

1 JOHN – CHAPTER 3:10-18

Love as a Test Against the Antichrists

INTRODUCTION

We have left the trawls of 1 John 3:4-10, but it has given us the foundation to understand the next section of 1 John. The writer is not providing a test for salvation or fellowship. Instead, he is establishing a distinction between the apostles and the children of God on one side, and the antichrists, who claim that Jesus is not the Christ, on the other.

This section continues the contrast. The false teachers, the antichrist, and those who are of the devil are contrasted with the apostolic community and the children of God.

1 JOHN 3:10-18 – OVERVIEW

The author's contrast in this section is stark, but we must understand the difference between identification, observed activity/function, and instruction.

First, let's examine how the contrast is identified.

1. The Antichrists
 - a. Verse 10b – The one not loving his brother – Articular Participle
 - b. Verse 14b – The one not loving – Articular Participle
 - c. Verse 15 – All the hating one the brother of his – Articular Participle
 - d. Verse 15 – Murderer – Noun
2. The Apostles/Children
 - a. Verse 11 – One Another
 - b. Verse 13 – Brethren, You
 - c. Verse 14 – Brethren
 - d. Verse 16 – Us, We, Brethren
 - e. Verse 18 – Little Children

Interestingly, there are no identifications for the children or the apostolic community in this section, no articular participles or descriptive adjectives. The author in this section directly speaks of those referred to as “children of the devil” (verse 10), as they are identified as those who do not love. But the inverse is not seen here. The children are not identified as “one who loves his brother.” Why? In this section and subsequently, they are told that they ought to love as well as the method of how to love.

Next, let's take a look at the observed activity/function (indicative verbs) in this section and how these groups are contrasted.

1. The Antichrists
 - a. Verse 13 – the world **hates** you – Present Active Indicative
 - b. Verse 15 – The one hating his brother **is** a murderer – εἰμί eimi – equivalency
 - c. Verse 15 – No murder **has** eternal life abiding in him - ἔχω echo – reality
2. The Apostles/Children
 - a. Verse 11 – The message **you have heard** from the beginning – Aorist Indicative
 - b. Verse 14 – We **have passed** out of death into life – Perfect Indicative

1 JOHN – CHAPTER 3:10-18

Love as a Test Against the Antichrists

- c. Verse 14 – **We love** the brethren – Present Indicative
- d. Verse 16 – **We know** love by this – Perfect Indicative

In the observable actions (activity, function), we can see the contrast even more clearly. The antichrists are observed as hating, as not loving. This is contrasted with the “we love the brethren.” The letter does not describe in detail what the antichrists are doing or not doing, but we do have one aspect. Verse 17 gives us a scenario that would appear to indicate that the antichrists have failed. They were there with means, saw the brethren in need, and closed their “hearts” against them.

Before we get too far, we need to say again that this is not a test for salvation nor a test for fellowship with God; this is a continuation from the previous section, in which the author is demonstrating the antichrists (2:18), those who are trying to deceive them (2:26) by saying that Jesus is not the Christ (2:22), are ones who do not love.

Later in these lessons, we will see that not loving is not a test to see if someone is saved. A believer is fully capable of the lack of love as demonstrated in this passage. However, in this situation, the writer is pointing out that the false gospel (false doctrine about Jesus not being the Messiah) and not loving the brethren are intrinsically intertwined.

Finally, we can review the instructions in this section.

- 1. Verse 11 – **We should love** one another – Present Subjunctive
- 2. Verse 13 – **Do not marvel** – Present Imperative
- 3. Verse 16 – **We ought** to lay down our lives for the brethren - ὀφείλω opheilō – to be obligated – Present Indicative
- 4. Verse 18 – **Let us** not **love** with word or with tongue but in deed and truth

All four of these instructions are directed to the *children* (teknon) who are the target audience of this letter. These instructions are all in the conversation of the antichrists not loving the brethren. What happens when an influential false teacher becomes prominent? Not only are followers misled by their false doctrine, but they are also led astray in their behavior.

1 JOHN 3:10-18 – QUESTIONS

- 1. What is the connection between truth and love?
 - a. Does having the truth automatically mean that one will love?
 - b. Does not having the truth automatically mean that one will not love?
- 2. Why use Cain and Abel in this reference?
 - a. How was Cain evil and Abel righteous?
- 3. Verse 14 – How do we know that we have passed out of death into life?
- 4. Verse 10, 12, 15, 17 – Is the use of “his brother” a reference to a fellow believer?

1 JOHN – CHAPTER 3:10-18

Love as a Test Against the Antichrists

1 JOHN 3:10B – THE ONE WHO DOES NOT LOVE HIS BROTHER

This is an articular participle that identifies someone and equates them with being:

- A. A child of the devil
- B. Not of God

We are not going to rehash “child of the devil” except to say that this is an identification of the antichrists from Chapter 2, and this section places them in direct opposition with the children of God, the recipients of this letter.

Not of God - οὐκ ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ - ouk ek tou theou

Some have explained this verse by stating that the behavior of “not loving his brother” is “not sourced from God.” This may be a true statement, but is that what the author is communicating to the recipients of this letter?

The phrase “the one who does not love his brother” is not an activity but an identification. Therefore, the theological statement does not apply in this case. The antichrists are the ones, in this context, who are identified as “one who do not love their brother.”

Based on the context, the author states that these false teachers, these antichrists, have not lived up to the primary message that Jesus gave to the disciples: we should love one another.

However, we cannot use this as a test for salvation. The author is distinguishing between the false brethren who are of the darkness and the apostles who are of the light.

Let’s paint a picture.

The apostles, perhaps in particular John, have shared the message of the Gospel of Jesus, they have shared in the joy with these believers; they have served them with love and tears and have sacrificed time, resources, and perhaps health.

Now, from the apostolic community comes a group of false brethren, antichrists, with a message contrary to Jesus, saying that Jesus is not the Christ and that they are there to take from them, not give. That they are to serve themselves, not the brethren. These antichrists are there to lead them astray, and they have ulterior motives. This is nothing new:

Matthew 23:1-7, 11-12

John 8:43-47

2 Corinthians 11:7-15

Philippians 3:17-19

1 Timothy 1:5-7, 6:3-5

2 Peter 2:1-2