

1 John 2:28-3:10 Answers Children of Christ or Scions of Satan?

Introduction: In the previous verses John warned that antichrist apostasy was coming. John exposed antichrist teachers as apostate Jewish Christians actively trying to persuade the church to abandon its belief in Jesus as the Christ. John's antidote for antichrist was found in **2:24** (let the original gospel message abide in them and continue to abide in the Son). Thus, in the previous passage John warned, "Antichrist is coming — Look out!" Now, in today's passage, John turns from antichrist to Christ to the real Christ and in effect says, "Christ is coming — Look up!" John details how genuine faith in Christ's coming will change our lives.

******As opposed to becoming apostate, what reason did John offer for continuing to abide in the Son (2:26-27)?** The reason given was "so that" when Jesus appears, we will be confident and not ashamed.

What would cause someone to shrink from Jesus in shame at His coming (2:28)? Those who do not believe in Jesus as the Christ will shrink in fear of judgment and those who claim to believe but who do not live lives of holiness will shrink.

ESV John 15:6 If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned.

What does it mean to abide in him (2:26)? From the immediate context it means to continue to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (2:24). This is in contrast to antichrist apostates who left the Faith and were actively trying to convert others.

ESV John 8:31-32 . . . Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples . . ."

When did or will Jesus appear (2:28)? It is important to distinguish between judgment coming predictions and second coming predictions. Jesus came in judgment against unbelieving Judaism in A.D. 70, but that was not a personal coming, no one saw Him, He did not appear (2:28), He did not return bodily as He had left (Acts 1:9-11).

ESV Acts 1:9-11 And . . . as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."

Timing: John predicted it was the "last hour" related to the coming of antichrist in the first century. However, John gave no time statement for the appearing of Jesus. It potentially could have happened within their lifetimes, but of course it did not. It could be without our lifetimes. No one knows when, but it could happen at any time.

Based on 2:29, what evidence is there that a person has been born again? The person born of God believes that Jesus is righteous and therefore he himself practices righteousness.

What is the difference between positional righteousness and practical (practicing) righteousness (2:29)? Positional righteousness is when God declares us to be righteous because of our faith in Christ:

ESV **Romans 4:3** . . . "Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness."

Practical righteousness or practicing righteousness is living out our faith on a day to day basis as we obey the teachings of Jesus. It is doing the right things that God wants us to do.

ESV **James 2:17** . . . faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead.

ESV **James 2:26** . . . as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.

We are saved by faith alone, but a faith that saves is never alone; it always produces good works. Everyone who has positional righteousness will also practice righteousness.

******What hope causes us to purify ourselves (3:1-3)?** It is because Jesus is pure. True believers have a confident expectation that Jesus was one day appear (come back) and when He does we will be supernaturally changed to be like Jesus. This hope causes true believers to purify themselves.

— 3:1 —

According to 3:1, how has the Father shown his love for us? He shows His love in that He did what it took to be able to call us His children.

ESV **Romans 5:8** . . . God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Why are God's children so misunderstood by the world (3:1)? The world did not know Jesus and it does not know us. There is built-in friction between the world and Christians (*ESV Study Bible*, p. 2433).

ESV **John 15:18-19** If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

Perspective: When rejected by the world because of Christ, it is easy to falsely conclude you have been abandoned by God. However, John reassures his readers that being rejected by the world is a confirmation we belong to Jesus.

In what sense did John use the word know (3:1)? It means to understand. The world did not, does not, recognize Jesus as God in the flesh. The world just does not “get” it.

Lyrics: “Sweet little Jesus boy, They made you Be born In a manger. Sweet little Holy child, Didn't know Who You were. Didn't know you Come to save us, Lord, To take Our sins away. Our eyes Was blind, We couldn't see. We didn't know Who You were.”

ESV **John 1:10-12** He [Jesus] was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him . . . But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.

— 3:2 —

According to 3:2, what will happen to us when Jesus appears? We will be changed to be like Jesus.

What changes will be necessary to make us like Jesus (3:2)? We will be given glorified bodies like Jesus now has, without defect and not liable to death. Even better, we will be totally freed from the sin that so easily besets us now.

ESV **1 Corinthians 15:51-53** . . . we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality.

— 3:3 —

******The application of the doctrine of the Second Coming of Jesus is found in 3:3. If you really believe in the Second Coming, what are you going to do?** Everyone who hopes in Jesus purifies himself just as Jesus is pure.

The contemporary English notion of hope is not the same as the first century Christian idea of hope. What is the biblical idea of hope (3:3)? It is not wishful thinking, but a confident expectation. There is no doubt involved with biblical hope. Biblically speaking we might say, “I hope the sun comes up tomorrow.” It is going to happen, it just has not happened yet.

******How can we tell the children of God from the children of the devil (3:4-10)?** The children of the devil practice lawlessness, they keep on sinning, they do not practice righteousness and they do not love the brethren. The children of God practice righteousness and do not continue on in sin.

— 3:4 —

How did John define sin in 3:4? Sin is lawlessness.

What law did John have in mind (3:4)? Obviously John had God’s law in mind, not Roman law.

Expressions of God’s Law: The moral law of God (or the law of love) is a spiritual reality that God has manifested in different ways (same moral law, different revelations of it).

1) The Law of Moses: The Law of Moses was given by God to Jews on tablets of stone to show them their sin and need for a Savior (since we are all sinners and since no one will get to heaven by keeping God's laws):

ESV **Romans 3:19** . . . whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped . . .

ESV **Romans 7:7** . . . if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."

No Jew who believes in Jesus is under the Law of Moses any longer. Writing to Jewish Christians, the Scripture states:

ESV **Romans 6:14** . . . you are not under law but under grace.

ESV **Romans 7:4** . . . you . . . have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead . . .

ESV **Romans 7:6** . . . we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.

ESV **Galatians 5:18** . . . if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

2) The Law on the Heart: Pagan Gentiles never were under the Law of Moses (being outside the Mosaic Covenant). Instead, God wrote his moral laws directly on the hearts of pagans to show them their sinfulness:

ESV **Romans 2:14-16** . . . when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

That which was moral in the Law of Moses is identical what which is moral in the law written on the hearts of Gentiles. Thus Jews (who have the Mosaic Law) and Gentiles (who have God's moral law written on their hearts) will both alike face God's judgment:

ESV **Romans 2:12** . . . all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.

3) The Law of Christ: Those who are in Christ, both believing Jew and believing Gentile, are now under the moral Law of Christ.

ESV **Galatians 6:2** Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.

Scriptural Summary: In writing about his approach to evangelism, Paul also revealed the biblical status of each group's relationship to law:

ESV **1 Corinthians 9:20** To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (**though not being myself under the law**) that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (**not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ**) that I might win those outside the law.

Unbelieving Jews are described as those under the law (*hupo nomon*)

Paul, a believing Jew, clearly stated he was not under the law.

Unbelieving Gentiles are described as those outside the law (*anomos*)

Paul then described himself as under the law of Christ (*ennomous christou*; literally: in-lawed to Christ).

Review: How did John define sin in 3:4? Sin is lawlessness. Sin is a violation of the moral aspects of the Law of Moses, a violation of God's moral law written on the hearts of heathens and of the Law of Christ.

There is a false teaching that is an abuse of God's grace. This false teaching claims a Christian can do anything thing he wants to (even sin) since he is not under God's law in any way, shape, form or fashion, but under grace. What is the name of this false doctrine? This is called antinomianism (against law). A similar sin is that of licentiousness, that is, having a license to sin! The truth is that we are in-lawed to Christ.

— 3:5 —

******According to 3:5, what was the purpose of Jesus' coming to earth?** Jesus came to take away sins.

ESV **John 1:29** . . . he [John the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"

— 3:6 —

******What truth did John declare about anyone who keeps on sinning (3:6)?** No one who keeps on sinning knows Jesus.

What does it mean to abide in Jesus (3:6)?

ESV **John 15:10** If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love.

Jesus came not only to take away the penalty for sin, but also to break it's bondage over us. We no longer are slaves to sin.

ESV **Romans 6:18** . . . having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness.

ESV **Romans 8:2** . . . the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.

Every Christian sins. What is the difference between someone who sins and someone who keeps on sinning (3:6)? What John is here condemning are those who keep on sinning as a lifestyle. Struggling against sin is one thing; wallowing (South Speak: wallerin) in it is quite another.

— 3:7 —

Based on 3:7, what false claims were people making? People were claiming to believe in Jesus even though they lived lives of sin and did not practice righteousness. Jesus came to take away sin. John did not want them to be deceived about the fact that those who belong to Jesus practice righteousness whereas those who practice sin do not belong to Jesus, no matter what they may claim to the contrary.

ESV Matthew 7:15 Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.

— 3:8 —

According to 3:8, what is true of those who make a practice of sinning? They are of the devil. Speaking to the unbelieving Jews, Jesus said:

ESV John 8:44 You are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father's desires. H

Based on 3:8, why is making a practice of sinning inconsistent with abiding in the Son?

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. If God's seed abides in you, you will not be able to keep on sinning.

ESV Galatians 5:16-17 . . . walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Christians will always be tempted. We will always feel the desires of the flesh. But the Holy Spirit within is also tugging, to keep us from doing the sinful things we sometimes "want" to do.

Adrian Rogers: The lost man leaps into sin and loves it, the saved man lapses into sin and loathes it.

ESV 1 John 2:4-6 Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

— 3:9 —

*****Why does no one born of God make a practice of sinning (3:9)?**

What does it mean to be born of God (3:9)? It means you are born again, born from above, birthed into God's spiritual family.

ESV **John 1:12-13** . . . to all who . . . receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

ESV **John 3:3** . . . Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

— 3:10 —

******What makes it evident whose child you are (who's your daddy)?**

What specific sin did John detail in 3:10? John said the one who does not love his brother is not of God (this is the spring-board to the next section).

ESV **1 John 2:9-11** Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

So What?

About what subject did John warn his readers not to be deceived? See 3:7.

What reasons did John give as to why God's children will not practice sin (2:28-3:10)? It is because Jesus is pure (3:3), Jesus came to take away sins (3:5), Jesus is righteous (3:7), Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (3:8), and God's seed abides in God's children (3:9).

As you examine you own life, will you be confident at Jesus' appearing or will you shrink from Him in shame (2:28)?

**** = ask this question before reading the text aloud. Doing so will cause focus.

- These lessons are designed for a 45 minute session (30 minutes of teaching and 15 minutes of group discussion) and are based on the text of the ESV.
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