**I JOHN IS WRITTEN TO BELIEVERS!**

John is NOT trying to win unbelievers to Christ (John 20:31), or help people discern if they are truly saved (I John 2:12, 20-21; 3:1-2; 4:4; 5:13)! John’s purpose is to encourage and guide **BELIEVERS** into the **FULLEST EXPERIENCE of FELLOWSHIP WITH THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.**

**I John 1:3 His purpose is FELLOWSHIP! True fellowship is something that is only possible for believers!** Amos 3:3; II Cor. 6:14-16; I Cor. 2:14; Ro 8:7-9. If he were writing to unbelievers, John would NOT deal with fellowship first – his priority concern would be get them saved! John 3:3, 5; 4:10, 14; 20:31

**1:6 “if WE”**  (v. 7, 8, 9, 10) Throughout this epistle, John includes himself with his audience by using the pronoun “we!” As far as John is concerned, the things he says his readers are capable of, HE is capable of, as well! All the things John addresses are concerns that affect the lives of believers.

**1:7 Who on earth is actually able to “walk in the light?”** Only believers!

(For unbelievers, the focus must be COME to the light! John 3:19-22)

**1:9 When are the lost ever told to confess sins for salvation? Never!** What IS the condition for salvation? Faith alone in Christ – John 1:12, 3:16; Acts 16:31.

Where is the gospel in I John 1:9? It is not there! If I John 1:9 were a “salvation text,” that would mean that an unsaved man could confess his sins, be saved, and without ever believing the gospel, since the condition here is “confess our sins,” and there is NO MENTION of any need to “believe the gospel.”

ONLY a child of God can experience forgiveness of sins through confessing his sins – an unsaved person can only be forgiven if he or she believes the gospel! Of course, a believer already has forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ – Romans 3:24-28; 4:3-8. The forgiveness that John offers for believers is “familial” forgiveness; we are forgiven in the sense we are restored to fellowship with the Father – NOT in a way that affects our eternal position as the children of God. Compare I John 1:7, 9; 2:1 with I John 2:2, 12.

**2:1 “My little children” is literally, “my little BORN-ONES”**

Would John address the lost this way? How could unbelievers be John’s “born-ones?”

ONLY BELIEVERS HAVE AN “ADVOCATE” – is it ever said of the lost, headed for Hell, that they have Advocate? What would such an “advocate” do?

**2:2 “He is the propitiation for *OUR* sins, and NOT for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” –** saying Christ has provided perfect satisfaction for the sins of two groups – one group includes John AND the people to whom he is writing (“*our* sins”); the other group is the “whole world!” The only view that makes sense here is he is affirming that his readers, who are BELIEVERS (like himself), ARE forever forgiven, and distinguishing them from the world of unsaved men – emphasizing that the sacrifice of Christ is sufficient for the sins of ALL! (II Cor. 5:19; I Timothy 2:6; 4:10; Heb. 2:9)

The lost, of course, still need to HEAR that, through the Cross, God does not impute their trespasses unto them, and accept the Truth by faith for propitiation to be APPLIED to them – Ro. 1:16-17; 10:13-14; 15:20-21; II Cor. 5:18-20!

**2:12 “I write unto you, little children, because YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN YOU for His Name’s sake” – John refers to them as “little born-ones” (again) and assumes their sins ARE forgiven!**

(II Cor. 5:19 – again, the world’s sins are not “imputed” against them, but they still need to hear and believe “THE WORD of reconciliation” – hence, they would not be called “children,” and would need to be informed and convinced of Christ’s finished work; here, John writes to these people on the basic assumption that they ARE God’s “little children” and have received God’s forgiveness.)

**2:20 “ye have an unction” (this means anointing and refers to the H. Spirit) – they have received the Holy Spirit, and have been “anointed” by Him, which could only be true of believers (Ro. 5:5; 8:9; II Cor. 1:22-23)**

**2:21 “I have not written unto you because ye KNOW NOT the truth, but because ye KNOW it”**

How could John say that the unsaved “know the truth?” Paul tells us in I Tim. 2:4 that the unsaved need to “come unto the knowledge of truth.” Paul describes the unsaved in Ephesians 4:18 as “being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;”

**2:24 “Let that *ABIDE* (= continue/remain) in you which ye have heard from the beginning . . .”**

Obviously, they had heard and received the Truth before. I Cor. 2:14 tells us, “the natural man (the unsaved) receiveth NOT the things of the Spirit of God”

**2:27 “But the anointing which you have received of Him ABIDETH (continues or remains) in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in Him.”**

Read this whole verse through carefully. The Holy Spirit is that “anointing” that teaches us “all things” – John 14:26; 16:13. Could this be said of unbelievers?

**2:28 “and now, little children, ABIDE in Him that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming”**

Only believers can ABIDE (continue, remain) in Him – unbelievers cannot remain in what they never were in to begin with!

John exhorts them to abide, NOT so they will be saved, but so they will have CONFIDENCE or boldness (parresian). He is not concerned that Christ will not TAKE THEM at the RAPTURE, but that they may experience SHAME at His appearing – this speaks of the faithfulness or unfaithfulness of believers, not the judgment of the unsaved. In other scriptures, it is only believers who look for His coming – Heb. 9:28; Titus 2:13; II Tim. 4:8.

**3:1 “Behold, what manner of love the Father HATH BESTOWED UPON US, that we should be called the sons of God”**

For unbelievers, God expresses His love by sending His Son to die (John 3:16 “God so loved the world . . .”). Could unbelievers be called “the sons of God?”(see Ro. 8:14-17; Gal. 3:26; Eph. 2:1-3; John 8:42-8:44).

**3:2 “BELOVED, NOW ARE WE THE SONS OF GOD”**

John does not call or challenge his readers to BECOME the “sons of God” – he emphatically says they ARE the sons of God – John 1:12!

**3:15 “his brother” (see also 3:17, 4:20-21, 5:16)**

The word “his” shows possession! Consider that in order to HAVE a brother, you need to BE a brother! It is certainly possible for believers to fail to love their brother. Considering the Bible’s sky-high definition of love (I John 3:16-18), and the broad Biblical definition for the word “hate,” it is certainly ALSO possible for a believer to “hate” his brother (see Gen. 29:30-33; Proverbs 13:24; I John 3:17)

**3:21 “BELOVED . . .”**

**4:1 “BELOVED . . .”**

**4:4 “YE ARE OF GOD, little children** (= “born-ones!”)**, and have overcome them: because greater is HE THAT IS IN YOU, than he that is in the world”**

This is certainly one of the strongest possible affirmations that John is writing to the children of God! Who could be “in them” that is “greater than he that is in the world,” but Jesus Christ (I John 3:9, 24; Ro. 8:9)?!

**4:7 “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and everyone that loveth is BORN OF GOD AND KNOWETH GOD”**

Since only those who are born of God CAN love, if Jesus is commanding them to love, they MUST be born of Him!

**4:11 “Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.”**

John affirms again these readers are the object of God’s agape love. Because that love has been “shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:5), they have the capacity to “love one another.” This is a repetition of the “new commandment” of Jesus in the Upper Room to His disciples (John 13:34-35; 15:12). Unbelievers do NOT have this capacity.

**5:13 “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may KNOW that ye have eternal life”**

Again, John assumes that they ARE believers, and his concern is NOT that they need to be saved, but that they have THE ASSURANCE THAT THEY ARE POSSESSORS OF ETERNAL LIFE!

**5:21 “Little children”** From beginning to end, John speaks in the most intimate, affectionate manner **– TO THE LITTLE BORN-ONES OF GOD!!!**