, while what Yochanan wrote may have been a useful test for those people in that day, this test is of little value for the 21st century reader, because we can't agree on what sound doctrine is.

The second test Yochanan gives for identifying the antichrist is to ascertain what one believes about Yahusha - specifically asking the question, "Is Yahusha the Messiah?" The antichrist, or false believer will deny that Yahusha is the Messiah:

Who is the liar but the person who denies that Yahusha is the Messiah? This one is the antichrist: the person who denies the Father and the Son. Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either. The person who confesses the Son has the Father also.

It seems that Yochanan was fighting the same battle that Yahusha himself fought and which the other apostles, including Sha'ul (Paul) fought. This battle was with the unbelieving Sanhedrin made up of Pharisees and Sadducees. Many of them rejected the claims of Yahusha that he was one with the Father and that he was sent by the Father. There was a divide between the followers of Yahusha and the rest of the Yehudim who rejected the claims that Yahusha was the Messiah.

So, Yochanan's explanation is directed to differentiate between the true faithful of Elohim and the pretenders by pointing out that those who do not identify Yahusha as Elohim's Messiah are at enmity with Elohim. Such a one is the antichrist, or is opposed to an understanding that Yahusha is the Messiah. To deny Yahusha as the Messiah sent from Elohim is to deny Elohim himself. If one does not understand that Yahusha is the Messiah, then he doesn't understand the Scriptures, because, as Yahusha himself put it, the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings - the Old Testament Scriptures - are "all about me" (cf. Luke 24:44-45; Yochanan 5:46-47).

So what is the "antimessiah" or "antichrist"? It is the belief system that says Yahusha is not the Messiah, or it is the person who does not believe Yahusha is the Messiah. The "antichrist" is not a single person who appears in the last days to fulfill prophesy, as is popularly believed in the Christian world. The "antichrist" is everyone who denies that Yahusha is the Messiah! There are a great many antichrists in the world today, just as there were many antichrists in Yochanan's time.

With this in mind, it is also clear that Yochanan was referring to the people in his day who did not believe that Yahusha was the Messiah - the unbelieving Jews. He was labeling the rebellious Jewish leadership and their followers as antichrist. The Pharisees and Sadducees were the antichrists of Yochanan's time, because they were the ones who denied that Yahusha is the Messiah. So, if you want to identify who the antichrists are today, just look at what people believe. There are many antichrists in our world - Jews, some Christians (!), Muslims, and on and on the list goes.

In a fascinating side note (it's fascinating to me, anyway), some Christians believe that the Messianics are antichrist! I was puzzled by this for awhile until I realized that Christians see the Messianics trying to mimic the Rabbis in their dress, their appearance, their prayers, their blessings, etc. These Messianics are mistakenly attempting to return to their "Jewish roots" rather than their Hebrew roots as they should be. Thus, they appear to be associating themselves with the Rabbis who don't believe that Yahusha is the Messiah. So, Christians think that the Messianics are antichrist, too!

On the other hand, those who have received "the Anointing" - that is, those who have received the outpouring of the Holy Spirit because of their belief in Yahusha as Messiah will know the true teachings, because the Holy

Spirit leads us into all truth. These who are anointed do not need a Rabbi or a Pharisee or a Christian Priest or Pastor to teach them the truth, because they have the witness of the Holy Spirit to help them to recognize the truth.

There is a subtle warning here in Yochanan's words. He is suggesting that those whose main source of information and opinion regarding spiritual things is his Rabbi or his Pharisee or his Priest or Pastor, will inevitably be subject to deception and the reception of what is a lie! If we do not seek after truth with a consuming hunger for the Word of Elohim, and instead merely listen to and believe what our Rabbi or Priest or Pastor teaches, we are certain to be subject to believing a lie. It is the Holy Spirit who leads his own into truth - not the Rabbi or Priest or Pastor.

Those who listen to the Holy Spirit will have no need to shrink away at the Master's coming. His true followers must walk in the way that the Master taught his disciples to walk. But dispensationalist Christians teach that the Master's teachings were only for the Jews and that we should only follow in the teachings of Paul or some other disciple! Don't listen to that kind of nonsense. Listen to the Master and obey what he taught and you will be able to have confidence before him at his coming. Walk as Messiah walked. Walk in full obedience to the commandments of the Bible.

Those Who Belong to the Father Put Righteousness Into Practice

1 Yochanan 2:29-3:6 If you know that he is righteous, you also know that everyone who practices righteousness has been fathered by him. See what sort of love the Father has given to us: that we should be called Elohim's children--and indeed we are! For this reason the world does not know us: because it did not know him. Dear friends, we are Elohim's children now, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that whenever it is revealed we will be like him, because we will see him just as he is. And everyone who has this hope focused on him purifies himself, just as Yahusha is pure. Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; indeed, sin is lawlessness. And you know that Yahusha was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. Everyone who resides in him does not sin; everyone who sins has neither seen him nor known him.

Earlier in this letter, Yochanan had written about the test of knowing who belongs to Elohim. He concluded that those who keep his commandments are those who love him and belong to him. Here, Yochanan elaborates on the importance of this test to identify who really belongs to Elohim. The followers of Yahusha Messiah have come to know and understand that Yahusha is righteous, just as Elohim is righteous. He was "without fault" and "blameless" as Pilate testified. He was brought as a lamb to the slaughter. His death was as a righteous one dying in the place of an unrighteous one.

We know that Elohim is righteous. So, it follows, that those who claim to belong to him, those who love him and attach themselves to his Messiah, will practice righteousness. But what does it mean to practice righteousness? Doing righteousness is walking in obedience to the commandments of Elohim. Those who walk in his footsteps of faithfulness to the commandments of Yahuwah will be like Messiah, and are recognized as being "fathered by him."

At this point in his letter, Yochanan stops to ponder and wonder at the amazing love of Elohim that he has showered on those who belong to Messiah. It's wonderful that Elohim would designate us as his own

children! Those who are walking in the footsteps of Yahusha and are separating themselves from sinful practices of the world and are walking in the commandments of Elohim are looking a lot like Yahusha! For this reason, Yochanan points out, the world does not recognize us any more than it recognized that Yahusha was from the Father. This is what causes us to stand out before Elohim the Father, and this is why the world does not understand us nor recognize who we are: we are steadfastly obeying Elohim and keeping his commandments.

We also know that at the resurrection event, when the living will be changed in the presence of Yahusha, we will be like Yahusha. We will see him as he is and we will be like him - Why? - because we are doing what he told us to do. We, the true followers of Yahusha are walking faithfully in the commandments, just as Yahusha instructed us to do. In this way, we are being transformed into his image so that we can look like him. For this reason, Yochanan says, we purify ourselves just as Yahusha is pure.

Yochanan has made this point over and over again. And yet, most Christians who read this letter still don't get it. He couldn't be any clearer that the true follower of Yahusha will obey the commandments that Elohim gave through Moses to all Israel. However, for those who still don't get it, Yochanan returns to the basics and defines his terminology again. What is sin? you might ask. Sin is lawlessness. When a Law of Elohim is broken, that is sin. Sin is the transgression of the Law. It is that simple. We don't have to guess about what sin is. We don't have to wonder if any of our thoughts or actions are sin. We merely need to consult with what is written in the Word of Elohim. Are we breaking a Law of Elohim by transgressing a Law or by not doing what we are told to do? Then we are sinning.

Yochanan says that those who keep on breaking the commandments are practicing lawlessness:

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; indeed, sin is lawlessness.

In contrast with this, Yochanan writes, Yahusha came to take away sin. In fact, in Yahusha there is no sin. So, everyone who belongs to Yahusha does not continue in sin. The one who belongs to Yahusha walks like Yahusha and talks like Yahusha. The true follower of Yahusha will obey Elohim's commandments, just like Messiah did. But those who continue walking in sin have neither seen Yahusha nor do they know Yahusha. If they had seen him and know him, they would stop sinning and begin to walk and talk and live as Yahusha did.

Those Who Practice Righteousness Are Righteous

1 Yochanan 3:7-10 Little children, let no one deceive you: The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as Yahusha is righteous. The one who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of Elohim was revealed: to destroy the works of the devil. Everyone who has been fathered by Elohim does not practice sin, because Elohim's seed resides in him, and thus he is not able to sin, because he has been fathered by Elohim. By this the children of Elohim and the children of the devil are revealed: Everyone who does not practice righteousness--the one who does not love his brother--is not of Elohim.

As Messiah said in Matthew 24, there would be those who would try to deceive his disciples in the last days. So, Yochanan reiterates the Master: "**let no one deceive you.**" Don't be mistaken and led astray by the false notion that one's righteousness has nothing to do with his actions, works, choices and practices. The righteous

one is righteous because he is practicing righteousness. It is in the keeping of Yahuwah's righteous commandments that one is seen and confirmed as righteous. This is in harmony with what Elohim has always said.

Through Moses, Yahuwah makes it clear that the practice of righteousness, that is, the keeping of the commandments of Yahuwah, is the identifying marker of the one who belongs to him:

Yahuwah commanded us to obey all these decrees and to fear Yahuwah our Elohim, so that we might always prosper and be kept alive, as is the case today. And it will be righteousness for us when we watch to do all this Commandment before Yahuwah our Elohim as he commanded us." (Devarim 6:24-25)

The righteousness that is imputed (credited) to us is the righteousness which is the result of doing the commandments as Yahuwah has commanded! This is clearly what the Scripture teaches. Righteousness does not magically drop on people who are living unrepentant in sin. There is no righteousness for us apart from the righteousness of Messiah which we begin to walk in when we repent (turn away) from our sin and begin walking in the commandments of the Almighty.

So the New Testament teaches us that Messiah is our righteousness. This is no doubt true. How then can we say that the keeping of the commandments is our righteousness and reconcile this teaching with Messiah being our righteousness? Certainly, Messiah's death on the tree as a ransom for our sins sets us free from the bondage of sin. We no longer are obligated to the sinful nature. But then we have to decide how we are going to live! Yahusha Messiah taught us that the correct way to express faith in Elohim is to obey the commandments (see the Sermon on the Mount). He made it perfectly clear that he had not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets, but he had come to fulfill them - which means he was to perform them and teach us their true meaning (cf. Matthew 5:17-20).

Messiah is our righteousness. What does this mean? - that we don't need to keep the commandments, but we only need to "believe" in Jesus? No. Certainly not. By identifying ourselves with Messiah and becoming his disciples, we are agreeing to keep his commandments and walk as Yahusha walked. This is how Messiah is our righteousness. We become like him by following in his footsteps. He showed us how to live. We proclaim our loyalty to him and then begin to do as he did - we keep all the commandments Yahuwah has given us.

As our ancestors whom Moses addressed in the passage above, we have life and death to choose from. If we choose life, we choose to obey all the commandments of our Master - the commandments of Scripture. If we choose not to obey the commandments, we are, in effect, choosing death - no matter what our lips may say or proclaim, our actions speak louder than our words. This is what Yahuwah revealed to us through Moses in Deuteronomy 30:

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love Yahuwah your Elohim, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and Yahuwah your Elohim will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Yarden to enter and possess. (Devarim 30:15-18)

So don't be mistaken and led astray by the false notion that followers of Messiah can go on sinning and Elohim is okay with that. If you continue to practice sin, according to Yochanan, you do not belong to Elohim or his Messiah. The one who practices sin is of the devil. Plain and simple. This is the definition of the one who belongs to the devil. Does he continue to sin? Then he is of the devil.

This question about whether a follower of Messiah can go on sinning willfully without any concern is answered by considering the very purpose that Messiah came to die on the tree. He came to destroy sin, which is the work of the devil. Since Messiah is destroying sin, why would a believer think that its okay for him to continue to sin? This is absurd. All who call on his name must stop sinning because if he really is a child of Elohim, then he will abhor sin just as the Father does. Just as Yochanan writes:

By this the children of Elohim and the children of the devil are revealed: Everyone who does not practice righteousness--the one who does not love his brother--is not of Elohim.

The genuine follower of Messiah will obey the commandments of Elohim, just as Yahusha did, and he will love his brother.

The Command to Love One Another

1 Yochanan 3:11-18 For this is the gospel message that you have heard from the beginning: that we should love one another, not like Cain who was of the evil one and brutally murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his deeds were evil, but his brother's were righteous. Therefore do not be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. We know that we have crossed over from death to life because we love our brothers. The one who does not love remains in death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. We have come to know love by this: that Yahusha laid down his life for us; thus we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. But whoever has the world's possessions and sees his brother in need and shuts off his compassion against him, how can the love of Elohim reside in such a person? Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue but in deed and truth.

Yochanan now returns to a discussion of the "gospel." Recall that in 1 Yochanan 1:5, he defines the gospel this way:

Now this is the gospel message we have heard from him and announce to you: Elohim is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.

Here in 3:11, the gospel is the message that we heard from the beginning, i.e. from the creation of heaven and earth. And that gospel is that we should love one another. Is there any contradiction in his "two gospels"? Of course not. Elohim is light and Elohim is love. The proclamation is both - that Elohim is light (not darkness, or "sinfulness") and that in keeping with his loving nature, we should love one another.

Now Yochanan drills down to show us what this kind of love entails. First, he shows us what this love is by showing us what this love is not. The opposite of the love we have had from the beginning is illustrated by the murder of Abel by Cain. Because Cain did not have the love of Elohim, and because he belonged to the evil

one, he brutally murdered his brother. He did so because his deeds were evil. The one belonging to the evil one practices evil and lawlessness, just as the one belonging to Elohim practices righteousness by keeping the commandments.

The murder of Abel was given to us to teach us something else: If we love Elohim like Abel loved Elohim, then the world will hate us just as Cain hated and killed Abel. Evil does not like nor get along with righteousness. Those who are evil and practice evil deeds will hate those who love Yahuwah and practice righteousness.

Furthermore, even hating your brother places you in the category of a murderer. Didn't Yahusha tell us to love even our enemies? How much more our brother. If you hate your brother, you need to examine yourself to see whether you really belong to Elohim. If you do not stop hating your brother, then you are confirming that you belong to the evil one.

Secondly, Yochanan defines the kind of love which was from the beginning by providing the greatest example of love. Yahusha demonstrated his love for us by laying down his life for us. He died in our place to take our punishment for sin. If we receive that love, then we are agreeing to stop sinning and to begin walking in his commandments always. This is how we show our loyalty to him and our "belief" in him: by obeying his commandments, just as he said, **"If you love me, you will obey my commandments."**

Thirdly, Yochanan tells us that the love that Yahusha showed us is the kind of love we need to have for one another. But if you see your brother in need and do not respond with a helping hand, how can you say that you love him? If you don't demonstrate the love of Yahusha by showing compassion to your brother and meeting his need, then you don't really belong to Elohim.

The love that we have by belonging to Elohim and by believing in Yahusha the Messiah must be demonstrated in tangible, visible ways. Loving your brother shows everyone that you belong to Elohim. Refusing to help your brother shows everyone that no matter what your lips may say, you belong to the evil one.

1 Yochanan 3:19-24 And by this we will know that we are of the truth and will convince our conscience in his presence, that if our conscience condemns us, that Elohim is greater than our conscience and knows all things. Dear friends, if our conscience does not condemn us, we have confidence in the presence of Elohim, and whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do the things that are pleasing to him. Now this is his commandment: that we believe in the name of his Son Yahusha Messiah and love one another, just as he gave us the commandment. And the person who keeps his commandments resides in Elohim, and Elohim in him. Now by this we know that Elohim resides in us: by the Spirit he has given us.

Those who are attached to Messiah have been forgiven of sin. But even if our conscience still bothers us for sins past, Elohim knows our hearts and has forgiven all. Better to have a conscience that trusts in Yahuwah and does not condemn us. When we have confidence in Yah's word, we can have confidence that he hears our prayers. This confidence can be ours if we are keeping his commandments and doing his word. This is how we can have confidence that he hears our prayers. When we do his commands, his Spirit reassures us and confirms that we belong to him.

Next, Yochanan moves on to say, **"now this is the commandment."** It is important to understand from a knowledge of Torah what Yochanan is alluding to. In Devarim [Deuteronomy] 6:1, Mosheh writes,

Now this is the commandment: the statutes and the decisions which Yahuwah your Elohim commanded to teach you to do in the land which you are crossing over there to inherit.

Here, the word translated *commandment* is the Hebrew **חֻצְמִי** (pronounced *mitzvah*) which means *command*. When used in the singular, as it is in Devarim 6:1, *mitzvah* refers to the whole covenant Yahuwah made with his people on Mt. Sinai. This is confirmed by what follows - mention on the statutes and decisions (judgments) of the law which constitute the Covenant.

So is its usage in 1 Yochanan 3. When Yochanan writes, "Now this is the commandment," he is alluding to the renewed covenant which Yahuwah has made with his people through the death of Yahusha, the Lamb of Elohim. So the covenant is summarized by what follows: "**that we believe in the name of his son Yahusha Messiah and love one another.**" This is the *summary* of the covenant, not the details. What follows "believing in the name" is the love we are to have for our brother - in short, the keeping of the commandments. Love is the summary of all the other commandments of the Torah and love is the summary of what Yahusha taught his disciples. Only those who keep the commandments reside in Elohim. Just as in the "old" covenant, where keeping the commandments was an integral part of the covenant agreement, the renewed covenant in Yahusha's blood also begins with the forgiveness obtained through the shed blood but is sustained and verified through our keeping of Elohim's commandments, which are the detailed substance of the covenant agreement.

The Spirit he has given us testifies with our spirit that we belong to Elohim. The Spirit does this only when we are obedient to his commandments. If a so-called believer is deviant or unwilling to obey his commands, the Spirit is not "leading" him. Peter affirmed this in his sermon as recorded in Acts 5:32, where he instructs us who can receive the Holy Spirit:

We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom Elohim has given to those who obey him."

The Holy Spirit is given only to those who obey him. So, those who have the Holy Spirit are those who keep the commandments, just as Yochanan said. And these receive the assuring of the Holy Spirit that they belong to Elohim.

Testing the Spirits (A Reprise of Warnings About Anti-Messiahs)

1 Yochanan 4:1-6 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to determine if they are from Elohim, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of Elohim: Every spirit that confesses Yahusha as the Messiah who has come in the flesh is from Elohim, but every spirit that does not confess Yahusha is not from Elohim, and this is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and now is already in the world. You are from Elohim, little children, and have conquered them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. They are from the world; therefore they speak from the world's perspective and the world listens to them. We are from Elohim; the person who knows Elohim listens to us, but whoever is not from Elohim does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit.

There are many Christians who talk the talk of the Faith and who believe they have the Holy Spirit. But you would never know it by the way they live. The Holy Spirit is not the author of greed and sexual scandal and building monuments to men. Yet, so many Christians, led by the example of their ministers, priests and pastors are practicing these pernicious transgressions of the righteous law of Elohim. Those who are guilty of these things still insist they they are filled with the Holy Spirit, and that they are children of Elohim.

Don't be fooled. Actions speak louder than words. Those who do these things are being led by some other spirit and not the Holy Spirit of Elohim. This is why we must "test the spirits." And how do we test them? Very simple. Don't overlook it. We test the spirits by observing the actions and deeds of the person in whom the spirit resides. If someone says he has the Holy Spirit, test this hypothesis by observing how he lives, walks, talks and how he treats his brother. Is he keeping the commandments of Elohim, or is he going down his own path and living life his own way? Those who pursue living life by doing it their own way (remember the song, *My Way*?) do not belong to Elohim. But those who live life by doing it "His way" are the genuine children of Elohim.

There are many false prophets in the world. This is why it is paramount to study and obey the Scriptures and not to obey pastors, priests and teachers whose teachings contradict plain Scriptural Instruction. The Torah tells us what test we are to put to those who claim to be holy men. Here's how we know who the true prophet is and who the false prophet is. The words of the true prophet can always be confirmed by testing whether they agree with the words of Yahuwah.

Test #1

Devarim 18:21 Now if you say to yourselves, 'How can we tell that a message is not from Yahuwah?'-- 22 whenever a prophet speaks in my name and the prediction is not fulfilled, then I have not spoken it; the prophet has presumed to speak it, so you need not fear him."

It is easy to tell that the spirit in someone is not the Holy Spirit sent from Yahuwah if what the spirit says will come to pass does not come to pass. This person speaks presumptuously. He is lying about having a word directly from the Almighty. We have seen many Christian teachers and prophesy experts who claimed that the LORD told them something would happen, and then it didn't happen. These are false prophets - all of them. Don't be fooled.

Test #2

Devarim 13:1 Suppose a prophet or one who foretells by dreams should appear among you and show you a sign or wonder, 2 and the sign or wonder should come to pass concerning what he said to you, namely, "Let us follow other elohim"--elohim whom you have not previously known--"and let us serve them." 3 You must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer, for Yahuwah your Elohim will be testing you to see if you love him with all your mind and being. 4 You must follow Yahuwah your Elohim and revere only him; and you must observe his commandments, obey him, serve him, and remain loyal to him. 5 As for that prophet or dreamer, he must be executed because he encouraged rebellion against Yahuwah your Elohim who brought you from the land of Egypt, redeeming you from the place of slavery, and because he has tried to entice you from the way Yahuwah your Elohim has commanded you to go. In this way you must purge out evil from within.

Shemot 34:27 And Yahuwah said to Mosheh, "Write these words, for in accordance

with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Yisrael.

The spirit sent from Yahuwah will never lead anyone into bowing down before pagan deities, including Ishtar, Ba'al, Mithras or any other. Nor will the true sent one ever lead Yah's people into obeying a different set of instructions (laws) than that which Yah gave through Moses at Sinai. The true prophet **must** be leading the people to obedience to Yahuwah's commandments which are written in the Scriptures. There are many Christian teachers and preachers who tell you that the Old Testament Instructions have been done away with, but that you should obey the Scriptures as your priest or pastor interprets them to you. These are all false prophets, too. Don't be fooled by them. Go find another place to worship because you are being lied to.

This test of the spirit as given in the Torah is in agreement with what Yochanan is teaching us here. His test is to test what the spirit in question is saying about the identity of Yahusha:

Every spirit that confesses Yahusha as the Messiah who has come in the flesh is from Elohim, but every spirit that does not confess Yahusha is not from Elohim, and this is the spirit of the antichrist.

This is the same test as above. The test of a prophet (a spirit) is to see if that spirit leads us to follow the one and only Elohim. Yochanan's test is the same. His test is to ask if the spirit is confessing Yahusha to be the Messiah of Elohim, the One Sent by Elohim to instruct us how to live. The Holy Spirit testifies to the identity of Yahusha as Elohim's right hand. But the enemy spirits all cast doubt on the identity of Yahusha as being sent from Elohim and that he taught his disciples to obey the letter and the spirit of the Law. The enemy spirits want us to worship some other god, or to worship "the true God" some other way. The enemy spirits want us to abandon Elohim's righteous Law and obey some other set of man-made instructions, instead.

There are two camps of people in the world. There are those who belong to Elohim and confess Yahusha as having been sent from Elohim. These have the Holy Spirit and lead us in the direction of obedience to the commandments of the Almighty. The other camp is those of the world. They may talk the religious talk and claim all sorts of things. But those who do not belong to Elohim will try to persuade you that you may go and worship other gods or that you don't have to obey the commandments of God. Others may say that Yahusha is not sent from the Father. Thus it is quite simple to discern between the spirits - they lead in opposite directions.

False prophets, false teachers and false spirits speak from the world's perspective. They will tell you to ignore Elohim's law and to obey their laws instead. They will tell you that you can live your life however you please, and that this will be okay with the Almighty. The false teachers will tell you not to obey that nasty, outdated, worn out Old Testament Law because God never really expected his people to be able to obey it anyway. God had always intended to get rid of that ridiculous law and replace it with the command to just love people. However you think one should love your fellow man, that's the only thing God wants us to do.

Hogwash!

The genuine children of Elohim will have profound loyalty to the Almighty and will love to obey his commandments. The one belonging to the Eternal will identify himself by his righteous lifestyle practices. Does he live in obedience to his Maker? Yes? Well then, he's the real thing. And the true believers will listen to the apostles teaching, as Yochanan implies, because they belong to Elohim. This is the true test of the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit.

The Test of Love (A Reprise of Loving One Another)

1 Yochanan 4:7-21 Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from Elohim, and everyone who loves has been fathered by Elohim and knows Elohim. The person who does not love does not know Elohim, because Elohim is love. By this the love of Elohim is revealed in us: that Elohim has sent his one and only Son into the world so that we may live through him. In this is love: not that we have loved Elohim, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, if Elohim so loved us, then we also ought to love one another. No one has seen Elohim at any time. If we love one another, Elohim resides in us, and his love is perfected in us. By this we know that we reside in Elohim and he in us: in that he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone confesses that Yahusha is the Son of Elohim, Elohim resides in him and he in Elohim. And we have come to know and to believe the love that Elohim has in us. Elohim is love, and the one who resides in love resides in Elohim, and Elohim resides in him. By this love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment, because just as Yahusha is, so also are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears punishment has not been perfected in love. We love because he loved us first. If anyone says "I love Elohim" and yet hates his brother, he is a liar, because the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love Elohim whom he has not seen. And the commandment we have from him is this: that the one who loves Elohim should love his brother too.

Love is at the heart of the Law. To love is the greatest of the commandments. When asked by the Pharisees what he thought was the greatest commandment of the Law, Yahusha replied,

"'Love Yahuwah your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matthew 22:37-40)

To love Elohim and to love your neighbor are the summary of all the commandments. All other commands of Scripture hang off these two.

To illustrate this point, consider the Ten Words, also known as the Ten Commandments. The first few of them - to have no other elohim besides Yahuwah, not to make any images to bow down to, not to profane the name of Yahuwah, and to set apart the Sabbath day unto Yahuwah - these have in common that they detail what it means to love Elohim. The rest of the "Ten" - honor your parents, don't adulterate, don't murder, don't steal, don't bear false witness, don't lust after your neighbor's wife, don't desire your neighbor's things - these all have to do with loving your neighbor. Thus, each of the Ten Commandments either speaks to loving Elohim or to loving your neighbor.

So it is with all of the laws, statutes and commandments of the Torah of Moses. Every one of them is kept to honor and love Elohim or to respect and love one's fellow human being. This is what Yahusha means when he said the **"all the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."**

Love has many facets. Loving Elohim and loving people include all of the following virtues and more: respect, loyalty, warm feelings, fair treatment, due honor, compassion, dignity, honesty, candor. But to show disrespect, disloyalty, no feelings, unfair treatment, dishonor, callous disregard, dishonesty or deceit toward Elohim or toward your fellow man indicates that the person doing so does not know Elohim and does not

belong to Elohim.

Elohim has shown us the deepest demonstration of genuine love which we are to have for one another. He did this by sending his Son to be a ransom for our sins, taking upon himself the punishment for our sins - death by hanging. So, the love we have for Elohim pales in comparison to the love he has demonstrated toward us. Nevertheless, the love of Elohim in sending his Son is the kind of love that we should have for each other. To love your fellow like that is the proof that we belong to Elohim. This kind of love does not come naturally in humans. The source of this kind of love is Elohim.

When we habitually practice this kind of love, love makes us the kind of people that Yahuwah wants us to be. And this leads to our having confidence before him at his coming. Those who fear judgment do not believe in the promises of Elohim that their sins are forgiven. But those who trust and then practice the love of Elohim have complete confidence in Him and can look forward to seeing Elohim without fear of punishment.

Ultimately, it is evident who really loves Elohim. The one who hates his brother whom he has seen cannot possibly love Elohim, whom he has not seen. But he who loves his brother demonstrates that he loves Elohim and belongs to Elohim, because the commandment from Elohim is for the one who loves Elohim to love his brother, too.

Loving Elohim and Guarding His Commands

1 Yochanan 5:1-5 Everyone who believes that Yahusha is the Messiah has been fathered by Elohim, and everyone who loves the father loves the child fathered by him. By this we know that we love the children of Elohim: whenever we love Elohim and obey his commandments. For this is the love of Elohim: that we keep his commandments. And his commandments do not weigh us down, because everyone who has been fathered by Elohim conquers the world. Now who is the person who has conquered the world except the one who believes that Yahusha is the Son of Elohim?

Earlier, Yochanan had written that if one embraces the Son, he has the Father also. But if you don't acknowledge the Son, you don't know the Father. Here, he reiterates. Those who acknowledge that Yahusha is the Messiah sent from Elohim are children of Elohim. A second proof that we are the children of Elohim is that we love those who love Elohim.

As he has done so before, Yochanan now talks again about the evidence of love for Elohim. The one who loves Elohim obeys his commandments. Those who don't obey the commandments of Elohim do not truly love Elohim. And the commandments we are to obey are those which are summarized in love for our fellow.

This is why the commandments are not a burden. It's because they are all about love. Some Christian teachers would have us believe that the commandments of the Old Testament Law are a burden which we do not have to bear. But those who teach this do not understand the Torah given through Moses and do not understand love. All the commandments of Yahuwah are based in love. This is why they are not too difficult to do. It is not a burden to love.

Moses told us that the Torah\Law is not too difficult to keep. Speaking of a distant time (our time) and to a

repentant people (we who turn back to obedience to the Torah), Moses writes,

You will again obey Yahuwah and follow all his commands I am giving you today. Then Yahuwah your Elohim will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. Yahuwah will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers, if you obey Yahuwah your Elohim and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to Yahuwah your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul. Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it. (Devarim 30:8-14)

Contrary to what Evangelical and Catholic ministers like to preach and teach, the Torah has never been too difficult for anyone who loves Yahuwah to keep. It is a popularly received bold-faced lie that Messiah does not expect his followers to keep the commandments. Nothing could be further from the truth. Messiah taught his disciples that the correct way to express loyalty to the Creator is to obey all his instructions (cf. the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7 - he did NOT come to destroy the Law or the Prophets!).

And Paul repeated the words of Devarim 30 in Romans 10, where he notes that for those who are attached to Messiah, obedience to the commandments of the Torah is not too difficult. Regarding the righteousness of faith, Paul quotes at length the contents of Devarim 30. What does the righteousness by faith say?, Paul asks.

But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: That if you confess with your mouth, "Yahusha is Master," and believe in your heart that Elohim raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." (Romans 10:8-11)

Righteousness by faith, according to Paul, is that righteousness in which one walks when he expresses fidelity to Yahuwah by keeping all his commandments! And doing this is not too difficult for anyone. Love for Yahuwah and for the Messiah starts in the heart, proceeds through the mouth, and expresses itself in the action of obedience to all the commandments of Elohim's covenant.

1 Yochanan 5:6-12 Yahusha Messiah is the one who came by water and blood--not by the water only, but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. For there are three that testify, the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three are in agreement. If we accept the testimony of men, the testimony of Elohim is greater, because this is the testimony of Elohim that he has testified concerning his Son. The one who believes in the Son of Elohim has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe Elohim has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that Elohim has testified concerning his Son. And this is the testimony: Elohim has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. The one who has the Son has this eternal life; the one who does not have the Son of Elohim does not have this eternal life.

There is still debate ongoing about what the water and the blood refers to. Obviously the blood is that of

Yahusha. But the water may be that of his baptism. Others suggest the water is that which poured out of his side with the blood when he was pierced by the soldier. But I don't think it matters in terms of the argument Yochanan is making. He is merely saying that the testimony of Yahusha is perfectly consistent with his message that the Father sent him to be the Savior of the world. Elohim's testimony is always greater than that of men. Men lie. Elohim is truth and always tells the truth.

Thus, the testimony that Yahusha is the promised Messiah and that his death provides ransom for our sins, is the message which provides eternal life to those who receive him, repent of their transgressions and begin to walk in the light of righteousness. There is no other ransom which results in forgiveness of sins and confidence before Elohim. Yahusha has provided this salvation for whomever will walk in his footsteps.

Closing Summary

1 Yochanan 5:13-21 I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of Elohim so that you may know that you have eternal life. And this is the confidence that we have before him: that whenever we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in regard to whatever we ask, then we know that we have the requests that we have asked from him. If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not resulting in death, he should ask, and Elohim will grant life to the person who commits a sin not resulting in death. There is a sin resulting in death. I do not say that he should ask about that. All unrighteousness is sin, but there is sin not resulting in death. We know that everyone fathered by Elohim does not sin, but Elohim protects the one he has fathered, and the evil one cannot touch him. We know that we are from Elohim, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. And we know that the Son of Elohim has come and has given us insight to know him who is true, and we are in him who is true, in his Son Yahusha Messiah. This one is the true Elohim and eternal life. Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

Finally, Yochanan again sums up the main points of the letter he has written. Yahusha's death provides life for those who turn to him and walk the walk of faithfulness. The Holy Spirit gives confidence to all those who receive Yahusha. And such will have their prayers answered because they ask unselfishly, in agreement with Elohim's will.

One who loves his brother will pray for his brother and he will rebuke and forgive his repentant brother. But those whose sin is egregious rebellion against Elohim need not bother asking for forgiveness, because they will be rejected by Elohim just as they have rejected Elohim.

But the true child of Elohim will stop sinning. And he will be protected from the evil one by Elohim. We know that we belong to Elohim because we keep his commandments, we get insight into what is true, and we know that Yahusha is the Son of Elohim.

To keep yourself from idols is the first expression of allegiance to the Almighty. Loving Elohim starts with refraining from having other gods. And keeping from idols keeps us in the mind frame wherein we can love our brother.

END

