



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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1 John 2:7-14 Commentary New Revised Standard Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

(1 John 2:7) Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard.

The writers of the New Testament showed that Jesus' teachings and their teachings were consistent with and often in fulfillment of the Old Testament Scriptures. Writing of the Scriptures (the Old Testament and the growing New Testament), the Apostle Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, "All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work." In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus taught His followers to obey the Old Commandment: "Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." The "word" is the message of Jesus and the apostles that John's readers had been taught. Jesus and His apostles always taught as of first importance that God commands everyone to love God and love others.

(1 John 2:8) Yet I am writing you a new commandment that is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.

The followers of Jesus Christ have an additional commandment to obey that Jesus and the Holy Spirit within them enable them to obey. In John 13:34-35, Jesus gave believers in Him a new commandment that John had also given the first readers of his letter: "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Jesus perfectly loved and obeyed His Father in heaven. Jesus repeatedly displayed His love and obedience to God, which He made an example for all who will follow Him. Jesus loved His disciples and all who would believe in Him, and He loved them to the end when He died on the cross for them. Jesus' new commandment is true in Him because He lived and still lives according to His commandment to love God and others. Jesus still loves all His followers, and He still gives His life to them in a variety of ways as described in the New Testament; for example, Jesus still intercedes in prayer for those who believe in Him. His new commandment is true in all who follow Him because He has anointed with the Holy Spirit all those who believe in Him, and Jesus himself abides with and within them. The darkness is passing away and the True Light is shining as the love and truth of Jesus shines forth through Jesus' faithful followers. In Matthew 5:14, Jesus said, "You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid." If a believer in Jesus lives in the light, the light can be seen. Furthermore, remember Jesus said, "Everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." The True Light shines in the Church when the followers of Jesus Christ love one another, and the True Light shines into the world through the Church. The darkness passes away whenever someone turns from the darkness to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior so Jesus can indwell them and shine His light within and through them. As the Church grows spiritually and shines more brightly, the darkness passes away and the True Light draws people to her.

(1 John 2:9) Whoever says, "I am in the light," while hating a brother or sister, is still in the darkness.

In the Church, there may be some who say, “I know and follow the truth.” They may say they follow the theology of Jesus, or Paul, or Peter, or John, or some renowned thinker in the Church past or present, but if they hate someone in the Church past or present, they still walk in darkness. The love of Jesus within a believer shows the measure of true discipleship, not someone’s claim that they know the truth and live in a truth that is devoid of love for God, others, and other believers. A “believer” may hate someone who is long dead, and if they hate them, they are still living in darkness.

(1 John 2:10) Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.

The true followers of Jesus Christ live in Jesus and Jesus lives in them. They live in the Light and they walk in the Light. They know the Truth and they walk in the Truth. However, no believer in Jesus walks perfectly in this life, but their disobedience to the Father and the Son is a rare exception to the way they live habitually. They study the Scriptures to love and trust more in Jesus and follow Jesus more perfectly as the Holy Spirit helps them. Their beliefs and way of life in the Light leads them to love others in the Church and not hate anyone. They practice forgiveness as Jesus has forgiven them. There is no cause of stumbling in a way of life that follows Jesus’ teachings and example. Unhappily, turning from following Jesus Christ even for a moment can become a cause for stumbling.

(1 John 2:11) But whoever hates another believer is in the darkness, walks in the darkness, and does not know the way to go, because the darkness has brought on blindness.

John warns those in the Church about the consequences of hatred so they will avoid hating anyone in the Church. Unhappily, some will hate a true believer with whom they disagree, even someone with a different theological view than their view in areas where true believers in Jesus have been known to disagree on minor or nonbiblical topics. If someone hates a fellow Christian (and John strongly warns us to repent of this hate if we find ourselves in this situation or leaning toward hatred), then that person lives in darkness no matter what they may say about themselves knowing the truth. John says they remain in darkness, and they walk in darkness,

even though they may claim to know the truth of Jesus and maintain “the right theology.” They may claim to be leaders and teachers in the Church, and recognized as such by others, but if they hate another believer, then they do not know the way to go, and John warns believers against following them or believing as they do. John wrote that they hate a fellow believer because the darkness in which they walk has brought on spiritual blindness. They will walk into ever greater darkness. They have become like the Pharisees that Jesus described in Matthew 15:14, saying, “Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit.” John warns believers against following someone who hates a fellow believer, for if they do, they will “fall into a pit.”

(1 John 2:12) I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven on account of his name.

John wrote his letter to everyone in the Church, to those of all ages and all time. He wrote to “little children,” to those who were new believers in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. John gave them the assurance that their sins were forgiven “on account of His name,” on account of Jesus’ sacrificial death in their behalf for the forgiveness of their sins and on account of His resurrection from the dead that gave them the assurance of eternal life. John intended to warn them of what could happen if they began to hate someone in the Church or if someone taught them to hate someone. He began to warn them of what they could expect in the future from those who had turned from faith in Jesus and the Church to walk in darkness.

(1 John 2:13) I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young people, because you have conquered the evil one.

John wrote to “fathers,” to those who had reached spiritual maturity in the Church. They had come to know the Father and the Son, and from knowing Jesus they walked in the Light and they loved others in the Church as Jesus loves all His followers. They too needed to be warned lest for some reason they be tempted to hate a fellow believer in the Church. Because they knew God through faith in Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit enabled them to teach new believers and those who were maturing in their walk with Jesus. The

“young people” were those who were maturing as followers of Jesus Christ. Through faith in Jesus Christ, they had conquered the evil one because the evil one had formerly enslaved them and made them slaves of sin. By experience, they could understand the teaching of Jesus in John 8:34-36, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” The “young people” had a permanent place in the Family of God and they loved and served Jesus because Jesus had freed them from slavery to the evil one.

(1 John 2:14) I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young people, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

1 John 2:12-14 reads almost like a poem or hymn. All believers in Jesus Christ are “children” of the Father and they know the Father through faith in Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 4:6, Paul explained, “And because you are children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, ‘Abba! Father!’” As we have said, “fathers,” mature believers, know the Father and the Son, they know the Scriptures, and they can teach others the message of Jesus and the apostles. The “young people” (those growing in spiritual maturity as faithful followers of Jesus Christ) have conquered the evil one by trusting in Jesus. They walk in the True Light. They remain strong in their faith in Jesus Christ and continue to “overcome the evil one.” They remain strong because the Holy Spirit and the Word of God written abide in them; therefore, they can overcome the evil one, whether the devil or someone being led by the devil (such as the Pharisees who misled those to whom Jesus preached and taught). John wanted all those who follow Jesus to know and remember where they stood in relation to the love and teaching of Jesus and others in the Church, for some might need to repent of the sin of hating a fellow believer. As followers of Jesus Christ, true believers love new Christians, and they help them grow in their faith and obedience to Jesus Christ. True believers in Jesus Christ love and help maturing Christians remain strong in their faith

and trust in the Word of God. They help them overcome temptations, the evil one, and show them how to avoid the snare of the devil. They support and encourage the mature Christians who faithfully teach them and help them walk in love according to the message of Jesus and the Scriptures in the Church and in the world.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. What do you think the commandments were that John referred to?
2. If a believer in Jesus says, "I am in the light," what do you think he means?
3. What can keep a believer in Jesus from stumbling?
4. What can cause stumbling?
5. What did John say about young people who were believers in Jesus?

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