

## NOTES AND QUESTIONS FOR INDUCTIVE STUDY OF FIRST JOHN PART THREE

Having explained in chapter one why he knows that his message is true and how we can be certain we are completely forgiven, John now goes on to present two more areas in which Christians can be absolutely confident.

First he talks about knowing we know Jesus because we live according to His commands,(2:3) and therefore we 'walk' or live as He lived.(2:5,6) The secret of living this way is to 'abide', to be completely at home, in Jesus.(2:6) Notice that present certainty is based on present trusting. We cannot be sure now based only on the experience of the past.

Before we can begin to experience a certainty about Christ living in us, we must have the certainty of forgiveness which chapter one describes. John's purpose in writing is to prevent ongoing sin,(2:1) but prevention of more sin must begin with cancelling the sin already past. John lets us into a deeper understanding of how Jesus' blood actually cleanses us from all sin. Jesus having taken not only the punishment but also the blame for our sin, (propitiation), (2:2) rose again and returned to heaven to be our Advocate, our counsel for the defence.(2:1)

Living like Jesus is living according to His commands. All those commandments however are not a list of dull rules but one simple principle. The command to love our brother was an old one because it went back to the Old Testament, (Lev.19:18) but it had a new quality to it; we are to love as He loved.(Jn.13:34) The light of Jesus shines on us through the Word so that it might shine in us in understanding and then out of us in love for our brother. The light of Jesus will show in love for our brother and the darkness of Satan will blind us.(2:7-11)

One by one, John breaks his message down to little children, those just beginning, to young men, those starting to grow in Christ, and to fathers who have matured in Christ. The very first step for little children is forgiveness of sin. The next step for young men is to learn how to overcome the Devil, the evil one, through the Word of God. The goal is the simple, unshakeable certainty of knowing Christ which comes with maturity.(2:12-14)

The alternative to overcoming the evil one is to love the world and the things in it. The Devil persuades us to love the world by exploiting our three weaknesses. The 'lust of the flesh' is the inner desire for pleasure, possession and power which the Devil used successfully with Eve when 'the tree was good for food',(Gen.3:6) and unsuccessfully with Jesus when he urged Him 'tell this stone to become bread'.(Lk.4:3) This in turn is aggravated by the 'lust of the eyes' because 'it was a delight to the eyes',(Gen.3:6) and when 'he showed Him all the kingdoms of the world'.(Lk.4:5) Both lusts depend on the 'boastful pride of life', the inner lie which says that I can be equal with God, as demonstrated in 'desirable to make one wise',(Gen.3:6) and 'throw Yourself down from here'.(Lk.4:9) All this attractiveness is temporary. Trusting God is for ever.(2:15-17)

After discussing how the Devil works behind the scenes to tempt us in the heart, John now goes on to describe how at times and particularly towards the end, he will come

into the open. The word 'antichrist' is only used in the Bible here and twice more in 4:3 and II Jn.7, sometimes in the singular and sometimes the plural. This therefore does not seem confined to one person but could have many forms throughout history. Other passages indicate one final opponent of Christ before His return.(II Thess.2:3,4; Rev.13:5-7) How will we recognise one or more antichrists? They could take many forms.(2:18) They will come from within the church, though not real Christians.(2:19) Christ in us, the Anointed One, will enable us to identify them.(2:20) The Bible will expose them.(2:21) They will deny that the Jesus of the New Testament is the Christ of the Old Testament. They will deny both God and the Son of God.(2:22) Having Christ is our safeguard,(2:23) because He lives in us,(2:24) giving us eternal life,(2:25) alerting us to deceivers,(2:26) and being our sure, sufficient Bible Teacher.(2:27)

So to remain confident that instead of being misled we will recognise Jesus when He comes and those who belong to Him right now, abide, live, rest, trust in Him constantly.(2:28,29)

Chapter three explores two more areas of certainty for Christians.

3:1-3 Q.1 What is the amazingly privileged position of Christians? Why on the other hand do unbelievers not recognise what special people we are? How will it be obvious when Christ comes again who really belongs to Him? What therefore should be the process going on until that time?

3:4-10 Q.2 What two kinds of habitual behaviour do people show? What is the source of habitually sinful behaviour? How does it express itself in terms of the law of God? What has Jesus done about the problem of habitual sin? If Jesus has done this for us, what new kind of habitual behaviour will we show? What two factors shape habitual righteousness in our lives? What is our responsibility for this to happen progressively as we mature? Does this mean Christians do not sin?

3:11,12 Q.3 How more than any other way will habitual righteousness show? In what way was Cain an example of the consequence of choosing life independent of God? How on the other hand was Abel an example of a child of God?(Heb.11:4)

3:13-15 Q.4 How according to verse 14 can we be sure we have passed from spiritual death to spiritual life? What came before the act of murder for Cain? How does Jesus regard hate and murder as one and the same?(Matt.5:21,22)

3:16-24 Q.5 What five examples does John use to describe how loving our brother will look in real life? What else might 'laying down our lives for the brethren' include apart from a final act of martyrdom? How would verse 17 relate to, for example, our response to the one billion people who live in extreme poverty on less than \$1 a day? How does loving the brethren help when we feel condemned instead of confident before God? What according to verse 23 is the link between loving the brethren and prayer being answered? How finally in verse 24 do we know He lives in us? What therefore is our one simple responsibility if loving the brethren is to be the result?