

A¹ Whoever believes that Yeshua is the Messiah (5:1a)

B¹ is born of God (5:1b)

C¹ loves those born of the Father. (5:1c)

D¹ this is the love of God that we keep His commandments (5:3a)

D² His commandments are not burdensome (5:3b)

C² loves the children of God (5:2)

B² everyone born of God (5:4)

A² the one who believes that Yeshua is the Son of God (5:5)

If the center of the chiasm (C¹+D¹/D²+ C²) is the focal point (as is often the case in this type of literary construction), then John is emphasizing that love for God and for each other is at the center of a genuine life of faith in Messiah Yeshua, and that such love, both for God and for one's fellow believers, is the fruit of obeying God's commandments.

1 Whoever believes that Yeshua is the Messiah is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.

Whoever believes that Yeshua is the Messiah – John is reiterating what he has emphasized throughout this epistle, that accepting by faith that Yeshua is the promised Messiah of the prophets and that being the Son of God, He alone is able to effect eternal atonement for sin is the only possible way for a sinner to stand righteous before God and to be received by Him into eternal life.

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Yeshua is the Messiah? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son. (1Jn 2:22)

By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Yeshua Messiah has come in the flesh is from God; (1Jn 4:2)

We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Yeshua is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. (1Jn 4:14–15)

Indeed, this central truth, that Yeshua is the Messiah, the Son of God, and the reality of His incarnation, that He came "in the flesh," is where John begins this epistle, for he testifies as an eyewitness of Yeshua, of His words, His miracles, His death, and His resurrection.

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 — and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us ... (1Jn 1:1-2)

Our verse opens with a clause that functions as the subject of the verb “is born,”¹ (Πᾶς ὁ πιστεύων ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ Χριστὸς). While the first word in the clause (Πᾶς, *pas*) is singular and could be taken as a collective singular, thus giving the sense of “all those who believe,” it seems warranted to note that the singular could just as well be putting stress upon the personal aspect of salvation. The translation could thus be: “Each one who believes that Yeshua is the Messiah is born of God.” This emphasizes that salvation in Yeshua, through the saving work He wrought by His death, resurrection, ascension and continues to secure through His intercession, is clearly a one-to-one reality in which the individual believer has died with Messiah and risen to new life in Him (cf. Rom 6:3–5). While there is clearly a corporate reality to our eternal salvation, for we have become part of the “body of Messiah” (Eph 4:14–16), this “body of Messiah” is made up of individuals who have a personal, one-to-one relationship with God through Yeshua and the Spirit.

Whoever [Each one who] believes... – The Greek word translated “believes” (ὁ πιστεύων, *ho pisteuōn*) is a present participle which denotes the regular and ongoing character of the person, or to say it another way, faith is that which characterizes the overall life of a true believer. And genuine faith, faith that is the means by which the salvific work of Yeshua is applied to the elect, is a faith that is evident via a life of obedience to God, a life lived out in accordance with His righteous standards. As Bruce notes:

In the Johannine writings this means more than assenting to the proposition that Jesus is the promised Messiah; it means personal faith in Him, personal union with Him, who has been revealed ‘in the flesh’ (4:2) as the Christ and Son of God.²

As noted above, union with Messiah means union with Him in His death and in His resurrection, so that one has died to the old life and has been born again or recreated into a new life. This is the very thing

1 (γενένηται, *gegennētai* < γίνομαι, *ginomai* “to come into being through process of birth or natural production, be born, be produced,” *BDAG* “γίνομαι.”

2 F. F. Bruce, *1John*, p. 116.

James emphasizes in his epistle when he writes:

For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead. (James 2:26)

...*that Yeshua is the Messiah* – That the Greek includes the article, “the Messiah” (ὁ Χριστός, *ho Christos*), points to the irrefutable fact that Yeshua is the Messiah prophesied by Israel’s prophets, Who would bear the sins of His people, giving His life for their redemption and salvation, and Who would, in His resurrection, be satisfied that His saving acts were successful in procuring eternal salvation for all whom the Father had given to Him (cf. Is 53:1–11; Jn 6:39; 17:2, 24).

This statement by John, as well as those similar statements in the previous chapters of this epistle (cf. 2:22; 4:2–3), have direct application to those in our day who teach that religiously observant Jews have obtained salvation even though they outwardly deny Yeshua to be the promised Messiah.¹ While this may be motivated by a “love for the Jewish people,” it is absolutely contrary to the message of the Scriptures, including our current text. A genuine love for those who are lost in their sin is to give them the good news of the Gospel as it is centered in the work of Yeshua the Messiah. For the Gospel is the “power of God resulting in salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.” (Rom 1:16)

...*is born of God* – The Greek verb translated “born” (γενένηται, *gengenētai*) is in the perfect tense, which indicates an event that took place at a point in time, but which continues on in the course of time to be evident and active. Thus, though the sovereign work of God in respect to salvation began in eternity past, the application of His sovereign design is worked out in the course of human history, as each of those whom He draws to Himself is brought to repentance and exercises personal faith in Yeshua.

The metaphor of physical birth is regularly used to describe the process of eternal salvation of those who believe in Yeshua, and the metaphor is obvious in its import. Birth is the beginning of life and it necessarily begins before the existence of the one being born. To be “born of God” (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γενένηται) means to “be born by God’s power and activity.” Or to take the metaphor further, “to be born of God” means to be spiritually procreated by Him. Even as a human child cannot be conceived apart from a father, so no one is able to come into the family of God—to

1 See further comments on this subject above, in the commentary on 1Jn 2:22.

become a child of God—apart from God having initiated that process. And this is precisely John’s emphasis in this verse. The one who believes that “Yeshua is the Messiah,” has come to this faith because God has initiated spiritual life, drawing that person to Him through the sovereignty of His grace. In this regard Boice writes:

We believe, and, in fact, do everything else of a spiritual nature precisely because we have first been made alive.¹

The words of Calvin emphasize the same point:

Hence the Apostle declares that all they who really believe have been born of God; for faith is far above the reach of the human mind, so that we must be drawn to Christ by our heavenly Father; for not any of us can ascend to him by his own strength. And this is what the Apostle teaches us in his Gospel, when he says, that those who believe in the name of the only-begotten, were not born of blood nor of the flesh. (Jn 1:13).²

Obviously, then, those who are “born of God” may rightly address Him as “Father” and view themselves as His “children.” This gives way to viewing the community of believers in Yeshua, the ekklesia He promised to build (Matt 16:18) as the “household of God.”

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God’s household, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, is growing into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Eph 2:19–22)

For John, as well as for all of the other Apostles, all who are truly born from above and have thereby placed their faith in Yeshua as their Messiah and Savior, are children with the same Father, each one being born of Him. And as children in His family, all have equal access to Him through Yeshua and all have the abiding Ruach HaKodesh to enable them to persevere in their faith and to grow in likeness to Yeshua, walking in His footsteps.

... and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. – Some have

1 James Montgomery Boice, *The Epistles of John* (Zondervan, 1979), p. 153.

2 John Calvin, *1John*, p. 251.

taken the singular “child” to refer to Yeshua, and thus the meaning: “whoever loves the Father loves His Son, Yeshua also.”¹ But the next verse would give strong evidence against such an interpretation, for in v. 2 the plural “children” is used, and this is clearly parallel to, and reinforcement of, the phrase in our verse. Thus, even as the verse begins by referring to individuals in their personal faith in Yeshua, so in this final clause the singular “child” refers to individual believers. We could paraphrase: “and each one who loves the Father has a commitment to love one another as well.”

Here John links faith and love. Anyone who has been born of God has been transformed, made new with a life that seeks to give allegiance to God Who has rescued the sinner and transformed them by means of having died with Messiah and risen with Him to a new life. Thus, saving faith produces a genuine love for God, a love that is a commitment of life to honor and serve Him with all of one’s heart, soul, and might.

As Calvin notes:

He confirms by another reason, that faith and brotherly love are united; for since God regenerates us by faith he must necessarily be loved by us as a Father; and this love embraces all his children. Then faith cannot be separated from love.²

John’s point is obvious: if we have come to love God for all of the bounty of grace and mercy He has given to us, then most assuredly the love of God enables us to love others who are our sisters and brothers in the family of God. This, of course, has been a regular theme in 1John, being once again emphasized in this verse, that an essential mark of truly possessing eternal salvation is an evident love for fellow believers. And it seems evident that John’s teaching on this point goes back to the very words of Yeshua Himself.

By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. (Jn 13:35).

2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.

As noted above, the singular “child” in the previous verse is here further explicated by the plural “children” as referring to believers in general, i.e., those who make up the body of Messiah. To “love the chil-

1 Note Augustine, *Ten Homilies on 1John*, Homily 10.2.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 250.

dren of God” means to love in word as well as in action. And such actions of love are here defined by the Apostle as obeying God’s commandments.

John states that “we know that we love...when we observe His commandments.” In other words, there is no need to go about telling people how much we love God and love others, for if we love God and others, our actions will prove it, and thus such love will be evident to all. This is not to diminish the value and importance of public praise for God’s greatness and the bounty of His grace and mercy toward His children, but it is to fall back upon that old adage: “actions speak louder than words.”

So John is giving us a litmus test by which we each can assess the level of our own love for God and for others, and this test is focused upon obedience of His commandments as a primary characteristic of our lives. Bruce puts it well when he writes:

It is easier to deceive ourselves in these matters than it is to deceive others. If we tell them that “we love God,” they will look for some visible evidence; we should look for some visible evidence ourselves. If the visible evidence is forthcoming, it will not be necessary to say that “we love God,”; the evidence will say so more convincingly.¹

Here, as often in the Scriptures, the concept of “love” carries the sense of commitment to a covenant relationship. To have been born by God means that we have come into a covenant relationship with Him, a relationship in which we seek to obey His commandments, one of which is to love one another. Thus, this love is action-oriented, observing the commandments which affect one another, and seeking to help each other live according to God’s righteous ways, walking in the footsteps of our Messiah, Yeshua.

Here, again, we see that John is reinforcing the same lessons he taught us in chapter four.

The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. (1Jn 4:8)

We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. (1Jn 4:16)

We love, because He first loved us. (1Jn 4:19)

1 F. F. Bruce, *1John*, pp. 116-17.