

SERIES: I JOHN: HOW TO KNOW YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, WEEK 25

TITLE: WHAT WE KNOW FOR SURE!

TEXT: I JOHN 5:18-21

INTRODUCTION: (1) IT IS FITTING THAT A BOOK (I JOHN) DEALING WITH THE SUBJECT OF CERTAINTY AND ASSURANCE, SHOULD END WITH 3 FINAL AFFIRMATIONS, INTRODUCED BY THE PHRASE "WE KNOW" IN VERSES 18, 19 AND 20.

* JOHN CLOSES I JOHN WITH 3 CLEAR AND CANDID CERTAINTIES THAT SUMMARIZE TRUTHS ALREADY COVERED EARLIER IN THE BOOK.

** IT IS TO SAY, JOHN THE BELOVED APOSTLE CONCLUDES HIS EPISTLE WITH 3 CATEGORICAL STATEMENTS, ALL HIGHLIGHTING THE ASSURANCE THAT IS INHERENT FOR A TRUE CHRISTIAN.

*** NOW DOGMA, DOCTRINE, AUTHORITATIVE TRUTH AND CLEAR AFFIRMATIONS ARE ESSENTIAL TO BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY. WE CAN KNOW WITHOUT A SHADOW OF DOUBT, TRUE TRUTH.

**** AND WHEN I SPEAK OF AFFIRMATIONS I AM TALKING ABOUT BELIEFS THAT ARE AFFIRMED OR DECLARED TO BE TRUE, SOLEMN TRUTHFUL DECLARATIONS.

(2) AND CLEAR AFFIRMATIONS ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO BIBLICAL CHRISTIANITY.

* HOWEVER, SOME PROFESSING CHRISTIANS BELIEVE THAT CLEAR AFFIRMATIONS, DOGMA AND DOCTRINE ARE DIVISIVE.

** IN FACT, THERE ARE THOSE WHO WOULD TRY TO ELIMINATE AFFIRMATIONS IN THE INTEREST OF UNITY AND GREATER HARMONY AMONG CHRISTIANS.

*** TO ILLUSTRATE THAT FROM CHURCH HISTORY, JAMES MONTGOMERY BOICE IN HIS COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES OF JOHN TALKS ABOUT ERASMUS OF ROTTERDAM AND MARTIN LUTHER.

**** AND HOW AT THE BEGINNING OF THE REFORMATION, ERASMUS WAS A PARTIAL SUPPORTER OF MARTIN LUTHER, WHOM HE REGARDED AS BEING RIGHT IN MANY THINGS.

(3) BUT AS TIME WENT ON, ERASMUS CHANGED, FOR ERASMUS THE HUMANIST DID NOT HAVE LUTHER'S SPIRITUAL UNDERGIRDING.

* BECAUSE OF THAT, AS THE REFORMATION DEVELOPED, ERASMUS BECAME INCREASINGLY DISTRESSED BY THOUGHTS OF A RUPTURE WITHIN CHRISTENDOM AND BECAME HORRIFIED BY WHAT HE REGARDED AS MARTIN LUTHER'S EXCESSIVE DOGMATISM.

** IN RESPONSE AND ENCOURAGED BY HIS FRIENDS, ERASMUS WROTE A BOOK DEFENDING THE FREEDOM OF THE HUMAN WILL IN SPIRITUAL MATTERS AND ATTACKING LUTHER FOR HIS CONVICTIONS.

*** NOW LUTHER COULD HAVE BACKED OFF, FOR THE SAKE OF UNITY, LUTHER COULD HAVE TONED IT DOWN AND LEFT CERTAIN THINGS UNSAID OR HE COULD HAVE QUALIFIED HIS TEACHING IN VIEW OF ERASMUS' ATTACK.

**** BUT LUTHER COULD NOT WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE. INSTEAD, HE REPLIED IN WRITING IN HIS BOOK "THE BONDAGE OF THE WILL" (WHICH WE HAVE IN OUR CHURCH BOOKSTORE), AND IN WRITING THAT BOOK GAVE A DEFENSE OF CHRISTIAN CERTAINTY AND A REAFFIRMATION OF THE BIBLE'S TEACHING ON THE WILL'S DEPRAVITY IN SPIRITUAL THINGS.

(4) LUTHER DECLARED: "NOTHING IS MORE FAMILIAR OR CHARACTERISTIC AMONG CHRISTIANS THAN ASSERTION. TAKE AWAY ASSERTIONS, AND YOU TAKE AWAY CHRISTIANITY...WHY THEN DO YOU – YOU! – ASSERT THAT YOU FIND NO SATISFACTION IN ASSERTIONS AND

THAT YOU PREFER AN UNDOGMATIC TEMPER TO ANY OTHER?”

* BOICE WENT ON TO SAY, “ITS HARD TO DOUBT THAT THE APOSTLE JOHN WOULD HAVE BEEN PLEASED WITH LUTHER’S ARGUMENT HAD HE BEEN THERE TO HEAR IT, FOR JOHN TOO BELIEVED IN ASSERTIONS AND WOULD HAVE MAINTAINED THAT IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO HAVE CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THEM. MOREOVER, JUST AS ASSERTIONS WERE IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY IN JOHN’S TIME AND IN LUTHER’S TIME, SO THEY ARE IMPORTANT AND NECESSARY IN OUR TIME.” (END QUOTE)

** WITH THAT SAID, WE CONCLUDE OUR STUDY OF I JOHN TODAY WITH A STUDY OF 3 CERTAINTIES, 3 AFFIRMATIONS OF 3 THINGS WE KNOW.

*** FOR V. 18 BEGINS WITH “WE KNOW,” V. 19 BEGINS WITH “WE KNOW” AND V. 20 BEGINS WITH “WE KNOW.”

**** AND BECAUSE OF THAT I’VE TITLED OUR MESSAGE TODAY, “WHAT WE KNOW FOR SURE!”

(5) AND UNDER THAT THEME WE’LL LOOK AT 4 POINTS, THE FIRST 3 BORROWED FROM PETER BARNES AND HIS COMMENTARY ON THE EPISTLES OF JOHN.

* NO. 1 AN AFFIRMATION ABOUT HOLINESS, V. 18; NO. 2 AN AFFIRMATION ABOUT WHERE WE STAND, V. 19; NO. 3 AN AFFIRMATION ABOUT THE TRUTH IN CHRIST, V. 20; AND NO. 4 AN ADMONITION, V. 21.

** NOW WITH THOSE 4 POINTS AS OUR GUIDE THROUGH I JOHN 5:18-21 BEFORE US, LET'S BEGIN BY LOOKING AT OUR FIRST POINT TODAY, AN AFFIRMATION ABOUT HOLINESS. LOOK AT I JOHN 5:18 PLEASE.

I. AN AFFIRMATION ABOUT HOLINESS, (READ V. 18)

A. NOW THE AFFIRMATION, THE DECLARATION OF TRUTH TO BEGIN WITH IN V. 18 IS, WE KNOW, WE CAN BE SURE, WE CAN BE POSITIVE, THAT A PERSON BORN OF GOD DOES NOT CONTINUE IN SIN, WE HAVE BEEN MADE HOLY SO WE WANT TO BE HOLY.

* AND IT APPEARS FROM THE NAS AND NKJV THAT JOHN IS COMMUNICATING SINLESS PERFECTIONISM, THAT AFTER WE ARE BORN AGAIN, WE SIN NO MORE.

** BUT THE VERB SINNETH IN THE KJV, SIN IN THE NKJV OR SINS IN THE NAU, THIS VERB IN THE GREEK IS IN THE PRESENT TENSE.

*** AND THE PRESENT TENSE COMMUNICATES CONTINUAL OR HABITUAL ACTION AND SIMPLY MEANS,

WE KNOW THAT NO ONE WHO IS BORN OF GOD CONTINUES IN SIN.

**** SO THE STATEMENT IS NOT THAT THE CHRISTIAN CANNOT FALL INTO SIN; INDEED, WE CAN AND DO. RATHER IT IS THAT, WHILE WE FALL INTO SIN, WE CANNOT CONTINUE IN IT INDEFINITELY.

1. TO SAY IT ANOTHER WAY, IF A PERSON IS TRULY BORN OF GOD, THE NEW BIRTH WILL RESULT IN NEW BEHAVIOR.

* SIN IS NOW, BECAUSE OF THE NEW BIRTH, NO LONGER THE PREVAILING PATTERN IN THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. WE STILL SIN, BUT NOT AS WE DID BEFORE. SIN IS NOW INTERMITTENT, WHERE IT ONCE DOMINATED OUR LIVES B.C., BEFORE CHRIST. WE NO LONGER PRACTICE SIN AS THE NORM.

** AND THAT IS HOW THE ESV AND THE NIV TRANSLATE THE FIRST PART OF V. 18. THE ESV SAYS: "WE KNOW THAT EVERYONE WHO HAS BEEN BORN OF GOD DOES NOT KEEP SINNING."

*** THE NIV SAYS: "WE KNOW THAT ANYONE BORN OF GOD DOES NOT CONTINUE TO SIN."

**** SO WE KNOW THIS FOR SURE, BECAUSE OF NEW BIRTH OR REGENERATION, A NEW HEART AND SPIRITUAL LIFE ARE IMPLANTED IN AN INDIVIDUAL, THEREFORE THE LIFESTYLE STARTS TO CHANGE, CHANGING FROM A LIFE OF DARKNESS TO LIGHT. WE DO NOT KEEP ON SINNING WITHOUT REPENTANCE.

2. AND JOHN WILL AMPLIFY ON THIS SURE TRUTH IN THE REST OF V. 18, BUT HE WHO WAS BORN OF GOD KEEPS HIM AND THEREFORE THE EVIL ONE DOES NOT TOUCH HIM.

* NOW NOTE HERE, THAT MOST MANUSCRIPTS DO NOT INCLUDE THE WORD SELF, MOST SAY; AND THEREFORE THE ESV, NIV, NAS AND NAU TRANSLATED THE PHRASE IN V. 18 "KEEPS HIM" OR PROTECTS HIM OR KEEPS HIM SAFE.

** BUT THE KJV AND NKJV TRANSLATE THE PHRASE KEEPETH HIMSELF AND KEEPS HIMSELF.

*** WELL THE TRUTH SCRIPTURALLY IS WE DON'T KEEP OURSELVES IN SECURITY, BUT CHRIST KEEPS US. SO SELF IS NOT IN MOST MANUSCRIPTS. CHRIST IS THE ONE WHO KEEPS US HERE IN V. 18. CHRIST KEEPS US SAFE HERE.

**** AND THE FACT OF THE MATTER IS, IF YOU ARE A TRUE BELIEVER, YOU KNOW THAT IF LEFT TO YOURSELF, YOU WOULD FALL AWAY, BUT BECAUSE YOU ARE KEPT BY THE SON OF GOD, YOU WILL NEVER TURN YOUR BACK ON GOD OR GO BACK PERMANENTLY TO YOUR FORMER WAY OF LIFE.

3. THEREFORE THOSE BORN OF GOD PERSEVERE BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST PRESERVES, PROTECTS AND KEEPS US.

* BELOVED, THERE IS NO COMFORT OR ASSURANCE OR CERTAINTY IN THE THOUGHT THAT WE ARE IN OUR OWN KEEPING; OUR SECURITY IS NOT IN OUR GRIP ON CHRIST, BUT HIS GRIP ON US.

** AND BECAUSE CHRIST KEEPS US, THE EVIL ONE DOES NOT TOUCH US, THE LAST PART OF V. 18.

*** SO WHY DO WE NEED TO BE KEPT? BECAUSE WE WHO HAVE BEEN BORN OF GOD ARE NOT IMMUNE TO TEMPTATION. AND THE EVIL ONE WHICH IS TALKING ABOUT SATAN, THE DEVIL, WOULD TOUCH US.

**** AND THE WORD "TOUCH" IN THE GREEK LIT. MEANS TO GRASP, TO LAY HOLD OF, TO FASTEN A GRIP ON SOMETHING, TO CLING TO.

4. AND IF SATAN COULD, HE WOULD TRY TO CONTROL US AND TAKE US DOWN WITH HIMSELF. SATAN CANNOT TAKE US BACK INTO HIS GRIP.

* IF YOU HAVE BEEN BORN AGAIN, YOU ARE NO LONGER IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE EVIL ONE. SATAN CANNOT TAKE AWAY YOUR SALVATION, HE CANNOT CONTROL YOU, HE CANNOT POSSESS YOU AND HE CANNOT MAKE YOU SIN.

** WHY? BECAUSE JESUS CHRIST KEEPS YOU. YOU ARE NOW IN THE GRIP OF THE HAND OF GOD AND NO ONE CAN PLUCK YOU OUT OF THAT HAND, FOR JESUS SAID IN JOHN 10:27-29 (QUOTE THEM).

*** AND BELIEVER WE ARE NOW “KEPT” BY THE POWER OF GOD. (QUOTE I PETER 1:4&5, JUDE V. 24)

**** AND THEN II THESSALONIANS 3:3 SAYS: “BUT THE LORD IS FAITHFUL, AND HE WILL STRENGTHEN AND PROTECT YOU FROM THE EVIL ONE.”

5. AND WHAT A WONDERFUL ASSURANCE WE HAVE HERE IN V. 18. THE CERTAINTY, THE AFFIRMATION IS:

* THE DEVIL DOES NOT TOUCH THE BELIEVER BECAUSE THE SON KEEPS US, AND BECAUSE THE SON KEEPS US, WE NO LONGER ARE SLAVES TO SIN. AND THIS IS DELIVERANCE FROM THE EVIL ONE. WONDERFUL TRUTH,

AN AFFIRMATION THAT SHOULD BUILD ASSURANCE BECAUSE OF THIS CERTAINTY.

** WHICH LEADS TO ANOTHER CERTAINTY OF WHAT WE CAN KNOW FOR SURE, ANOTHER AFFIRMATION, AN AFFIRMATION ABOUT WHERE WE STAND, LOOK AT V. 19 PLEASE.

II. AN AFFIRMATION ABOUT WHERE WE STAND, (READ V. 19)

A. NOW THE 2'D THING WE KNOW FOR SURE IN OUR TEXT TODAY IS: WE KNOW THAT WE ARE OF GOD, WE KNOW THAT WE BELONG TO GOD.

* AND THE SIMPLE POINT IS, IF YOU HAVE BEEN BORN OF GOD, YOU BELONG TO GOD.

** BUT IN TIMES PAST, AT ONE TIME YOU WERE OF THE WORLD AND UNDER THE POWER OF THE EVIL ONE – SATAN. BUT NOW YOU BELONG TO THE LORD, EPH. 2:2&3.

*** HENCE, YOU HAVE A DIFFERENT FATHER – GOD; A NEW MASTER – THE LORD JESUS CHRIST; A DIFFERENT INFLUENCE – THE HOLY SPIRIT; A NEW STANDARD – THE WORD OF GOD.

**** BEYOND THAT YOU BELONG TO A NEW FAMILY – THE CHURCH OF GOD; AND YOU LIVE WITH A NEW PURPOSE – THE GLORY OF GOD.

1. AND PRACTICALLY SINCE WE NOW BELONG TO GOD, WE MUST LIVE LIKE IT. WE MUST NOT LIVE LIKE THOSE IN THE WORLD BECAUSE WE ARE NO LONGER OF THE WORLD, QUOTE I JOHN 3:1 AND I JOHN 4:4.

* AND BELOVED, THE REASSURING TRUTH OF V. 19 IS WE BELONG TO GOD. WE ARE NO LONGER UNDER THE POWER OF THE EVIL ONE, SATAN.

** AND THE WORD POWER HAS TO DO WITH THE CONTROL, THE SWAY, THE SPHERE OF HIS EVIL INFLUENCE.

*** WE ARE NO LONGER HIS. BUT IN CONTRAST TO THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN BORN OF GOD, THE WORLD, THOSE WHO DO NOT KNOW CHRIST, ARE UNDER THE POWER, THE SWAY, THE INFLUENCE, THE GRIP OF THE EVIL ONE AND THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW IT.

**** AND CLEARLY HERE JOHN CONTRASTS BELIEVERS WITH UNBELIEVERS, AND THE WORLD WE LIVE IN IS DIVIDED INTO TWO CAMPS, THOSE OF GOD AND THOSE

OF SATAN. THERE IS NO THIRD CATEGORY, NO MIDDLE GROUND, NO THIRD OPTION, NO THIRD ALTERNATIVE.

2. EVERYONE IS EITHER A PART OF GOD'S KINGDOM OR SATAN'S KINGDOM, THOSE WHO BELONG TO GOD AND THOSE WHO BELONG TO SATAN.

* AND IF YOU WOULD TELL THE AVERAGE PERSON THAT THEY ARE UNDER THE INFLUENCE, THE GRIP OF SATAN, THEY WOULD LAUGH. BUT THEY ARE BLINDED BY OUR FALLEN WORLD SYSTEM LED BY SATAN THAT IS IN OPPOSITION AND HOSTILE TO GOD. SATAN IS THE PRINCE OF THIS WORLD, THE GOD OF THIS WORLD, QUOTE II CORINTHIANS 4:3&4.

** AND UNBELIEVERS ARE WILLING SUBJECTS TO A KING THEY WOULD LAUGH ABOUT AND SAY THAT HE IS A FIGMENT OF OUR IMAGINATION. BUT THEY ARE WILLING SERVANTS OF HIS AND DO NOT EVEN KNOW IT.

*** SO WHAT DO WE KNOW FOR SURE IN V. 19?

**** THAT IF WE ARE BORN AGAIN, WE ARE OF GOD. WHAT A WONDERFUL ASSURANCE, WE ARE NOT OF SATAN, WE ARE OF GOD, BUT THOSE NOT OF GOD THROUGH NEW BIRTH ARE OF SATAN AND UNDER HIS GRIP AND DIRECTION.

3. AND THAT IS THE 2'D CERTAINTY. A THIRD IS FOUND IN V. 20, AN AFFIRMATION ABOUT THE TRUTH OF CHRIST, LOOK AT V. 20 PLEASE.

III. AN AFFIRMATION ABOUT THE TRUTH OF CHRIST,
(READ V. 20)

A. NOW THE SURETY, THE AFFIRMATION, WHAT WE KNOW FOR SURE IN V. 20 IS THAT THE SON OF GOD HAS COME AND HAS GIVEN US (BELIEVERS) UNDERSTANDING.

* NOW THIS CERTAINTY STRIKES AT THE VERY ROOT OF THE FALSE TEACHING THAT JOHN HAS BEEN WRITING ABOUT.

** FOR THE FALSE TEACHERS WERE TEACHING THAT GOD THE SON, THE CHRIST HAD NOT COME IN THE FLESH.

*** AND THEY WERE IN ESSENCE SAYING: "WE ARE THE PEOPLE" IN THE KNOW ABOUT THIS – GNOSIS – KNOWLEDGE. WE HAVE THE REAL KNOWLEDGE, WE HAVE THE REAL TRUTH ABOUT THE CHRIST SPIRIT WHO CAME AND LEFT JESUS. WE HAVE THE REAL UNDERSTANDING ABOUT THESE THINGS.

**** BUT JOHN SAYS: WE KNOW THAT THE SON OF GOD HAS COME AND HE HAS GIVEN US UNDERSTANDING AND NOT YOU, THE FALSE TEACHERS.

1. BELOVED, WE UNDERSTAND WHY JESUS CAME, WE UNDERSTAND AND KNOW ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE AND PURPOSE OF THE INCARNATION, WE HAVE THE TRUE KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE PURPOSE OF THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST.

* AND TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH IS ANCHORED IN THE GREAT FACT OF CHRIST'S COMING.

*** BUT SAVING FAITH, AS WE HAVE SEEN THROUGHOUT OUR STUDY OF I JOHN, IS MORE THAN JUST BELIEVING IN AN HISTORICAL JESUS, BUT UNDERSTANDING WHY JESUS CAME.

*** SO HERE IN V.20 JOHN TELLS US, THE SON OF GOD HAS COME AND HAS GIVEN US UNDERSTANDING, SO THAT WE MAY KNOW HIM WHO IS TRUE!

**** AND TRUE REFERS TO THAT WHICH IS AUTHENTIC AS OPPOSED TO THAT WHICH IS FALSE, THE ULTIMATE REALITY AS OPPOSED TO THAT WHICH IS MERELY ITS SHADOW.

2. AND AGAIN, THE FALSE TEACHERS MADE MUCH OF THEIR SUPPOSED KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, BUT IT IS JOHN'S CONTENTION THAT APART FROM THE COMING OF GOD THE SON, WHO REVEALS GOD THE FATHER, SUCH KNOWLEDGE IS NOT KNOWLEDGE AT ALL.

* IT'S NOT THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUE OR REAL GOD. FOR ONLY THROUGH THE SON OF GOD IS THE TRUE GOD KNOWN, THE ONE WHO IS TRULY REAL.

** BUT GET THIS, JESUS HAS NOT ONLY OPENED THE DOOR TO KNOW HIM WHO IS THE REAL AND TRUE GOD, WE ARE IN HIM WHO IS TRUE, IN WHOM HERE?

*** IN GOD'S SON JESUS CHRIST. AND HERE WE HAVE A GREAT CHRISTOLOGICAL TRUTH, THIS IS THE TRUE GOD, THE ONE THE PRE-GNOSTICS DENIED WAS GOD, THE TRUE GOD, THIS IS THE TRUE OR REAL GOD – WHO?

**** GO BACK, HIS SON JESUS CHRIST. JESUS CHRIST IS THE TRUE GOD AND THE SOURCE OF ETERNAL LIFE.

3. THEREFORE WE HAVE A CONCLUSIVE STATEMENT ON THE DIVINITY, THE DEITY OF JESUS AT THE END OF THIS GREAT BOOK! THIS IS THE TRUE GOD – JESUS CHRIST AND HE IS THE ONLY ONE IN WHOM WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

* SO HOW DO WE COME TO KNOW THE REAL GOD, GOD THE FATHER? IT IS THROUGH THE TRUE GOD JESUS CHRIST. AND THOSE WHO HAVE THE SON HAVE LIFE, AND THOSE WHO DO NOT HAVE THE SON, DO NOT HAVE LIFE, I JOHN 5:12.

** AND WHAT WE HAVE IS AN AFFIRMATION ABOUT THE TRUTH OF CHRIST.

*** AND AGAIN IN JOHN WE SEE THE EXCLUSIVITY OF JESUS CHRIST AS THE ONLY WAY TO HEAVEN, AS THE ONLY ONE THROUGH WHOM WE RECEIVE ETERNAL LIFE.

**** JESUS IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE. AND HE CAME AND GAVE US UNDERSTANDING OF THE GOSPEL TO COME TO KNOW GOD, BUT REMEMBER HE IS THE TRUE GOD AND ETERNAL LIFE.

4. AND WHAT A BLAST THIS IS TO FALSE TEACHERS, AND WHAT AN ASSURANCE AND CERTAINTY IT IS TO TRUE BELIEVERS AT THE END OF THIS BOOK ON HOW TO KNOW YOU HAVE ETERNAL LIFE.

* NOW WITH THAT SAID, WE HAVE ONE LAST VERSE IN THIS BOOK OF ASSURANCE AND THIS VERSE IS A WARNING, AN ADMONITION. LOOK AT V. 21 PLEASE.

IV. THE ADMONITION, (READ V. 21)

A. NOW JOHN CLOSES WITH THE AFFECTIONATE WORDS "LITTLE CHILDREN," WORDS HE HAS USED TO TALK TO HIS CHILDREN IN THE FAITH, AS AN OLDER SPIRITUAL FATHER TO HIS BELOVED CHILDREN.

* AND AS A LOVING OLDER FATHER HE GIVES HIS PRECIOUS CHILDREN A FINAL COMMAND. FOR THE VERB TRANSLATED GUARD OR KEEP IS IN THE IMPERATIVE MOOD, THUS COMMUNICATING A CLEAR COMMAND. THIS IS A DIVINE IMPERATIVE, NOT AN OPTION.

** AND THE COMMAND IS GUARD OR KEEP, LIT. TO KEEP WATCH. AND THIS WORD WAS USED IN THAT DAY OF THE GARRISON OF A CITY GUARDING AGAINST ATTACK FROM WITHOUT.

*** IT WOULD ALSO HAVE REFERENCE IN THAT DAY TO GUARDING A FLOCK OR GUARDING A PRISONER.

**** NOW WHAT WERE THEY AND WHAT ARE WE TO BE GUARDING OURSELVES DILIGENTLY FROM? THE ANSWER IS IDOLS.

1. FROM AN IMAGE OF A GOD, THE LIKENESS OF SOMETHING, AN IDOL.

* NOW JOHN UP TO THIS POINT HAS NOT USED THIS WORD IN I JOHN, NOR HAS HE MADE ANY REFERENCES TO ANY KIND OF IDOLS THAT WERE WORSHIPPED IN FIRST CENTURY PAGANISM.

** THEREFORE IN THE CONTEXT OF I JOHN, IT APPEARS TO ME HE IS TALKING ABOUT THE IDOLATRY OF FALSE BELIEF, FALSE CONCEPTIONS OF GOD, HERETICAL

SUBSTITUTES FOR THE TRUE GOD, PROMOTED THROUGH THE FALSE DOCTRINE OF THE PRE-GNOSTICS.

*** BELOVED, IT APPEARS THAT JOHN IS SAYING IN EFFECT, BEWARE OF ANY TEACHINGS WHICH ARE OPPOSED TO THE REALITIES AND TRUTHS I HAVE GIVEN YOU IN THIS BOOK.

**** FOR HE WANTS HIS LITTLE CHILDREN TO GUARD THEMSELVES FROM ANY IDEAS CONCERNING GOD, OTHER THAN THOSE WHICH HE HAS HANDED DOWN.

2. AND THE TRUTH AND CERTAINTY IS JESUS CHRIST IS GOD. ANY OTHER THOUGHT IS IDOLATRY.

* SO IT APPEARS JOHN IS NOT SPEAKING PRIMARILY ABOUT IDOLS CARVED OUT OF WORD OR STONE. FOR AN IDOL IS A SUBSTITUTE OR FALSE GOD TAKING THE PLACE OF THE TRUE GOD.

** AND HERE IT LOOKS LIKE AN IDOL IS NOT SO MUCH A MATERIAL THING, BUT A FALSE TEACHING, A FALSE DOCTRINE CONCERNING THE TRUE GOD JESUS CHRIST WHO IS THE ONLY SOURCE OF ETERNAL LIFE.

IN WRAP UP AND IN APPLICATION: (1) IDOLS ARE ANYTHING AND ANYONE THAT WOULD REPLACE THE LORD GOD AS THE CHIEF DELIGHT OF OUR HEARTS.

* FOR THE FIRST COMMANDMENT OF THE 10 IN EXODUS 20:3 IS: "YOU SHALL HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME."

** AND IN WESTERN CULTURE, WE MUST REMEMBER THAT IDOLATRY DOES NOT ONLY MEAN BOWING DOWN TO A STATUE OF WOOD OR STONE, BUT CAN ALSO BE WRONG THOUGHTS ABOUT GOD, WRONG BELIEFS ABOUT GOD AND ANYTHING THAT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN GOD.

*** I MEAN THE HEART OF IDOLATRY IS GIVING ANYTHING OR ANYONE OR ANY BELIEF THE PLACE THAT BELONGS TO CHRIST.

**** THEREFORE IDOLATRY MAY BE GIVING WHAT IS DUE TO GOD TO A PERSON WE LOVE, SUCH AS A SPOUSE OR A CHILD OR ANY OTHER PERSON, LIKE A BOYFRIEND, A FIANCÉE, ETC.

(2) IT MAY BE GIVING MORE ATTENTION TO SPORTS, AN ACTIVITY OR A CAUSE THAN TO GOD.

* IT MAY BE WORSHIPPING MONEY OR THINGS.

** IT MAY BE WORSHIPPING A CAREER OR A JOB OR OUR BUSINESS.

*** OFTEN, IT IS FOCUSING TOO MUCH ON SELF, ON PLEASURE, ON LEISURE, ON TRAVEL.

**** IT MAY EVEN BE WORSHIPPING OUR THEOLOGY
INSTEAD OF THE GOD OF OUR THEOLOGY.

(3) BUT WHATEVER IT CAN BE, IF IT BECOMES A
CONTROLLING MATTER IN OUR LIVES AND USURPS
CHRIST'S PLACE, IT IS IDOLATRY.

* SO I ASK, ARE WE CLINGING TO IDOLS? DO WE PUT
OTHER PEOPLE OR THINGS BEFORE CHRIST? DO WE LET
POSSESSIONS TAKE PRIORITY OVER OUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH CHRIST?

** BELOVED, WE MUST PERSEVERE IN GUARDING OUR
HEARTS, BECAUSE IDOLATRY IS AN EVER PRESENT
TEMPTATION.

*** BUT ABSOLUTE ASSURANCE, BLESSED ASSURANCE,
TRUST IN THE CERTAINTIES OF GOD'S TRUTH WILL HELP
US FOCUS ON THINGS ABOVE, AND ON THE SOURCE OF
OUR ETERNAL LIFE, JESUS CHRIST. JOHN HAS GIVEN US
CLEAR TRUTH OF HOW WE CAN KNOW WE HAVE ETERNAL
LIFE AND NOT TO LOVE THE THINGS OF THE WORLD.

**** MAY WE APPLY THE TRUTH AND LET THE
CERTAINTIES OF WHAT WE CAN KNOW FOR SURE, GUIDE
US, COMFORT US AND SUPPORT US. (LET'S PRAY)