

sanctify His Name in the world, and to live as witnesses for Him and for His truth, will be rewarded by the Lord Himself in the world to come. Yet even these rewards are a matter of His grace, for apart from Him and His Spirit within us, we could do nothing. Even as the 24 elders are pictured by John in Revelation as casting their golden crowns before the throne, and proclaiming

Worthy are You, our Lord and our God, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and because of Your will they existed, and were created. (Rev 4:10)

so all who make up the redeemed people of God will affirm that whatever rewards we receive for laboring in His vineyard, are tokens of His free and sovereign grace.

Clearly those who have left the community, denied the reality of Yeshua's incarnation and thus denied Him, have no reward in the world to come but only eternal punishment. But those who have been born again by the power of God's Spirit are those who will continue to persevere in their faith and will continue to be witnesses of His greatness. Yet we must persevere, and we must encourage one another in the life of faith which we share. Indeed, perseverance is the inevitable product of saving faith, but it is also true that perseverance in faith is a cooperative work between God and those He has redeemed. "Persevere we must; persevere we will."

John's exhortation, which is in concert with the whole of Scripture, is that as children of God, we must take seriously the grand privilege we have of being the bearers of His saving grace to a watching world.

9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Messiah, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

The situation which was occurring in the community to which John addresses his epistles was this: some who had initially confessed Yeshua to be the promised Messiah and therefore the One and only One through Whom eternal salvation is possible, had been persuaded by false teachers that there was a more advanced knowledge of God which had been hidden from them. Once they came to accept this more advanced knowledge, obtainable only from teachers who had this special insight into the truth about God, they would realize that their initial confession of faith in Yeshua was ill-founded, and would abandon it, leaving their ignorance behind and advancing into the true knowledge

about God.

Anyone who goes too far... – It seems obvious that such an abandonment of the truth about Yeshua and a willingness to follow the false teachers is what John describes in the opening words of our verse, Πᾶς ὁ προάγων (*pas ho proagōn*), translated by the NASB as “Anyone who goes too far.”

The opening word Πᾶς (*pas*) often carries the sense of “all,” and when speaking of people, “everyone.” But it can also carry the sense of “each one,” and this may be the emphasis John desires as he warns those who make up the community, that each one of them must be aware of false teachers and not fall prey to their false doctrines. Yet, as we have seen in the previous verses, there is also a responsibility within the community to guard each other and to help one another remain firm in the truth as taught by Yeshua and His Apostles. So while there is clearly an individual responsibility to remain steadfast in the truth, there is also a need to express love to one another by carefully yet diligently guarding each other from any false teaching which might snare a fellow believer and turn him or her from the truth.

John speaks of the one who “goes too far” (ὁ προάγων, *ho proagōn*). The Greek word translated here as “go too far,” προάγω (*proagō*) often means simply “to lead,” “go before,” “lead the way,” “precede,” “to take charge.”¹ But what this would mean in the context of our verses seems a bit illusive, and it appears that later scribes likewise found the meaning of *proagō* difficult, for some of them substituted παραβαινων (*parabainōn*)² which carries the sense of “to go astray,” “to transgress or break.” All of the Syriac manuscripts have ܥܒܪܐ (עבר), which can generally have the sense of “to cross over” but also can mean “to transgress.”³

Therefore, the context of our verse would surely warrant interpreting the phrase “to go too far” to mean “to go beyond the boundaries of established doctrine,”⁴ that is, beyond what the Messiah Himself taught, and what was carried forward by His Apostles. This of course would include all of the Scriptures then extant in the early 1st Century, that is, the Tanach. For Yeshua Himself based His own teachings upon the Tanach and attested to the fact that the Tanach was the foundation upon which all subsequent divine revelation would be established and thereby known to be authentic (cf. Matt 5:17–20).

1 See BDAG, “προάγω,” p. 864.

2 P Ψ 33. 1739 ℣ sy

3 See Schmidt, “προάγω” in TDNT, 1.130; Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary* (Eisenbrauns, 1998), p. 399.

4 Kistemaker, 2John, p. 382.

In fact, “going too far” is what these false teachers had done, for if, in fact, they were those who had imbibed the heresy of early, nascent Gnosticism, they had put themselves forward as having gone beyond the Apostolic teaching to a greater, spiritual understanding of spiritual things. They were telling their followers that they had received great wisdom and knowledge which allowed them to have “the truth” which the Apostles themselves lacked. And, of course, this all related to the very person and work of Yeshua.

But this is nothing new. Indeed, from the very beginning of time, the enemy of our souls has sought to persuade people that the Bible is not enough—that there are essential truths which can only be found by going beyond the Scriptures to the mystical and hidden teaching of this “great teacher” or that one. And of course, we find the same thing happening in the Messianic movement, where those who have put themselves forward as teachers are seeking to tickle the ears of their followers with “truths never before known” or “just revealed in our time.” John exhorts us with words written and inspired thousands of years ago, not to be fooled by such tactics but to remain steadfast in holding the word of God, the Scriptures, to be our final authority in all matters relating to our faith and *halachah*.

... and does not abide in the teaching of Messiah – The concept of “abiding” (Greek μένω, *menō*) is something John uses often. The verb *menō* is found 24 times in 1John and three times in 2John. We’ve already encountered the first occurrence in v. 2, and the other two are in our verse, v. 9. When John uses the concept of “abiding,” he is emphasizing that the very character of true, saving faith is that it produces perseverance. The “abiding” presence of the Spirit of God (Ruach Elohim) within every true believer is the very seal of God Himself, a seal that remains and secures abiding faith even unto the return of Yeshua. Paul speaks of this reality in his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians:

In Him [Yeshua], you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge (ἀρραβών)¹ of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory. (Eph 1:13–14)

Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. (Eph 4:30)

1 This is a Greek loanword from the Hebrew עֲרָבוֹן. Note Gen 38:17–20 in which the Hebrew עֲרָבוֹן (*‘eirabōn*, “pledge,” “down payment”) is translated in the Lxx by ἀρραβών, *arrabōn*.

The metaphor of “being sealed” (σφραγίζω, *sphragizō*) comes from the ancient practice of a seal being impressed into damp clay and then attached to authenticate a document or other legal item and to keep it from being altered. Thus, when God puts His seal upon the believer, He is claiming that person for Himself and thereby committing His sovereign and omnipotent power to keep that person for eternity. Thus, those who have “gone too far,” are those who have left the truth of the Gospel and thus denied Yeshua. By this they demonstrate that they never had saving faith, but only an outward confession without a true, inward work of the Ruach by Whom abiding faith is maintained.

...in the teaching of Messiah – Note carefully that the one who abides in the truth of the Gospel has the teaching of Messiah as the central and core issue. One question that immediately arises is whether the genitive “of Messiah” (οῦ Χριστοῦ) should be understood as an objective or a subjective genitive. Is John talking of teaching *about* Messiah or of the teaching which Messiah Himself taught?

It seems best to understand John to be emphasizing the teaching which is found in the very person of Yeshua as the incarnate Son of God, as well as His teaching in word and His works which have been transmitted by His Apostles as they were borne along by the Ruach in their writings (1Pet 1:21). This is the argument of the author of Hebrews:

how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation? After it was at the first spoken through the Lord, it was confirmed to us by those who heard, God also testifying with them, both by signs and wonders and by various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit according to His own will. (Heb 2:3–4)

And note these parallels:

So Yeshua answered them and said, “My teaching is not Mine, but His who sent Me. If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know of the teaching, whether it is of God or whether I speak from Myself. (Jn 7:16–17)

Since the fulness of Deity dwells in the incarnate Yeshua (Col 2:9), it is clear that Yeshua’s coming to earth is the ultimate, complete, and final revelation of the Father. Once again, the author of Hebrews emphasizes this:

God, after He spoke long ago to the fathers in the prophets in many portions and in many ways, in these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things,

through whom also He made the world. And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. (Heb 1:1–3a)

... *does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.* – Thus, when John speaks of those who have denied Yeshua and have “gone too far,” he is actually challenging their contemptuous attitude revealed by their arrogant claims to have attained greater knowledge through teachings that went beyond that of Yeshua and His apostles. As Stott states:

They claimed to have “go-ahead” views, a superior *gnōsis*, which had enabled them to advance beyond the rudiments of the faith in which the common herd were content to “abide.” John refers sarcastically to their claim. They had indeed “gone ahead”. They had advanced so far that they had left God behind them!¹

The primary point is this: as the true child of God advances in his or her knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures, this will only strengthen their resolve to remain steadfast in the fundamental teachings of God, which always center in the person and work of Yeshua (cf. Col 1:18). To think that one could have advanced knowledge of God while at the same time deny the central place of God’s Son, Yeshua, is to give in to the lies of the devil, the very spirit of anti-Messiah.

So in our text, John is once again reiterating what he taught in his first epistle, that if one denies the Son of God, that person also denies the One Who sent Him, i.e., the Father.

Who is the liar but the one who denies that Yeshua is the Messiah? This is the anti-Messiah, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also. (1Jn 2:22–23)

Notice that in this final phrase of our verse, John refers to the one who abides in “the teaching,” which parallels the previous phrase “the teaching of Messiah.” This emphasizes the essentials, the foundational truths of the Gospel and of the self-revelation of God in Messiah.

John is not teaching that the believer in Yeshua is to remain content with the first-steps of faith or to consider growing in the knowledge

1 Stott, *2John*, p. 211.

of God and His self-revelation as unimportant or even wrong. Rather, John is teaching us that as we grow in our faith, our understanding and appreciation of the fundamental truths, the foundation of our faith, will grow and our resolve to abide by faith in these truths will be strengthened more and more.

The words of Peter speak to this very subject:

You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard so that you are not carried away by the error of unprincipled men and fall from your own steadfastness, but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Yeshua Messiah. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen. (2Pet 3:17–18)

Once again, John has made it amply clear that one cannot think to have a genuine relationship with God the Father if one denies or refuses to confess Yeshua to be the very Son of God, the only Savior sent by the Father to redeem all who will be saved. And John is simply teaching what Yeshua Himself taught. Speaking to His disciples He said:

The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me. (Lk 10:16)

He who hates Me hates My Father also. (Jn 15:23)¹

10–11 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.

The Greek construction of the opening clause gives the sense that John expects false teachers will continue to visit the community to which he writes, with the purpose of seeking to lead people into their errant ways.² He therefore gives the community warning and direction

1 The use of the word “hate” (μισέω, *miseō*) in this verse no doubt answers to the use of the Hebrew word שָׂנֵא (*sānaʾ*, “to hate”) in covenant contexts, which is opposite of אָהַב (*ʾāhav*, “to love”). “Hate” is to despise the covenant, while “to love” is to remain loyal to the covenant.

2 εἰ + indicative verb indicates a 1st class condition, which presumes a real event in the protasis and the required action in the apodosis.