

# **I JOHN: A STUDY IN SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT**

## **IV. Discerning True And False Claims Of Fellowship**

(1 John 2:3-11)

### **I. Introduction**

- A. John wrote 1 John to counter heretical views (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 881), so the epistle provides discernment, and is thus “filled with contrasts – light and darkness (1:6-7; 2:8-11); love of world and love of God (2:15-17); children of God and children of the devil (3:4-10); the Spirit of God and the spirit of Antichrist (4:7-12, 16-21).” (Ryrie Study Bible KJV, 1978, “Introduction to the First Letter of John: Contents,” p. 1770)
- B. We view the epistle for much needed spiritual discernment in our own era, and we study John’s instruction on discerning true from false claims of fellowship in 1 John 2:3-11 for our insight, application and edification:

### **II. Discerning True And False Claims Of Fellowship, 1 John 2:3-11.**

- A. If we claim that we experientially know God but we disobey His commandments, we lie, and the truth is not in us, but if we obey His commandments, we experientially know Him, 1 John 2:3-4:
1. John claimed that we can experientially know (*ginoskomen*, present of *ginosko*, “come to know, experience,” Th. Dic. of the N. T., v. I, p. 689; U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 814) that we “have come to know” (*egnokamen*, perfect of *ginosko*) God by the fact that we obey His commandments, 1 John 2:3.
  2. However, if someone claims that he experientially “has come to know” (*egnoka*, perfect of *ginosko*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) God but does not obey Him, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him, 1 John 2:4.
- B. If we claim that God’s love is perfected in us but we disobey God’s Word, we lie, but if we obey God’s Word, His love is perfected in us, 1 John 2:5.
- C. If we claim to fellowship with God but we fail to live the righteousness of Christ in His earthly life, we lie, and do not fellowship with God, but if we live the righteousness of Christ’s life, we fellowship with God, v. 6.
- D. If we claim that we love God but we do not love fellow believers, we lie, and do not fellowship with God, but if we love fellow believers, we fellowship with the Lord, 1 John 2:7-9:
1. John prefaced his instruction on the test of loving fellow believers with a preface on the commandment that Jesus had given at the beginning, 1 John 2:7. That commandment is recorded in John 13:34-35 where before the cross, Jesus ordered His disciples to love one another as He had loved them.
  2. That initial commandment is repeated now as a new commandment in 1 John 2:8a in the sense that “it had not lost its freshness,” Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 889. John’s claim that the darkness is passing and the true light of God’s revelation is already shining indicates that this commandment to love fellow believers conforms to the “revelation of God in Christ,” 1 John 2:8b; Ibid., Ryrie, ftn. to 1 John 2:8.
  3. John then asserted that he who claimed to be in the light of God’s revealed truth, be it in Christ or in the Scriptures, but who hated his brother in Christ, was still in sinful spiritual darkness, 1 John 2:9.
- E. There are big contrasts in the *eventual results* of fellowshiping versus not fellowshiping with God, v. 10-11:
1. He who loves his brother in Christ remains in God’s revelation and fellowship, and there is nothing in him to make himself stumble into sin and its harmful effects, v. 10. (Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 890)
  2. However, he who hates his brother is not only in spiritual darkness outside of God’s revealed truth, but he orders his life outside of God’s revelation in Christ and Scripture, and he is not even “aware” (*oida*, Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T., p. 815; Ibid., Theol. Dict. of the N. T., vol. V, p. 116-119) where he is headed, for the darkness has blinded his spiritual perception, 1 John 2:11. Thus, the lack of God’s revelation in the outlook of one who is out of fellowship with God blocks his discernment so that he heads into great harm.

***Lesson:*** *To obey God’s Word is to fellowship with Him, but to disobey it is not to fellowship with Him. To obey God is to have His love perfected in us, but to disobey Him means that His love is not perfected in us. To fellowship with God means one lives the practical righteousness of Christ’s earthly life where not fellowshiping with Him means one fails to live that righteousness. Loving other believers indicates that one fellowships with God and thus has no inner stumblingblock that results in his spiritually harmful failure. However, not loving other believers means one is out of fellowship with God, that he is not even aware of this problematical state since the spiritual darkness has blinded his capacity to discern spiritual reality, and that to his future, great, spiritual harm.*

***Application:*** *(1) May we apply these tests to our walk and repent if needed to avoid great harm. (2) If we discern that we pass these tests as those who fellowship with the Lord, (a) may we rejoice in God’s approval of our walk and (b) rest assured that His revelation in Christ and in Scripture provides nurturing protection in our walk.*