

So That You May Know

An Expository Study of the Epistle of **1 John 4:12**

Chapter 20- God Dwells in Us

191 God Dwells in Us- Part 2

WAOY Wednesday 05/21/08

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. We're continuing our verse by verse "journey" of the Epistle of **1John**, and today I want to continue to look at what John taught about "God Dwelling in Us"- so let's read **1John 4:12** again together:

No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

Now as I told you on the last broadcast- when we first read this verse- it seems that John is changing gears on us here and that he is introducing some new information to the discussion. But I really don't think that is what is happening here. But why does John, right in the middle of talking about us loving the brethren, suddenly then tell us that no man has seen God at any time? What has that got to do with loving each other? Was this something that John wanted to say to us earlier and just forgot and now he is bringing it up, so he won't forget again. I really don't think so.

But what is the connection here? What does John mean by saying this? What was it that compelled John to sort of burst out and say that no man has seen God at any time in the middle of a long discussion about us loving each other?

Here is what I believe is happening. The Apostle John is introducing here a new theme; a new idea into his great discussion about believers loving each other. And this new theme is concerning the assurance of our Salvation; it is the entire question about our knowledge of God and the way in which we can know God.

In other words, what I believe is going on here is that John is linking what he is saying to us now in verse 12 to what he has already said in verse 7. If that is true- then it would read something like this:

Beginning with verse 7, let's reconstruct this thought using also verse 12-

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

Now when I do this- I am not saying that verses 9-11 are not important- they are- but those verses are an amplification of the main statement that John is making here- that God is Love. So we can put the discussion about this in this way:

The central theme that John is teaching us here is that believers *should- they ought-* to love one another. Now why is this important? John says that the first reason that this is important is because God is Love. So, for us to love is a very wonderful thing- it makes us God- like because our God is Love. So, for us to be like God- we must also love.

But it isn't just nice and sweet that we love as though that were optional in the sense that some would say today that *some* saved people love while others who are equally saved do not choose to love. No, that is not what John is teaching here. John is saying very clearly here that when we love- we are proving that we belong to God- because God is Love. So when we love- that part of God's Own Character and Nature is in us and therefore we love.

And John is saying that we don't have to put forth great effort to love like this- but we are to *naturally* love. So this love should flow out from us *naturally* precisely because we have been born from above and have received within ourselves the new divine nature.

So John is teaching here that every single person who is born of God must love- for that is the only way that we can manifest that we do appreciate the love that God has shown to us.

And this love is on many levels. First, we love God. We love God and we love God's ways. We love God ways and we love God's Word. We love to spend time with God; we love to talk about God; we love to give to God of ourselves; an our time; and our energy; and our money and our talents.

And we love God so much that when we want to do something or we want to say something or we want to yield to the temptation to manifest qualities that are not like God- God's Love for us creates a love for Him and we are able to overcome that assault against our love for God.

But John is also saying that it is important that we love the brethren from the standpoint of our own assurance of Salvation and from the standpoint of our fellowship with God.

So now verses 9-11 amplify what John is teaching us here and from them we know that the greatest manifestation of God's Love toward us is not in the blessings that God gives us or in the physical healings or the new shiny toys that we get from God- which are all great- but which are all temporary and are not permanent. But the highest and most marvelous demonstration of God's Love toward us is in the death, burial and Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ which purchased our sinful souls and gave us access to Heaven and that is permanent and that is eternal.

But having said that- John then goes right back to this point that he makes in verse 12- that since none of us can see God- when we love one another- and when that love I naturally outflow of us belonging to Jesus- that is the closest thing that we have on earth to a representation of God's Love toward us.

So the real point that John is making here is the assurance of our Salvation and the importance of the love of the brethren in this matter of assurance- in the larger issue of our knowledge of God and the fact that God is Love.

In other words- if we love people for any other reason other than the fact that our love is a natural outflow of us belonging to God- Who is love- then we will get no assurance of our Salvation. But when our love is predicated upon the fact that part of God's very Own Character and Nature lives and walks in us by virtue of the fact that we now are indwelt by the Holy Spirit- then as we love- we are assured that we are saved.

Let me try to put this another way. John was a very hard and rough man. When Jesus first called them- John and his brother James had already developed a reputation about their conduct so much so that they were known as "The Sons of Thunder." John was a fisherman, whose hands were gnarled and calloused. John spent most of his

younger life staying up all night fishing and then repairing the nets and fixing the boat and selling the fish during the day.

In addition to being a rough fisherman- John was also a man who lived in the Middle East during the first century. Life in general was rough and the life of a Jew in that day was brutal.

The Roman soldiers who walked through the streets and who occupied their land had absolute authority. The Romans looked at the Jews as being barbarians who were not educated or sophisticated. The Romans mocked the Jewish religion which worshipped a single God instead of the much more advanced religion of the Romans who had hundreds of gods.

The Jew looked at the Romans as being wicked, pagan invaders of the land that God has given to them and they hated the Romans; and they prayed for God to send them a Deliverer who would come into Jerusalem, riding a white stallion and who would lead the armies of Israel to vanquish the Roman army and who would walk triumphantly into the temple and sit down in the throne of King David and who would restore Israel's Glory again.

Several people had risen up through the years who laid claim to being that Deliverer and yet they had all been soundly defeated by the superior military of Rome.

The hatred and the suspicion and the animosity between the Jews and Romans was so thick- you could cut it with a knife. The Jews constantly plotted how they might over throw them- and the Romans knew this. So the Romans responded to this hatred with utter contempt.

Because of their superior military might- the Roman soldiers could treat the Jews anyway that they wanted with no repercussions. For example- it was common in that day for a Jew to be out with his family and a Roman soldier would walk right up to him and slap him to the ground; steal his coat; molest his wife and beat his child.

It was in this setting – with all this hostility and hatred that Jesus began to speak very strange sounding words like this from **Matthew 5:38-48** where He said:

38 "You have heard that it was said, '*AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.*'

39 "But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on

your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

40 "If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.

41 "Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

42 "Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

43 "You have heard that it was said, '*YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR and hate your enemy.*'

44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on *the* evil and *the* good, and sends rain on *the* righteous and *the* unrighteous.

46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

48 "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

John heard this sermon, and it began to open his eyes as to what true Salvation and true Love really was. But although John and Peter and James were all eternally transformed by these words- this kind of sermon did not cause the average Jew to like Jesus very much.

You see, the Jew of that day did not view Salvation as being saved from their sins- they viewed Salvation as being saved from the infidel Romans. To them, Heaven was not a celestial place where God dwelled- Heaven was the land of Israel. And to them, God's Presence did not abide inside their hearts- no, God's Presence dwelt only in Jerusalem; in the Temple; and behind the veil.

At first, the Jews who followed Jesus thought that Jesus was going to rise up and assemble an army that would destroy the pagan Romans. They thought that Jesus would be their king and would rescue them from the infidel pagans.

Instead Jesus told them that the kingdom of God lay inside them and their greatest problem was not the Romans- but sin- and that they were not defiled by what they ate but by what came out of their hearts.

Jesus told them that they were slaves alright- not to the infidels- no Jesus said that they were all slaves to satan. Jesus told them that the

invading armies might come and go but that the Jew would never be truly free until they had repented and accepted the fact that He was Yahweh in the flesh.

And Jesus told them that the day was coming when they would no longer worship God in Jerusalem; in that Temple- but that the Temple in Jerusalem would be torn down and with it the entire Levitical priesthood would be abolished and replaced with a greater Temple that held a superior Priesthood and a superior Covenant that had superior Promises and which was purchased by a superior Sacrifice. And Jesus told them that not only did God so love the Jew- but God so loved people out of every nation on earth- including the pagan Romans- and that some of them too would be saved.

Most of the Jews who heard Jesus say these things walked away from Him- but not John. John had eyes to see and ears to hear and these Words changed John forever. God graced John to understand that God loved him prior to his birth and that God had laid His Hand upon him before he was ever born and God sent Jesus to pay for all of John's sins and purchase his Salvation. And so with all of that in mind- John now passionately cries to us that because God so loved us- and because God now dwells within us- we ought to also love one another. May God help us all.

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