

society, many held the view that the future was left to chance. For example, Plutarch wrote:

... yet the future may be prevented by Fortune, while the present cannot be taken away; nevertheless these men cast aside the present gift of Fortune as something alien to them, while they dream of the future and its uncertainties.¹

But we know of certainty that God is in control of all things, and that our times and our lives are in His hands. Moreover, we know that eternal life is promised to all who are in Messiah, for Yeshua taught this as did His disciples.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (Jn 5:24)

For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day. (Jn 6:40)

My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. (Jn 10:27-28)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Lord. (Rom 6:23)

Of this we may be certain: God keeps His promises. What is more, the phrase “eternal life” in our verse is more literally rendered from the Greek as “the eternal life,” having the definite article (τὴν ζῶην τὴν αἰώνιον). John intends us to know that this is eternal life which only God can give, and it is only available through the work of His Son, Yeshua.

26–27 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

The verb ἔγραψα (*egraspa*) in v. 26 is in the aorist tense, and thus the NASB translates “I have written” rather than “I am writing.” But this

1 Plutarch, *Parallel Lives*, Marius 46.2–4.

particular use of the aorist tense is common in letter writing, for by the time the recipients receive the letter, the writing itself will have been completed. This is traditionally referred to as the “epistolary aorist.” Thus the ESV rightly translates “I write these things to you...” and the NIV translates “I am writing these things to you...” The point is simply this: when John uses the “epistolary aorist,” he is not referring to a previous epistle or letter which he has written. He is using the customary way of referring to that which he is currently writing to them and which they will receive in due time.

John has already made it clear to his readers that he was not writing to them because he felt they had not yet received the truth, for their remaining steadfast in the very gospel they had received was proof that they were abiding in the truth. In 2:13-14 John states that he was writing to them because they “know the Father” and because “they know Him Who is from the beginning.”

Now, in these final verses of this paragraph, John makes it clear that he is also writing to them to warn them about those who were trying to “deceive them.” This both sums up the current paragraph and forms a bridge to the next section of the epistle in which he continues to admonish them, and us, not to be deceived (3:7).

The word “deceive” in English carries with it a specific motive of someone who is purposefully intending to perpetrate a lie and present it as the truth. However, the Greek word in our text, which is translated as “deceive,” is *πλανᾶω* (*planaō*) which can also carry the sense of “wander” or “to take the wrong way.” Thus one can be “self-deceived,” meaning that one takes the wrong path but is not aware of doing so. Indeed, deception, by its very nature, is that condition when one is certain he or she has chosen the way of truth when in reality they have erred and followed that which is false.

It is very likely, then, that those who were trying to “deceive” the recipients of John’s epistle were not seeking to persuade them to accept something they knew was false. Rather, they were quite convinced that they had the truth and that they were therefore doing a favor to the community to which John writes, to turn them away from John’s gospel message (which in their minds was false teaching) and toward the truth as they defined it.

This very admonition which John gives in these verses pertains directly to believers in every era. False teachers who are themselves deceived and think that their errant teaching is actually the genuine truth are the best at persuading others to follow them in their errant ways. We see this in current trends in our day and even particularly in the current “messianic movement.” Self-appointed teachers, often who

have very little if any biblical training, find novel (even if unwarranted) interpretations of the Scriptures, form new doctrines and practices, and persuade others that their insights are true and gain them as followers of their errant concepts and teachings.

Thus, those who are “trying to deceive you” (περι τῶν πλανώντων ὑμᾶς) are those who have denied that Yeshua is the Messiah and who are offering what they consider to be substantial arguments to sustain their anti-messiah perspective.

Yeshua warned us that such would take place in the eras subsequent to His ascension:

As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, “Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” And Yeshua answered and said to them, “See to it that no one misleads you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will mislead many. (Matt 24:3-5)

As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you – What, then, does John offer as the means by which such deception can be known, avoided, and even exposed and defeated? Clearly it is to know the truth as God has revealed it to us, and to apply the truth to our lives as the Spirit Himself gives us His divine direction. Here we see that though the anointing they have received enables them to stand against deceptive teaching, it is still required that they prepare themselves and be ready to do spiritual battle with the deceivers in order to expose their lies.

As John has already noted in v. 20 of this chapter,¹ the “anointing” which they have received is the very presence of the Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit, Who indwells every believer, guides them, empowers them, convicts of sin and purifies them, and strengthens them to grow in the grace and knowledge of Yeshua, so their lives are more and more conformed to Him.² Primarily, the work of the Ruach in this anointing is to apply the truth of the Scriptures to the life of the believer so that God’s ways more and more become the pattern in all areas of the believer’s life. Thus, it must become the regular practice of the believer to

1 See the remarks on v. 20 above for a more full exposition of the “anointing” as the presence of the Spirit in the life of every believer.

2 Note John’s references to the Ruach HaKodesh in the latter part of this epistle: 1John 3:24; 4:2; 5:6, 8.

constantly be feeding upon the word of God, for it is the word of God in the heart of the believer that the Spirit uses to lead, protect, strengthen, and mature one's life of faith.

This is precisely what Yeshua promised to His disciples in describing the work of the Spirit to establish the truth:

But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you. (Jn 14:26)

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. (Jn 16:13)

Paul emphasizes this same truth in regard to the Ruach Who indwells every believer:

However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Messiah, he does not belong to Him. If Messiah is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness. . . . So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh — for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Rom 8:9–10, 12–14)

and you have no need for anyone to teach you; – This statement must obviously be understood and interpreted with the immediate context. John is not teaching that once a person comes to faith and is thereby endowed with the indwelling Spirit of God (Ruach Elohim), he or she suddenly knows everything necessary and is no longer in need of teaching. Indeed, John, in writing this very epistle, is functioning as a teacher for those who were to receive it. Rather, what John is emphasizing is that in the core issue of Yeshua, that He is the Messiah promised and prophesied by Israel's prophets, the one and only Son of God and Savior of sinners, they need no one to teach them this core truth. For not only have they fully received this teaching from John and others, they have likewise demonstrated that they have been born again by receiving the truth about Yeshua and committing themselves to Him in faith.

In fact, the words John uses here are reminiscent of the language of

Jeremiah in his prophecy of the New Covenant.

“They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know ADONAI,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares ADONAI, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (Jer 31:34)

Thus, the believers to whom John writes do not require someone to teach them about *Who the Messiah is*, for they “all know Him” in truth, that is, they all have confessed Him to be their Messiah and Savior and have demonstrated that their faith is genuine by remaining firm in their faith and confession of Yeshua.

But even as Yeshua commanded His disciples to “make disciples of all the nations,” He also added “teaching them to observe all that I commanded you” (Matt 28:19–20). This commandment to teach those who become disciples of Yeshua was not something only the Twelve were to do, for the requirement to make disciples of all the nations was not completed by them but will be completed by the subsequent generations of Yeshua’s disciples. Thus, as we apply John’s words to our own lives, we recognize how important it is to study the Scriptures, to apply them to our own lives, and to teach others as well.

Such learning and being taught in the truth of the Scriptures through the work of the Ruach is not accomplished only at the individual level but necessarily involves participation within a believing community. As F. F. Bruce notes:

It is within the fellowship that the Spirit operates; it is there that He teaches the people of God. So Paul prays that those who are inwardly strengthened by the Spirit of Christ “may have power to comprehend *with all the saints* what is the breadth and length and height and depth” (Eph 3:18).¹

Indeed, neither Yeshua nor the Apostles ever envisioned the making of disciples as taking place on a purely individual basis. The work of the Ruach in maturing believers in their faith is inextricably bound to the gathered body of believers. Yeshua promised to build His *ekklesia*, His “assembly,” promising its success even against the “gates of hell” (Matt 16:18). His *ekklesia*, then, must be an essential part of the commission He gave to His disciples to make disciples from every nation. Paul likewise sees the body of Messiah, the *ekklesia*, as the place

1 F. F. Bruce, *1John*, p. 76 (emphasis his).

in which, through the interworking of each member, each believer is enabled to grow in becoming more and more like Yeshua.

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Messiah; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Messiah. (Eph 4:11–13)

...but as His anointing teaches you about all things, – Once again, the “anointing” to which John refers is the abiding presence of the Ruach HaKodesh within the individual believer and thus within the gathered body of Messiah. Since it is the work of the Spirit to make Yeshua known, His leading will always be to glorify Yeshua. Thus, all who are led by the Spirit will abide in Yeshua, that is, will remain firm in their faith in Yeshua and will grow and mature in that faith and produce the inevitable fruit of righteousness which saving faith yields (Gal 5:22–23). Once again, John is building upon the very words of Yeshua which he recorded in his Gospel account:

But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you. (Jn 16:13–14)

and is true and is not a lie, – Further, since the Ruach always leads and prompts in accordance with the Scripture that He inspired, one can be assured that the leading of the Spirit is according to truth and not error, i.e., His anointing “is true and is not a lie.” One of the litmus tests by which the leading of the Spirit is known, is that His leading will always be in line with what the Scriptures teach, and will always give Yeshua the honor and glory He deserves. In short, the leading of the Spirit is always in direct opposition to the spirit of antichrist.

and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him. – The precise translation of this final clause of v. 27 is a bit ambiguous. The verb ἐδίδαξεν (*edidak-sen*, aor. 3rd p.s., “to teach”) could refer either to the word “anointing” or to the “Spirit.” The NASB takes it as referring to the “anointing,” thus the translation “just as it has taught you.” The HCSB takes “Spirit”

to be the subject of the verb, and thus translates “just as He has taught you.” But since the “anointing” of which John writes is the “anointing of and by the Ruach,” the meaning of both is essentially the same. Since, however, the subject of the previous clause is the word “anointing,” it makes sense that John would carry this through for the final clause as well.

Regardless, the primary emphasis is upon the abiding presence of the Ruach within the believer and thus the believer is divinely anointed to bear the testimony of Yeshua and to sanctify Him as Lord, Savior, and Messiah to a watching world. This is done first and foremost by “abiding in Him,” that is, remaining steadfast in our confession of faith centered in Yeshua, and thereby seeking to walk as He walked, as John has taught us at the beginning of this chapter (2:6),

the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. (1Jn 2:6)

28 Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

As noted above, verses 28–29 not only conclude the current paragraph but also form a bridge to the next chapter. Verse 28 summarizes with the repeated admonition to “abide in Him,” but then introduces the eschatological hope of Yeshua’s return, which thus moves forward to emphasize the believer’s diligence in living out his or her faith in righteousness, not only to be a witness to others of their salvation in Yeshua but also of His abiding presence through the indwelling Ruach. One is reminded of Luke’s account regarding Peter and John:

Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Yeshua. (Acts 4:13)

May this likewise be the case in our lives, that people who are acquainted with us and have occasion to observe how we live, will recognize that we “abide in Him”—that our manner of living portrays the righteousness which He exemplifies.

Not only are we motivated from the heart to “abide in Him” because He has redeemed us from the curse of sin and given us a life of hope, joy, and fellowship with Him, but we also have the sure hope of His return, and we therefore are to be diligent to always be ready for

His return and thus to welcome Him as our reigning King and Lord. John began this epistle by describing himself as an eyewitness of the incarnate Messiah:

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life (1Jn 1:1)

And here, at the end of this second chapter, the Apostle writes of Yeshua's sure return, and he will repeat this emphasis in 3:2. Thus, our fellowship with the Son (1:3) consists not only of the spiritual exercise of prayer, meditation upon the word of God, and fellowship with other believers, but also finds its fulfillment in the physical return of our Messiah, Yeshua. Therefore, John admonishes us to keep our eyes and hearts fixed upon the sure hope of His return so that when He comes, He will find us abiding in Him by walking in righteousness, that is, walking as He walked.

John here teaches us that we are to be confident (*παρρησία*, *parrēsia*) in respect to Yeshua's return. The word *parrēsia* can also carry the sense of "boldness" and this is the same word found in Acts 4:13, quoted above. Because Peter and John had "been with Yeshua," they were bold in their testimony for Him. For in the verses just prior (Acts 4:11–12), they had stated to the rulers, elders, and scribes gathered in Jerusalem, that Yeshua was the only path of salvation and righteous standing before the Father.

He is the STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED by you, THE BUILDERS, but WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER stone. And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved. (Acts 4:11-12)

Thus, the confidence or boldness of which John writes in our text means that believers in Yeshua "readily, frankly, and boldly speak about their Lord and Savior."¹

29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.

Whether the pronouns "He" and "Him" in this verse refer to Yeshua or to the Father is somewhat debated among the commentators,² but in

1 Kistemaker, *1John*, p. 288.

2 Kistemaker, *Ibid.*, holds the view that v. 29 looks forward to the

the final analysis, the oneness of the Father and Son makes the question moot. It is true that in the Scriptures we are met with the phrase “sons of God” and never “sons of Messiah,” and it may therefore be that the “Father” / “Son” metaphor is in John’s mind. Even as the Son came to make the Father known, and lived in complete righteousness having come from the Father Who is righteous, so believers also have their spiritual rebirth from the Father, through the Son, applied by the Spirit. And as a result, we are sons and daughters who reflect God’s righteousness in our day to day living. This means that we seek forgiveness when we sin; that we do all in our power to make things right when we have caused wrong; and that we discipline ourselves to walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh. We strive to be known as people who do God’s will, who obey His commandments, who, by loving Him, likewise love our neighbor.

John speaks here of the primary characteristic of one’s life. This is evident from the present participle John uses in the phrase “everyone also who practices (literally “does”) righteousness.” The present participle *ποιῶν* (*poiōn*) indicates a “general characteristic,” something that regularly characterizes one’s life. Thus the NASB has “who practices righteousness.” In this way, John frames this chapter by concluding it with the same theme with which he began:

By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. (1Jn 2:3–6)

following verses, and thus opts for “He” and “Him” signifying “the Father.” See Brown, *NIDNTT*, 3.362 who takes them to be speaking of Yeshua.