

1 John 2:3-11 – An Old and New Commandment

John declared that “God is light, and in him is no darkness at all”. The result is that anyone who is not cleansed from sin cannot be in fellowship with God. Christians still sin but we are no longer slaves to sin and it should not characterize our lives. When we do sin we need to confess our sins and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all our sins. He is the propitiation for our sins. Only because we are cleansed by the blood of Christ can we have fellowship with God who is wholly holy. When we sin, Jesus is our advocate with the Father. Anyone who says, “I don’t sin” or “I have not sinned” is a liar who deceives others and also themselves. They make God into a liar because God says that we are all sinners.

Read 1 John 2:3-6.

How can we know that we have come to know God? What are the commandments which we should obey? (2:3)

What is true of someone who claims to know God but who does not keep his commandments? The idea here is similar to 1:6 but stated in a different way. “If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.” (2:4)

In verse 5, John used the phrase “keeps his word” as opposed to “keep his commandments” (2:3, 4). Do these two phrases mean the same thing or is there a difference in the way John used them? What is true of the one who keeps his word?

In verse 6, John used the phrase “abides in him” instead of “know him” (2:3, 4). Is there a difference between knowing God and abiding in God according to how John used these phrases? What should be true of the one who abides in God?

Notice the different phrases John used for Christians. “We have come to know him”. (2:3) “We are in him”. (2:5) “Abides in him”. (2:6)

Read 1 John 2:7-11.

In verse 7, John referred to them as “beloved”. This is an adjective which comes from “agape love”. What does this say about John’s relationship with the readers and hearers of this letter?

What “old commandment” did John refer to in verse 7? Is it a commandment which went back to the days of Moses or is it a commandment which went back to when they first heard the Gospel?

People often claim that the Bible contradicts itself and therefore can’t be true or authoritative. Some of these people might call “A Tale of Two Cities” by Charles Dickens a great book. The book starts with “It was the best of times.” “It was the worst of times.” They don’t say that Charles Dickens contradicted himself and therefore his book is no good. Sproul often spoke about the apparent “contradictions” in the Bible. I don’t remember an exact quote but the basic idea is that you don’t automatically assume something is contradictory if it looks contradictory. It should only be taken as contradictory if there is no reasonable way to explain the apparent “contradiction”. John obviously didn’t forget what he just wrote one verse earlier. The old commandment is also a new commandment. That isn’t a contradiction. The “new commandment” is most likely a reference to what Jesus said at the Last Supper. “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another”. (John 13:34) How was this commandment also old? See Leviticus 19:18.

What did John mean by “the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining”? (2:8)

According to verse 9, what criteria can we use to determine if someone is telling the truth when they say that they are “in the light”? This verse also sheds light on what commandment John had in mind in verses 7 and 8.

What is true of those who love their brother? (2:10)

What is true of someone who hates their brother? (2:11) Verses 10 & 11 may remind you of John 12:35 or John 3:19-21.

Notice the “If we say” in 1:6, 8, 10 and the “whoever says” in 2:4, 6, 9.