1:1-4 How are we to understand what John says here?

Here John positively affirms from personal, experiential knowledge the reality of the humanity of Jesus, and the authenticity of the gospel. John was an eyewitness to all that Jesus did during his earthly ministry; he saw Him, heard Him, and touched Him (CP Lu 24:36-40; Jn 1:14; 16:28; 20:26-30). *That which was from the beginning* in 1Jn 1:1 refers to the pre-incarnate Jesus - before He took on human form (CP Nu 21:4-9 with 1Cor 10:9; Psa 45:6-7; Isa 6:1-5 with Jn 12:37-41; Mic 5:2; Jn 1:1-2; 3:13; 8:56-58; 17:5; Ac 20:28; Ro 9:5; Php 2:5-8; Col 2:8-10; 1Ti 3:16; Tit 2:13; He 1:8-12; 2Pe 1:1-2; 1Jn 3:16; Rev 1:8, 11, 17-18; 21:6; 22:13, 16, 20). The pre-incarnate Jesus was an equal member of the Godhead from all eternity. (For a more detailed study on the Deity of Jesus, see comments on Mt 3:16-17; Lu 1:35 (B), Jn 12:41, Ac 20:28, 1Jn3:16-18, 2Jn 1:9-11 and author's studies *Jesus – Eternally God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, *Names and Titles of Jesus, The Doctrine of the Trinity* and *Jesus* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**).

1:8 See comments on 1Jn 1:10

1:9 Is there any confessed sin that God will not forgive?

No, regardless of how bad it is there is no confessed sin that God will not forgive (CP Isa 1:18; 43:26). The only sin that God will not forgive is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (CP Mt 12:31-32; Mk 3:29). Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit can only be committed by someone who, after having partaken of God's saving grace, rejects the truth of God's word and no longer believes in Christ and His atoning death. In rejecting this truth, they are treating Christ with contempt, and in effect are crucifying Him afresh and exposing Him to public disgrace. As far as they are concerned Christ was worthy of death. They have rendered their hearts so hard towards Him that they are impervious to the ministry of the Holy Spirit and are irrevocably lost. Furthermore, they are not interested in seeking forgiveness. Those who reject Christ like this are called apostates (CP He 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22). Apostates are not to be confused with backsliders. As long as backsliders retain their faith in Christ and His atonement, they can be renewed to repentance (CP Hos 14:4; Mt 12:31; Mk 3:28; 1Jn 5:16).

Christians need never fear that they have blasphemed the Holy Spirit while ever they seek forgiveness of sins. The fact that they can come to the throne of grace means that they have not hardened their hearts and rejected Christ and His atonement, as have apostates (CP He 10:19-23). See also comments on He 6:4-6, 10:26-31, 2Pe 2:20-22, 1Jn 5:16-17.

1:10 What does it mean that we make a liar out of God if we say we have not sinned?

God says everyone has sinned, and it is for this reason alone that He sent His Son Jesus, to die as the propitiatory sacrifice for their sins (CP 2Chr 6:36-39; Psa 14:3; 51:5; Ecc 7:20; Isa 53:6-8; Jn 1:29; 3:16; 6:47-51; Ro 3:10-26; 1Ti 2:5-6; He 2:9, 17; 1Jn 2:2; 4:10). Jesus died in vain if there were no sins to atone for, and for anyone to deny that they have sinned, is to call God a liar. Jesus did not die only for those who believe on Him either, as so many in the church believe. As the foregoing scriptures clearly teach, He died for everyone who ever lived, but His atoning death is only efficacious for those who believe on Him and obey Him (CP Jn 8:51; 14:15, 21, 23; 15:10; Ac 3:20-26; 1Jn 2:3-6; 3:22; 5:2-3, 14-15).

2:2 See comments on 1:10

2:3-6 What do we learn from what John says here?

We learn from this that it is folly for anyone to think that they can be justified by faith through Christ and not obey His commandments. Obedience to God's word is the key to everlasting life (CP 1Sam 15:22-23; Ecc 12:13; Mt 7:21-27; Jn 14:15, 21. 23-24; 15:10, 14; Ro 6:16; 1Cor 7:19; 1Jn 3:24; 5:2-3; 2Jn 6; Rev 22:14). One can only be assured of salvation by obeying Christ's commandments. Those who profess to be Christians but do not obey Christ's commandments are not telling the truth - they are liars (CP 1Jn 1:6, 8, 10). God's love accomplishes its perfect work in those who obey Christ's commandments, therefore whoever says they abide in Him should walk as He walked. Christ's life, as set forth in the gospels, is the pattern for every professing Christian (CP Ro 12:1-2; 1Cor 7:17; Eph 6:14; Col 3:1-11; 1Pe 1:13-16; 4:1-2). See also comments on Mt 7:21; Ro 6:16; 1Cor 7:17-24.

2:7 What is the old commandment John refers to here?

John does not say here what the commandment is, but it is to love one another (CP 2Jn 5-6). John called it an old commandment in 1 Jn 2:7 because the believers to whom he was writing had heard that Jesus commanded it when they first heard the gospel. This is what "from the beginning" means in this context - from the beginning of their Christian walk.

Loving one another is not an option for Christians - it is a command, and there are no boundaries (CP Jn 13:34-35; 15:12-17). Jesus commands us here to love one another with the same love wherewith He loved us. That means that Christians' love for each other is not self-seeking, but unconditional and self-sacrificial as Christ's was for us (CP Jn 13:2-17). Jesus was not instituting a foot-washing ordinance here that the church has to practice, but was demonstrating the true meaning of servanthood to His disciples. The act of washing the disciples' feet was to inspire them to love and honour each other above themselves. It teaches us that we should be willing to do the lowliest service for each other, and prefer the least among us above ourselves (CP Php 2:1-5). Christians are to do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility are to consider others better than themselves. In doing this Christians imitate Christ (CP Ro 15:1-3). *Neighbour* in V2 here means fellow-Christian.

Christ is the model of conduct in relationships between weak and strong Christians. His example demands mutual forbearance and love. We are to follow Christ's example and not live for our own self-interests, but to serve our brothers and sisters in Christ (CP Ga 5:13-15; 6:2). The law of Christ is to love one another unconditionally and self-sacrificially, even as Christ loves us. *Neighbour* in Ga 5:14 also means fellow-Christian as in Ro 15:2. Love expressed like this surpasses by far all moral systems of all other religions and is a sign to the world of the reality of Christianity (CP 1Cor 12:18-26). This clearly shows how the lives of Christians are inextricably woven together in Christ, and how we need to relate to and depend upon one another in order that God's purpose for the church be fulfilled. If we all loved one another the way Christ directed us to in Jn 13 and 15, then whatever affects one of us will affect all of us. If one suffers, then all will suffer with that one, and if one is honoured, then all will rejoice with that one.

Here is the literal English rendering of Jn 13:34-35 from the Greek according to **Kenneth Wuest's Expanded Translation of the Greek New Testament**,

> *"A commandment, a new one I am giving you, that you should be constantly loving one another with a divine and self-sacrificial love; even as I loved you, you also be loving one another. In this all shall know that you are my disciples, if you constantly have love among one another."*

The key word there is *if* (CP 1Jn 2:3-5, 9-11; 5:1-3; 2Jn 5-6). These passages all underline the test of true Christianity: obedience and love. Firstly, they teach that the only sure way of knowing that we are saved is by being obedient to God's commands. Anyone who professes to be a Christian but lives as they please will have no part in God's eternal kingdom. This clearly refutes the teaching that "once saved" means "always saved". It is only by continued obedience to God's word that salvation is assured and God's love is perfected in Christians. Christian love expresses itself first of all in implicit obedience to God's commandments. Secondly, those scriptures teach that Christians reveal the genuineness of their love for God only by their love for each other. In 1Jn 2:9-11 love is characterized by light, and hate, by darkness, which signifies hell and eternal damnation. Anyone who says they love God but does not express that love by their unconditional, self-sacrificial love for other Christians are only deluding themselves thinking that they are saved (CP 1Jn 3:10-19,23-24).

The theme of John's teaching in this epistle is summed up for us here in V10 where he distinguishes between the true children of God and the children of the devil. The true children of God do not habitually sin, and they love each other unconditionally and self-sacrificially. The word *loveth* here is **agapao**, the love of God Himself - the same love commanded and inspired by Jesus in Jn 13:34-35 and 15:12. 1Jn 3:14 teaches that it is only Christians' love for each other manifested like this that assures them of their place in God's eternal kingdom, and this is confirmed in V16-19 (CP Jas 2:14-26). We learn here that the only faith that saves is that demonstrated by works out of our love for God and for each other. This is the acid test of Christianity whereby we know whether we are following the example of God's love to others. If we are not willing to give of our material things to other Christians in need, then we certainly would not lay down our lives for them as Jesus laid down His life for us, and expects us to do for each other. James teaches the same thing here as John. Notwithstanding that we profess to love God, we are deluding ourselves thinking that we are saved if we do nothing unconditionally and self-sacrificially for our brothers and sisters in Christ (CP Lu 16:19-31).

This is called the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. It is not teaching that the rich man went to hell just because he was rich and Lazarus went to heaven just because he was poor. Neither affluence nor poverty determines our eternal destiny but the life we live on earth. The rich man went to hell because his life was filled with self-centred living, not caring about others of God's children worse off than himself. In his self-indulgent lifestyle the rich man violated God's two greatest commandments (CP Mt 22:36-40). Lazarus went to paradise where all the righteous dead went before Christ's death and resurrection. Christ took them to heaven with Him when "He ascended up on high" (CP Eph 4:8-10). Lazarus was saved, not because he was poor, but because he found his help in God. Lazarus' name depicted his relationship with God. It means "God has helped", or "God the helper". The significance of Lazarus' name suggests that Jesus meant Lazarus to symbolize all the outcasts of society who have no other help but God (CP Mt 5:3; Lu 4:17-18). The parable of the rich man and Lazarus teaches above all else that Christians cannot profess reverence for God while at the same time living only for the fulfilment of their own self-gratifying desires. Scriptures are quite clear - anyone claiming to be born again of the Spirit of God who at the same time consciously sows to their flesh is guilty of mocking and despising God, and will forfeit their place in his eternal kingdom (CP Pr 19:17; 21:13; 22:9; Mt 25:34-40 with Mt 25:41-46; Ga 6:7-10).

God says that it is only our unconditional and self-sacrificial love that gives of itself for the happiness and well-being of our fellow-Christians that proves our love for Him, perfects His love in us, and assures us of our place in His eternal kingdom (CP 1Jn 4:7-21). Here John traces the love Christians should manifest for each other to its source in the nature of God as revealed in Him giving His Son up to death to provide salvation for His enemies, again stressing Christians' love for each other as the test of the Christian life. Christians are to show they are God's children by manifesting attitudes and actions like God's toward other Christians. It is only by the expression of our love for each other like this that God's love is perfected in us. The effectiveness of God's love in us demonstrates itself in our love for each other. This is the perfect love that casts out fear in V18 which is the same thing we learned in 1Jn 3:14 - Christians in whom God's love is perfected through their unconditional, self sacrificial love for other Christians need have any fear of not being saved. They can confidently look forward to Jesus' return, knowing that they have ensured their destiny in eternity with Him. They have proved their love for God by their love for each other. We need to heed all that these scriptures teach because they all

emphasize the love Christians are to have for each other as the key to eternal life (CP Ro 12:9-10; 1Pe 1:22).

In Ro 12:9-10 Paul impresses upon us that Christians' love for each other has to be sincere, unfeigned, without pretence, or hypocrisy. It must be a sincere expression of the esteem in which we hold other Christians, honouring them above ourselves. In 1Pe 1:22 Peter commands Christians to "love one another with a pure heart fervently". *Fervently* means literally stretched out, intensely, without ceasing, continually. The idea is that of a love that is extended to its fullest capacity to reach the one loved (CP Eph 4:1-3). Paul is exhorting Christians here to practice what they preach. That is essentially what "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called" means. The Christian life we live should always be in accordance with the profession of Christianity we make. *Lowliness* is humility. It means a total absence of arrogance, conceit and haughtiness, a sense of moral insignificance and a humble attitude for the concern of others (CP Col 3:12-14). Christians are to adopt and practice diligently every form of relational righteousness: love, compassion, humble attitudes, self-giving behaviour, freely flowing forgiveness, and patience toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. The love shown at Calvary was a forgiving one. Ours should be the same - a love that causes us to be long-suffering toward each other, a love that makes us kind to each other, a love that so causes us to rejoice in the welfare of another that there is no room for envy in the heart, a love that is not jealous, a love that keeps us from boasting of ourselves, a love that keeps us from bearing ourselves in a lofty manner, a love that keeps us from acting unbecomingly, a love that keeps us from seeking our own rights, a love that keeps us from becoming angry, a love that does not impute evil, a love that does not rejoice in iniquity but in the truth, a love that bears up against all things, hopes all things, endures all things. That is the kind of love God says one Christian should have for another (CP 1Cor 13:1-7).

Christian love seeks the welfare of all and works no ill to any (CP Ro 14:13-15). This proves that one Christian can be destroyed by another, and it teaches that whoever places a stumbling block in another Christian's way has ceased to walk according to love, and has violated the law of Christ, which as we saw earlier, is the supreme Christian rule (CP 1Cor 8:1-13). Christians, who do not love their brothers and sisters in Christ as God commands, hate them. Anything less than active benevolence is hatred. Scriptures all teach that there is no neutrality in Christianity. Jesus uses the same illustration in Mt 12 (CP Mt 12:30). Those who are not actively involved in doing the work of God for Christ are actively involved in doing the work of the devil in opposition to Him. In God's economy love and hate, light and darkness, life and death, obedience and disobedience, necessarily replace, as well as necessarily exclude one another. Whoever has not the one, of necessity has the other in each case (CP Mt 25:41-46 with Ro 6:16; Jas 2:14-26; 1Jn 3:14-19; Rev 3:15-16). These scriptures all teach the same thing: there is no neutrality in Christianity. Like John said, "...he that loveth not his brother abideth in death" - he is going to hell (CP Rev 3:7-13).

The church at Philadelphia is one of seven churches Jesus addresses in Rev 2 and 3, and while they were all churches that existed at that time, they are also representative of churches in all ages since then up until the end of the church age, and what Jesus is saying to them is for our admonition too. *Philadelphia* means love of the brethren, and what Jesus is teaching us here is that it will only be those Christians who belong to the Philadelphia church - those who love their brothers and sisters in Christ - who will be saved from the Great Tribulation (CP V10). The church at Philadelphia were the only ones who did all that Christ charged the New Testament church to do. They obeyed His commandments and loved one another with a pure heart fervently (CP He 13:1; 1Pe 2:17; 4:8).

The reason for the exhortation to love one another in 1Pe 4:8 is because love covers a multitude of sins. This is not teaching that the love we display toward others will cause God to pass up or pardon their sins, but that when Christians truly love one another, one will not make public the sins of the other, but will keep them to himself. Love is blind to the faults of others. How much gossip would be eliminated in the church if we loved each other like this (CP Pr 10:12; 1Cor 13:7). A classic example of the love of a New Testament saint covering up the sins of another is Paul with Onesimus in Paul's letter to Philemon (CP Phm 9-21). Can we truly say that we have obeyed God and love our brothers and sisters in Christ as Paul loved Onesimus (CP Eph 5:1-2). Christians are to order their behaviour toward each other in the same love wherewith Christ loved us. When our love for each other becomes the deciding factor in our choices and the motivating power in our actions, we will be exemplifying in our lives the same self-sacrificial love for each other as Christ's was for us. If our behaviour toward each other is ordered in this fashion, then we can know that we have passed from death to life. If not, then we are still dead. The children of God are characterized by love which originates in God, expresses itself in self-sacrifice, and is evidence of eternal life (CP 1Pe 3:8).

The only way Christians can ever be of one mind as Peter commands here is to be brethren who are loving, tender-hearted, humble-minded, and have fellow-feeling - compassion - for one another; able to "rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep", which is what we learned early in this study in 1Cor 12:26, and which Ro 12:15 also teaches (CP 1Cor 12:24-26; Ro 12:15). There is one last point that we need to be clear on here before closing this study and that is, just who is my brother and sister in Christ whom I have to love? Everyone who possesses a living faith in Jesus Christ as their Saviour, and remains loyal to God's word as they sincerely understand it, while standing against the things that God hates, is a brother or sister in Christ and deserves our special love, honour, and support (CP 1Th 3:12-13; 4:9-10). Not only are we to love all who belong to the household of faith, but we are to increase our love for them. This does not mean that we have to compromise our particular biblical beliefs or doctrinal differences to accommodate them all, but we are to love them in spite of our differences (CP Lu 9:49-50).

This is a lesson for divided Christendom today. There is no place for narrow exclusivism in the New

Testament church. We are to love fellow Christians regardless of their denomination. If the work they do is for God's glory they are our brothers and sisters in Christ. The Christian life throughout is to be motivated by divine love - the love of God; the love that God is Himself - which is what we learned in 1Jn 4:16. This love is produced in the hearts of Christians by the Holy Spirit as they are yielded to His sanctifying grace (CP 1Jn 4:16 with Ro 5:5 and Ga 5:22). Most Christians love each other with a mutual friendly love which is called out of their hearts because they find pleasure in each other's fellowship, but God calls us to increase that love to an unconditional, self-sacrificial love - the same love wherewith He loves us, and as the scriptures we have studied here all clearly teach, that is the only love that will ensure our place in His eternal kingdom (CP 1Th 3:12-13; 4:9-10; 2Pe 1:5-7). See also comments on Jn 13:34-35, Ro 13:8, 1Cor 12:31, Ga 5:1-8, 5:13, 1Th 3:12, 1Jn 3:15, 3:16-18, 19-22, 4:7-21, Rev 3:7-13, and author's study *How Christians are to Love One another* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith.**

2:9-11 ***See comments on 2:7***

2:12-14 ***What do we understand from the terms John uses here for the people he is addressing?***

It is generally agreed among bible commentators that John is addressing different groups of Christians here, not according to their age, but according to their experience in Christ. In V 12 *children* is from the Greek word **teknia**, which is used figuratively in the New Testament as a term of endearment for followers of Christ. John is addressing all Christians here (CP Jn 13:33; Ga 4:19; 1Jn 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). *Fathers* in 1Jn 2:13 and 14, are older and mature Christians; those advanced in the knowledge of Christ. *Young men*, also in V13 and 14, are younger in age than *fathers*, and not as mature in the Lord, but are still able to overcome the devil. Their consistent defeat of Satan's lies and deceptions underlines their empowering by the Holy Spirit and the word of God abiding in them. The term *children* is used again in V13, only this time it is from the Greek word **paidia**, which means infants. It refers here to young Christians - babes in Christ. They may not be as advanced in their knowledge of Christ as the "young men" and "fathers", but they know God nonetheless.

2:15-17 ***How is "the world" defined in this context?***

The world in scripture applies not only to material, but also to abstract things which have spiritual and moral (or immoral), values (CP Jas 4:4). "The world", both here and in 1 Jn 2:15-17 designates all that is alienated from and hostile to God. It refers to the sphere of human activity in which we live which is dominated by selfish ambition, pride, greed, self-gratifying pleasure, materialism, and evil desire. The world hates Jesus and all who follow Him (CP Jn 1:10-11; 7:7; 15:18-25; 17:14; 1Jn 3:13). The spiritual force behind the world is Satan. He is the god of this world (CP Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; 2Cor 4:3-4; 1Jn 4:4; 5:19). *Wickedness* in 1Jn 5:19 (KJV), means literally "the wicked one" - Satan. The world encompasses all that is evil (CP Mt 18:7; Ga 1:3-4; 2Pe 2:20). Much in the world system is religious, cultured, refined and intellectual. But it is anti-God and anti-Christ. It is a culture that exalts power and celebrity. Satan's strategy is to disarm the church by assimilating it into the world system. Many Christians are materialistic and pleasure-seeking, and many church programmes are packaged to accommodate the culture of the world more than for worshipping Jesus. Christians caught up in these things are in grave danger of forfeiting their salvation. They cannot serve God and Satan (CP Lu 16:13-14; Ro 6:16; 1Cor 10:21-24).

The lust of the flesh in 1 Jn 2:16 refers to the passionate cravings of the sin nature; the preoccupation with gratifying physical desires. These desires include obvious sins such as sexual immorality and murder, but they also include less obvious sins such as selfish ambition, hatred, jealousy and such like. (CP Ga 5:19-21). *The lust of the eyes* refers to the evil desires that may be aroused by what we see (CP 2 Sam 11:1-4 with Mt 5:28; 1 Cor 10:1-6). Satan uses the eyes to incite evil desires. This includes the desire to watch pornography, violence, ungodliness and immorality in the theatre, television, movies and magazines. Jesus issues a dire warning in scripture to Christians using their eyes for this purpose (CP Mt 6:22-23 with 18:9). "The lust of the eyes" also applies to craving and accumulating material possessions (CP Lu 12:15-31). *The pride of life* refers to an insolent and empty assurance which trusts in the things that serve the creature life and despise the things of God. It is a vain assurance in one's own resources: wealth, prominence, achievement; being obsessed with one's status or importance (CP Jas 4:13-16). Everything that arouses pride is part of the satanic world-system and will result in tragedy for Christians if they succumb to it (CP Pr 16:18-19; 27:1; 29:23; Ecc 5:10-16; 1Ti 6:6-10).

Christians are in the world, but they are not of the world. We must only ever see ourselves as strangers and pilgrims in the earth (CP Jn 17:11-12, 14-17; He 11:13; 1Pe 2:11). We must never allow ourselves to be ensnared by the pleasures and promises that this life may offer (CP Mt 16:24-27; Lu 12:15; Ga 6:14; Eph 6:11-18). Christians cannot love the world or the things of the world, because everything the world loves, God hates (CP Lu 16:15). Furthermore, the world and all it contains is only temporary. It is destined to be destroyed by God and even now it is passing away (CP Isa 33:1-11; Dan 2:34-35; 1Cor 7:31; 2Pe 3:5-7, 10-12). See also comments on Lu 16:14-15, Jn 15:18-25, Ga 6:14, Jas 4:1-4, 2Pe 3:1-7 and author's studies *Christians, Love Not the World* and *Christian – Beware of Failing God's Grace and Forfeiting your Salvation* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

2:18-19 ***Who are the antichrists referred to here?***

These antichrists are false teachers who have departed doctrinally from the church's position concerning the person of Christ. They are not true believers, and expose themselves to the community of believers as antichrists when they cease fellowshipping and speak against Christ (CP V22-23; 4:3; 2Jn 7). These false

teachers are imbued with the spirit of the antichrist who is yet to come. (For a more detailed study on the antichrist see comments on 2Th 1:7-10 and 2:1-3).

2:22-23 What do we learn from what John says here?

We learn from this that no one can be saved who does not believe in the Deity of Jesus - that Jesus is God. Many profess to love God the Father, but deny God the Son, Jesus (CP Jn 8:19, 42; 1Jn 4:2-3). No one can have God without Jesus, for God Himself bears witness to Jesus (CP Mt 3:13-17; Lu 9:28-36 (also Mt 17:1-8, Mk 9:1-8); 1Jn 5:6-13; 2Jn 9). Christians cannot fellowship with or welcome into their home and pray God's blessing over anyone who they know teaches against the person of Christ as he is presented in scripture (CP 2Jn 7-11). See also comments on 1Jn 1:1-4 and author's studies *Jesus – Eternally God* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1),** *Names and Titles of Jesus, The Doctrine of the Trinity* and *Jesus* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

2:27 Does this mean that human teachers are no longer needed in the church?

No, John is simply saying here that these believers, who are under the anointing of the Holy Spirit, already know the truth and have no need of any instruction from the false teachers of V26 who were trying to seduce them from the truth (CP V20-26). There are some in the church who believe that they do not need human teachers to instruct them, but that is not correct. If it were then these scriptures are meaningless (CP Mt 13:52; Ac 13:1; Ro 12:7; 1Cor 4:1; 12:28-29; Eph 4:11-16; 1Ti 2:7; 5:17; 2Ti 3:16-17; He 5:12; 13:7, 17; Jas 3:1). Clearly, these scriptures all teach that God has set human teachers in the church as well as the Holy Spirit to teach the saints, and that they will remain there while ever the church exists. (For a more detailed study on teachers see comments on Eph 4:11-12 (under heading Teachers), Jas 3:1-4).

3:2 What future event is John alluding to here?

(CP 1Cor 1:6-8; Php 3:20; Col 3:4; 1Th 1:10; 2:19-20; 3:13; 5:23; 2Th 3:5; 2 Ti 4:8; Tit 2:13; Jas 5:7-9; 1Pe 1:7; 1Jn 2:28). Together with 1Jn 3:2 these scriptures all allude to what is known as the "rapture" of the church. This is when Jesus comes again to take all the saints of God - Old Testament and New Testament alike - both living and dead, back to heaven with Him at the first resurrection (CP Jn 5:28-29 with 14:1-3; 1 Cor 15:51-58; 1Th 4:13-18; 2Th 2:7). At this time, as we saw in 1Cor 15:53, every saint of God will receive a new body (CP 1Cor 15:35, 38-49, 53; Php 3:20-21). Believers' bodies will no longer be weak mortal bodies, subject to death and decay. They will be immortal, supernatural bodies like Christ's resurrection body (CP Lu 24:36-43; Jn 20:19-20, 24-31). Believers too will be able to walk through walls, like Jesus. We learn from these scriptures also that bodies will be flesh and bone, and that we shall be able to partake of food as Jesus did.

It is only in the resurrection - in their glorified, immortal bodies - that believers will be able to see Christ as He is. That is what John means in 1 Jn 3:2 (KJV), when he says, "...it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." We could never see Jesus as He really is through physical eyes in a mortal body. We can only look on His glory through spiritual eyes in an immortal body. The all-inclusive promise of the rapture - being taken up with Christ in glory, and seeing Him as He is, should encourage Christians to live even holier lives than they do (CP 1Jn 2:28 - 3:3). The rapture is a purifying hope - the source of inspiration and consecration for all sincere Christians (CP Eph 5:25-27; Col 3:1-6; 1Th 3:12-13; Jude 20-24). See also comments on 1Cor 15:35, 15:51-58, Php 3:20-21, 1Th 4:13-18, Tit 2:13, 1Pe 1:7, and author's study *The Rapture* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith.**

3:6-9 Does this not contradict what John teaches elsewhere in scripture?

No, the literal meaning in the Greek construction of this verse is that Christians do not continually, habitually sin. If John was teaching here that Christians do not sin at all he would be contradicting what he Himself teaches in 1:8-10 and 2:1 (CP 1Jn 1:8-10; 2:1). Christians sin, but they do not live lives of habitual sin (CP Ro 6:1-23). Paul stresses the fact in Ro 6 that true believers are identified by their death to habitual sin. They sin spontaneously, but not habitually. When believers surrender their lives to Christ they are born again spiritually and the power of sin over their lives is broken. Through Christ God's resurrection power flows in them, and thus Christians are able to live holy, righteous lives (CP Ro 8:1-4). This is what John means when he says in 1 Jn 5:18 (KJV), that believers keep themselves from the temptations and snares of the devil (CP 1Jn 5:18). Most modern versions of the bible translate this verse to read that he that is begotten of God is Jesus, and it is He who keeps believers from the temptation and snares of the devil. Believers can choose for themselves which translation they use. Both versions are taught in scripture (CP Jn 17:11-15 with Jude 20-21). See comments on all Ro 6 questions, also Ro 3:9, 5:12-14, 7:4, 7:7-23, 8:1-2, 8:3-4; Ga 5:17; Jas 4:5 and 1 Jn 3:6-9 and author's studies *Romans 6 – A Study on God's Empowering of Believers through Jesus Christ to Overcome Sin* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 1)**, *The Power of God in Christians to Overcome the Devil, The Doctrine of Grace* and *Regeneration and Sanctification Defined* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**, and *What being Born Again Means* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith.**

3:10-13 What do we learn from what John says here?

Here John characterizes the children of God by their righteousness and love for each other, and the children of the devil by their unrighteousness, and an unloving heart full of murder, hate and indifference. Adam's

first son Cain is the prototype of the hate that is in the world against Christians (CP Gen 4:1-8; He 11:4). Cain killed Abel because he hated Abel's righteousness (1Jn 3:12 *... and wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil and his brother's righteous*). The hatred that the world has for righteousness began with Cain and has perpetuated itself ever since. It is a basic principle in human life that wickedness hates righteousness (CP Jn 1:4-5; 3:19-21; 15:18-25). This explains why the world hates Christians; their righteous life shows up the world's unrighteousness. Thus, as John teaches in essence in 1Jn 3:13, Christians are to expect no better treatment from the world than Abel received from Cain. (See also comments on Jn 15:18-25).

3:15 ***How are we to understand this?***

Here John equates hatred with murder. In the preceding study on V10-13 we saw that Cain's hatred of Abel's righteousness resulted in him murdering Abel (CP V10-13). Whoever harbours hatred toward a fellow-Christian is a potential murderer because in God's economy, love and hate, like light and darkness or life and death, necessarily replace, as well as necessarily exclude each other. Whoever does not have the one, of necessity has the other in each case (CP Mt 5:21-22; 1Cor 13:2; 1Jn 2:9-11). Mt 5:21-22 teaches that our attitude toward our fellow-Christians is as significant to Jesus as what we do to them. In 1Jn 2:9-11 love is characterized by light, and hate, by darkness, which signifies hell and damnation. This teaches that no one can say they love God and expect to spend eternity with Jesus, while at the same time they hate their fellow-Christians. Anyone who does so is only deluding himself thinking that he is saved. It is only Christians' love for each other that proves their love for God and ensures their place in God's eternal kingdom (CP Jn 13:34-35; 1Jn 3:14; 4:7-8, 11-12, 18-21; 5:1-2). See also comments on 1 Jn 2:7. and author's study *How Christians are to Love One another* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith.**

3:16-18 ***What do we learn from what John says here?***

Believers who profess to love their fellow-Christians must not only express that love in words, but in deeds also. We are only deluding ourselves thinking that we are saved if we have the wherewithal, but do not meet the needs of our brothers and sisters in Christ who are wanting (CP Jas 2:14-26). James teaches the same thing here as John does: the only faith that can save us is that demonstrated by works out of our love for God and for each other. Notwithstanding that we profess to love God, it will avail us nothing if we do not unconditionally and self-sacrificially help our brothers and sisters in Christ who are in need (CP Ga 6:9-10). God says that it is only our unconditional and self-sacrificial love that gives of itself for the happiness and well-being of our fellow-Christians that proves our love for Him, perfects His love in us, and assures us of our place in His eternal kingdom (CP 1Jn 4:7-21). 1Jn 3:16 also confirms the Deity of Jesus "... hereby perceive we the love of God, because He laid down His life for us". See also comments on 1Jn 2:7, 3:15, and author's study *Christians' Obligations to One Another Financially* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

3:19-22 ***How are we to understand what John says here?***

Believers prove their love for God by the expression of their love for each other and their obedience to God's word. But there are many who do this yet their conscience accuses them of not doing enough. Those affected like this need only apply to themselves the teaching of Psa 66:18-20. If there is no unconfessed or unrepented sin in their lives then God does not condemn them and they can know that He will hear and answer their prayers (CP Ro 8:1-4 with Psa 66:18-20). The Psalmist here knew that he was not harbouring any unconfessed or unrepentant sin in his heart because God answered his prayer. This is virtually the same teaching as 1Jn 3:19-22. Those living for God and loving the brethren unconditionally and self-sacrificially can rest assured in the knowledge that whatever they ask for in prayer they will receive (CP Psa 34:15; Pr 15:29; Jn 15:7; 1Jn 5:14-15. See also comments on Jn 15:7 and 1Jn 5:14-15 and author's study *Prayer* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith.**

4:1-6 ***How do believers try the spirits to see if they are of God?***

(CP also 2Jn 7-11). Believers must test the spirit of every teaching in the light of scripture. Any teaching that does not conform to scripture must be rejected out of hand, and while John is warning believers specifically in 1Jn 4:1-6 and 2Jn 7-11 to test the spirit of every teaching outside the church, believers must by the same principle, test every teaching within the church also (CP 1Th 5:21). God does not want believers to passively accept every teaching in the church at face value. They must test everything by scripture regardless of who teaches it (CP Ac 17:10-11). Paul and Silas' teaching here was acceptable to the Bereans only because it conformed to scripture. Every believer is to be like the Bereans, searching the scriptures to see if what they are being taught is correct. Peter teaches the same thing (CP 2Pe 1:16-21). Although Peter was an eyewitness to Jesus' transfiguration, and heard the voice of God Himself, he teaches here that the testimony of scripture is an even surer confirmation of God's truth about Jesus than his own eyewitness account.

There are false teachers within the church just as there is without, and there are many scriptures warning against them. Scriptures teach that they may outwardly appear to be genuine spiritual leaders, but inwardly they are "ravening wolves, full of dead men's bones, given over to extortion and excess, and full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (CP Mt 7:15-23; 13:25-30; Ac 20:29-30; 2Cor 11:12-15; Tit 1:10-14; 2Pe 2:1-3; Jude 4; Rev 2:20). False teachers may not always be immediately recognizable but their doctrine will betray them to believers who test their teachings against the pure word of God. (See also comments on Ac 17:11, 1Th5:21, 2Pe 1:16-19).

4:7-21 ***How are we to understand what John says here?***

Here John traces the love Christians should manifest for each other to its source in the nature of God as revealed in Him giving His Son up to death to provide salvation for His enemies (CP Ro 5:8-11; Eph 2:12-13; Col 1:20-22; Tit 3:3-7). In 1Jn 4:7-21 John is again stressing Christians' love for each other as the test of their Christian life (CP Jn 13:34-35; 15:12-17; 1Jn 2:10; 3:14). Christians are to show they are God's children by manifesting attitudes and actions like God's to each other. It is only by the expression of their love for each other like this that God's love is made perfect in them.

The effectiveness of God's love in Christians demonstrates itself in their love for each other. This is the perfect love that casts out fear in 1Jn 4:18, which is virtually the same teaching as 1Jn 3:14. This fear relates to the fear of being eternally damned. Christians in whom God's love is perfected do not have this fear - they have passed from death to life (CP Jn 14:23; 1Jn 3:19-24). Christians need to heed all that these scripture teach because they all emphasize the love Christians are to have for each other as the key to eternal life (CP Mt 22:36-40; Ro 12:9-10; 1Pe 1:22). See also comments on Jn 13:34-35, 1Th 3:12, 1Jn 2:7, 3:16-18, and author's study *How Christians are to Love One another* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith.**

5:6-9 How can water and blood bear witness to Jesus?

In V6 John names three witnesses - water, blood and the Spirit - that testify to the Deity of Jesus which the false teachers were denying (CP 2:22-24; 4:2-3, 14-15; 5:1-5, 10-13, 20). *Water* refers to Christ's baptism. It was at His baptism that the Holy Spirit identified Jesus as Messiah - God's anointed one - and God spoke from heaven declaring Him to be His Son (CP Mt 3:13-17). *Blood* refers to Christ's blood which He shed in His atoning death on the cross for mankind's sins (CP Mt 26:26-28 with 27:24-25; Ac 20:28; Ro 5:8-9; Eph 2:13; Col 1:20-22; He 9:11-14; 1Pe 1:18-19; 1Jn 1:7). *The Spirit* refers to the Holy Spirit who testified to the Deity of Jesus at His baptism, throughout His earthly ministry, His death and resurrection, and then to all who believe on Him (CP Mt 12:18-21; Lu 4:14-21; Jn 1:29-34; 14:16-17, 26; 15:26-27; 16:13-15; Ac 10:38; Ro 8:16; 1 Pe 3:18-19). Christ's resurrection from the dead also testified to His Deity (CP Psa 2:7 with Ac 13:33). When Paul quoted Psa 2:7 in Ac 13:33 he was simply illustrating that, by Christ's resurrection, God was formally showing Him to be His Son. The resurrection fulfilled King David's Old Testament prophecy (CP Ac 13:34-37; 2:22-28 with Psa 16:8-11). See also comments on Mt 1:18-21, 3:16-17, Lu 1:35(B), Jn 1:1, 5:16-23, 12:41, Ac 13:33, 20:28, Php 2:5-8, Col 2:9, 1Ti 3:16, He 1:5, 5:5, Rev 1:8. and author's study *Old Testament Messianic Prophecies – their New Testament Fulfilment* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

5:10-13 What profound truth is highlighted here?

The profound truth highlighted here is that one can be saved, and know it. When Christians walk in complete surrender to the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, the assurance of their salvation is sealed by the witness of the Holy Spirit within them. God has given the Holy Spirit to believers in this present life as the pledge for their future resurrection and eternal inheritance in Christ (CP Ro 8:23; 2Cor 1:20-22; 5:1-5; Eph 4:9-14; 1Pe 1:1-5). *Earnest* (KJV), where used in those scriptures, means pledge, guarantee, deposit. The Holy Spirit is God's "down-payment" on our future resurrection. (See also comments on 2Cor 1:21-22, 5:5, Eph 1:11-14).

5:14-15 How can we know what to ask that accords with God's will?

According to His will here means in effect, according to His word. God's word - the bible - is His revealed will. Believers complying with God's word can be assured that whatever they ask for is "according to His will" (CP Jn 14:12-14; 15:16; 16:23-24). Here we learn that if we ask anything "in Jesus' Name" it will be done, because asking in Jesus' Name complies with God's word, and therefore is "according to His will" (CP Psa 18:41; 66:18 with Jas 4:2-4). Here we learn that asking from the wrong motives will avail nothing with God because it is not according to His will. This stresses the importance of believers being thoroughly grounded in God's word. Believers walking in fellowship with the word will never ask for anything outside of God's will, and this ensures that the answer to their prayers will always be "yes" (CP 2Cor 1:19-20). We learn from this that there is not one promise of God that is no to a believer, in line with His word - God is glorified in His promises being fulfilled in our lives. This is what V 20 teaches (CP Jn 15:7-8).

We learn here that if we abide in Christ and His word abides in us, there are no limitations whatever on what we may ask of God. Because we comply with God's word, whatever we ask therefore, is according to His will. Throughout scripture God undertakes to answer the prayers of believers and fulfil His promises in their lives. All believers have to do is comply with His word (CP Psa 34:15-17; 145:18-19; Pr 15:8, 29; Mt 7:7-12; 18:19; 21:21-22; Mk 11:22-24; Eph 3:20; He 11:6; Jas 1:5-8; 5:14-15; 1Pe 3:12; 1Jn 3:19-22). These scriptures all teach that to comply with God's word means being in obedience to His declared will. Believers who know God's will like this can rest assured they will receive whatever they ask of Him, "...and this is the confidence that we have in Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (KJV). (See also comments on Mt 21:17-22, Jn 14:12-14, 15:7, 2Cor 1:19-20 and author's studies *Prayer* and *Confessing God's Word* in his book **Foundational Truths of the Christian Faith**, *A Daily Confession for Christians* and *Making the Impossible Possible* in his book **Advanced Studies in the Christian Faith (Volume 2)**.

5:16-17 What is the sin unto death John refers to here?

The sin unto death that John refers to here is blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, which leads to (spiritual) death, because it is the only sin that God

will never forgive. True believers cannot commit this sin - it can only be committed by those who have deliberately shut their eyes to the light and call good evil, or who, after having been saved have spurned the spirit of grace and declared the blood of Christ that sanctified them as unfit to redeem (CP Mt 12:22-32; Mk 3:22-29; Lu 11:14-15; 12:10; He 6:4-6; 10:26-31; 2Pe 2:20-22). Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit includes attributing the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan, as in Mt, Mk and Lu here, and/or apostatising as in He and 2Pe, John is not forbidding believers to pray for those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit, in 1 Jn 5:16, he is simply pointing out that it is useless praying for them; they will die in their sin (CP He 6:7-8 with Mt 3:10; 7:19; Jn 15:1-6). See also comments on Mt 12:31-32, He 6:4-6, 10:26-31, 2 Pe 2:20-22, 1Jn 1:9.

5:18 ***See comments on 1 Jn 3:6-9.***