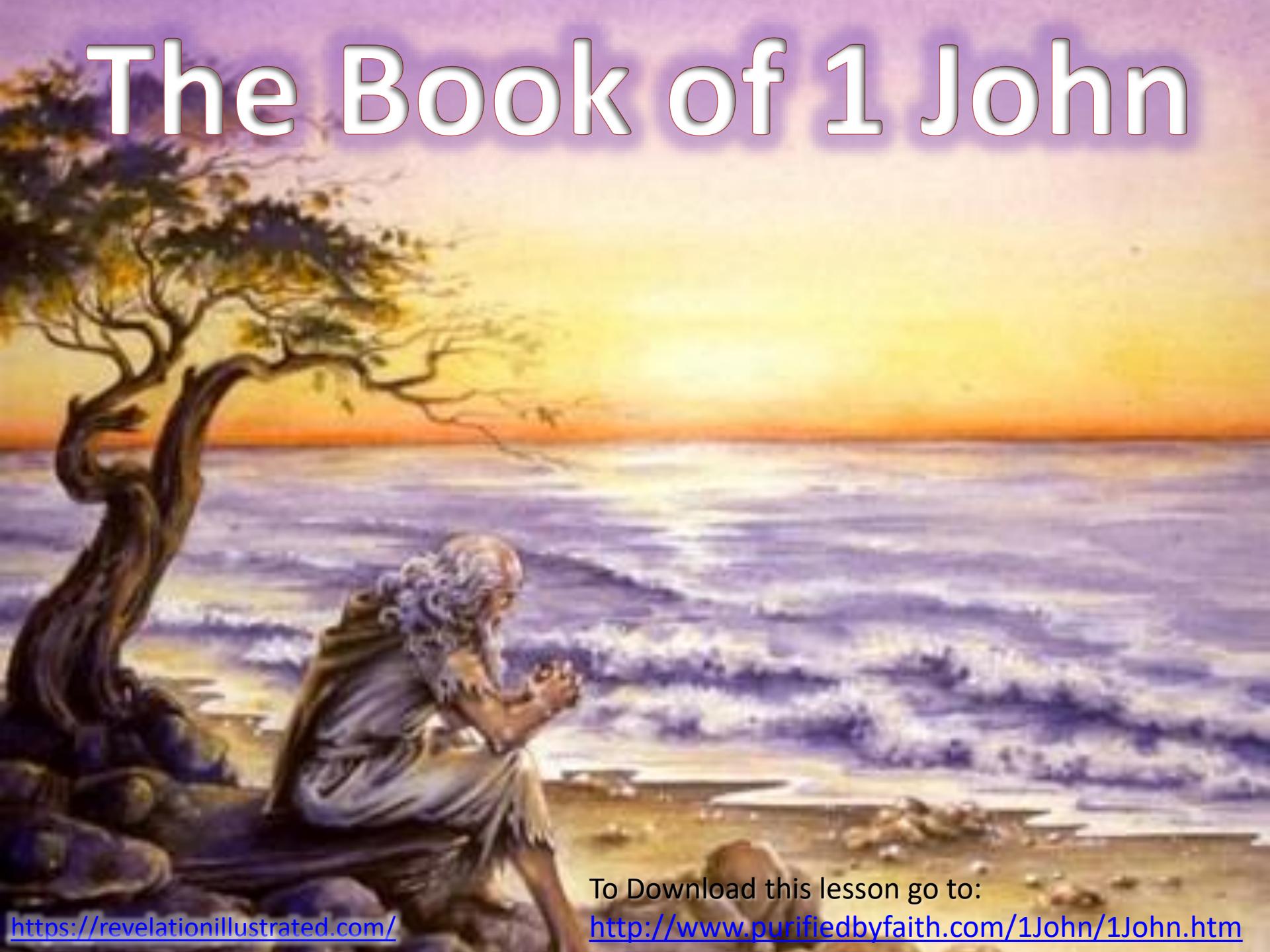


The Book of 1 John



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1 John 1:5 – 2:28

The *First* Presentation of
the Three Themes of
RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE
and **BELIEF** in Jesus

To Download this lesson go to:

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Outline of 1 John

- 1:1-4 - *Prologue: John Introduces the Major Theme of the Letter - FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD*
- 1:5-2:28 - *The First Presentation of the Three Themes of RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE and BELIEF in Jesus*
- 2:29-4:6 - *The Second Presentation of the Three Themes of RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE and BELIEF in Jesus*
- 4:7-5:21 - *The Third Presentation of the Three Themes of RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE and BELIEF in Jesus*

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1 John 1:5-7

Walking in the Light

5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

In verse 5, John identifies the fundamental ***message*** which he, along with the other apostles, had received from Jesus Christ and were proclaiming, namely *that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.*

5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.

(1 John 1:5-7)

God is Light

- When I hear John saying “*God is light*”, one of the first things that come to *my* mind is the number of times God is accompanied by ***radiant light*** when He makes an appearance in scripture:
 - **Ezekiel 1:27b-28a** - *I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness around him... Such was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the LORD.*
 - **Matthew 17:2** - *And [Jesus] was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light.*
 - **Acts 9:3** - *Now as [Paul] went on his way, he approached Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.*
 - **Revelation 1:14-16** - *The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace... his face was like the sun shining in full strength.*
- Paul tells us in 1 Timothy 6:16 that God “*dwells in unapproachable light*”

God is Light

- Although light often *accompanies* the *appearance* of God in scripture, in this passage John is actually *equating* God to light.
- The statement, “*God is light*” is one of only four statements in the Bible where God is *equated* to something:
 - John 4:24 – *God is spirit*
 - 1 John 1:5 – *God is light*
 - 1 John 4:8,16 – *God is love*
 - Hebrews 12:29 – *God is a consuming fire*
- When John says “*God is light*”, he is not just saying:
 - God is *the source of* light
 - God *dwells in* light
- John is *equating* light to God’s *very nature*
- What does John mean when he tells us that “*God is light, and in him is no darkness at all*”?

Light and Darkness

- The terms “light” and “darkness” are often used **metaphorically** in the Bible.
- One of the metaphorical uses of light and darkness in scripture is to represent the idea of **good** versus **evil**:
 - Isaiah 5:20 – *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness*
 - 2 Corinthians 6:14b – *For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?*
- The terms “light” and “darkness” are **also** used **metaphorically** in the Bible to represent the **revelation** of God’s **truth** in contrast to **ignorance** or **falsehood**.
 - Psalm 119:105 – *[God’s] word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.*
 - 2 Peter 1:19a – *And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place*

Light and Darkness

- So let's apply these two metaphorical uses of light and darkness to what John is saying in 1 John 1:5:
 - **Good and Evil:** *God is light [good], and in him is no darkness [evil] at all.*
 - **Truth and Falsehood:** *God is light [truth], and in him is no darkness [falsehood] at all.*
- Put these things together and we see that the God we serve is the ***embodiment*** of ***goodness*** and ***truth*** and God is ***pure*** – there is not the least hint of ***evil*** or ***falsehood*** in God.
- If we are thinking as we ***ought*** to think, John's declaration about God should strike within us a sense of ***worship*** and ***reverent fear*** – because the ***next*** thing John does in this passage is point out the ***implication*** of God's character for those (like ourselves) who are claiming to have "***fellowship***" with this pure and holy God!

John tells that if we *say* we have **fellowship** with (that we share in, have partnership with, are in close relationship with) **God**, but “*walk in darkness*”, (i.e., we live our lives in such a way as to ignore or deny God’s **truth**) then our claim to have fellowship with God is a **lie** (because there is no falsehood in God at all) and we are not living in obedience to God’s truth!

⁵ *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* ⁶ *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.* ⁷ *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

(1 John 1:5-7)

But if we “*walk in the light*”, i.e. conform our thinking and conduct to the truth of God’s Word (as He is true to Himself) then two benefits result:

1. We have fellowship (share common benefits, are in partnership) with other Christians.
2. The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin.

⁵ *This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.* ⁶ *If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.* ⁷ *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.*

(1 John 1:5-7)

The Blood of Christ

- The “*blood of Christ*” here which “*cleanses us from all sin*” does not mean that the physical substance that flowed through Jesus’ veins was somehow used by God to cleanse us from sin, but rather, the term “*blood of Christ*” is a *metonymy* that refers to the *violent sacrificial death* which Jesus died in order to pay the penalty for the sins of God’s people.
 - Hebrews 9:22b - *Without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.*
 - Hebrews 10:12 - *Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins...*

1 John 1:8-2:2

Walking in the Light Tested by Righteousness First in the Confession of Sin

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

Cleansed From All Sin

- John has just told us (in verse 7) that *the blood of Jesus... cleanses* those who *walk in the light* (i.e., true Christians - those who habitually live in accordance with God's truth) *from all sin.*
- So does this mean that Christians *never* sin?

To the **contrary**, John tells us that “*If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*”!

In other words, if we claim we have **not** sinned, we are calling God a liar because His Word teaches us that we **are** sinners! (e.g., Psalm 14:2-3)

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(1 John 1:8-2:2)

Rather than claiming that we have ***no sin*** (which is not true), ***when*** we sin we should ***confess*** our sins to God who will be *faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

⁸ *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* ⁹ *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* ¹⁰ *If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

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(1 John 1:8-2:2)

Confess - ὁμολογέω (*homologeo*)

- Thayer's Lexicon–
 - *to say the same thing as another, i.e. to agree with, assent*
 - *to confess, i.e. to admit or declare one's self guilty of what one is accused of*
- Therefore we confess our sins to God, by admitting our guilt and agreeing with God about our sins – that we have offended Him and (but for His mercy) are deserving of damnation for what we have done.

If we confess our sins . . .

- *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)
- Notice John does not say “if we confess our sinfulness” or “if we confess that we sin in a general sort of way”
- John says, “*If we confess our sins*” - When we go to God to confess our sins, we should admit to the **specific** sins that we know we have committed.

God is Faithful and Just to Forgive Us

- *If we confess our sins, **he is faithful and just to forgive us** our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)
- God has promised throughout scripture that He will **forgive** those who **confess** their guilt:
 - Proverbs 28:13 - *Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.*
 - Isaiah 55:7 - *Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.*
- God will be **faithful** to keep His promise, because God is always faithful to His word.
- God is **just** in forgiving the sins of His people because Jesus has paid the price for those sins (cf. verse 7).

God is Faithful and Just to Forgive Us

- *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* (1 John 1:9)
- Keep in mind that this epistle was written to those whose sins are *already forgiven*:
 - 1 John 2:12 - *I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.*
- Donald W. Burdick, a commentator on 1 John, makes this observation:
 - *John is not here speaking of the **initial** forgiveness that comes with **salvation**. The forgiveness of this verse, however, is an experience which comes **after** salvation. Its function is to remove that which disturbed the believer's fellowship with God. Whereas the former is a legal remission of guilt, the latter is the Father's forgiveness of His child **to restore undisturbed communion**.*

After giving such strong emphasis to the idea that we are all sinners, John wants to make sure that his readers don't get the **wrong idea** – John is writing these things so that they **won't** sin.

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

(1 John 1:8-2:2)

But in the event that someone **does** sin, John wants them to take comfort in the fact that we have an advocate who is constantly speaking to the Father on our behalf: Jesus the Righteous One!

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(1 John 1:8-2:2)

Jesus the Righteous One who is therefore pleasing and acceptable to God is the “*propitiation*” for “*our*” sins.

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(1 John 1:8-2:2)

Propitiation - ἵλασμός (*hilasmus*)

- The Greek word translated “*propitiation*” here is found only **two** times in the New Testament – here and in 1 John 4:10 where we are told that God provided Christ as the propitiation for our sins ***out of love for us.***
- **Lexical Definitions:**
 - *Louw-Nida* – *the means by which sins are forgiven*
 - *Liddell-Scott* – *a means of appeasing*
 - *Friberg* – *the means of forgiveness, way of reconciling*
- **Note in NIV Study Bible:** “*God’s holiness demands punishment for man’s sin. God, therefore, out of love (4:10; John 3:16), sent His Son to make substitutionary atonement for the believer’s sin. In this way the Father’s wrath is propitiated (satisfied, appeased); his wrath against the Christian’s sin has been turned away and directed towards Christ.*”

Christ the Righteous One is the Propitiation for Our Sins

- Simply put, here is what John is telling us:
- We were under the wrath of God because of *sin*.
- Christ, the Righteous One (i.e., without sin) was pleasing to God.
- God, instead of pouring out His wrath on *us* (who deserved it) poured out the wrath (punishment) that *we* deserved on *Christ*.
- Therefore God's anger against our sin has been *satisfied* and He is no longer angry with us.
- And because of this we can have fellowship with Him!
- The Apostle Paul expressed this same idea:
- **2 Corinthians 5:21** - *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* (NIV)

John then adds a phrase to describe who all is included in the propitiation of Christ: *not only for our sins . . . but also for the sins of the whole world.*

⁸ *If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.* ⁹ *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* ¹⁰ *If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.*

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(1 John 1:8-2:2)

To Whom Does “Our” Refer in 1 John 2:2?

- *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.* (1 John 2:2)
- In the 1 John 1:1-5, the first person plural (“we”, “our”, “us”) clearly referred to John and the other apostles who had witnessed the risen Christ.
- Starting in 1:6, John seems to begin using the first person plural in an axiomatic sense – meaning “anyone”:
 - 1:6 - *If we say we [anyone] have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie...*
 - 1:7 - *But if we [anyone] walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship...*
 - 1:8 - *If we say we [anyone] have no sin, we deceive ourselves...*
 - 1:9 - *If we [anyone] confess our sins...*
- But here (in 2:2) it would seem most natural to understand “**our**” as referring to John and his (Christian) readers.

Who is Meant by “the Whole World” in 1 John 2:2?

- *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of **the whole world**.* (1 John 2:2)

world κόσμος (kosmos)

- Order, arrangement, ornament, adornment
 - **1 Peter 3:3** - *Do not let your **adorning** be external--the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear--*
- The earth or all that is in it
 - **Matthew 13:35** - *This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter what has been hidden since the foundation of the **world**.”*
 - **Matthew 16:26a** - *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole **world** and forfeits his soul?*
- The human race, people in general, **or** people **without distinction**
 - **Matthew 5:14** - *You are the light of the **world**. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden.*
 - **John 12:18-19** - *The reason why the crowd went to meet him was that they heard he had done this sign. So the Pharisees said to one another, “You see that you are gaining nothing. Look, the **world** has gone after him.”*
- Gentiles as distinguished from Jews
 - **Romans 11:12** - *Now if their trespass means riches for the **world**, and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean!*
- The world of men who are hostile to God
 - **John 7:7** - *The **world** cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil.*

Who is Meant by “the Whole World” in 1 John 2:2?

- *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.* (1 John 2:2)
- “*Whole world*” in this context seems to refer to the sins of people in general or perhaps all people ***without distinction*** – though not necessarily all people ***without exception***.
- Compare this with **John 1:29** - *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*
- So I would take John to mean “*not our [John and his readers'] sins but also the sins of the whole [rest of] the world.*”

For Whose Sins is Christ “the Propitiation” (i.e. the means by which God’s wrath is appeased)?

- *He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.* (1 John 2:2)
- If we take this text in an unqualified sense, John would seem to be saying that Jesus has atoned for the sins of **everyone** (or all Jews and Gentiles) which would then mean that **everyone** is going to heaven!
- But of course we know even from John’s own writings that this is not the case:
 - **Revelation 21:8** - *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.*”

For Whose Sins is Christ “the Propitiation” (i.e. the means by which God’s wrath is appeased)?

- If Jesus had forgiven all the sins of those mentioned in Revelation 21:8 and other passages that talk about the last judgment, then **no one** would have to suffer eternal punishment, because there would be no sins left to punish!
- I believe, therefore that we must take “*the whole world*” in a more qualified sense to refer to all people **without distinction**, but not all people **without exception**.
- To determine specifically who has been atoned for by Christ, we need only look in the preceding context where John tells us:
 - **1 John 1:7** - *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.*
- It is for those who “walk in the light” that Christ has made atonement!

The First Presentation of the Three Themes of RIGHTEOUSNESS, LOVE and BELIEF in Jesus

- 1:5-7 - John states that:
 - “**God is light**” (i.e. God is truth and the revealer of truth)
 - A person's claim to have **FELLOWSHIP** with God is verified **only if** he “**walks in the light**” (i.e. lives according to **God's truth**).
- 1:8-2:6 - "**Walking in the Light**" Tested by **RIGHTEOUSNESS**
 - **First** - in confession of sin (1:8-2:2)
 - **Secondly** - in actual obedience (2:3-6)
- 2:7-17 - "**Walking in the Light**" Tested by **LOVE**
 - **Positively** - By love of one's brother (2:7-11)
 - [Parenthetical Passage in (2:12-14)]
 - **Negatively** - By **not** loving the World (2:15-17)
- 2:18-28 - "**Walking in the Light**" Tested by **BELIEF** in Jesus the Son of God.
 - Contrast Between False Teachers and True Believers (2:18-21)
 - Christological Test (2:22-23)
 - Exhortation to Continue in the Truth (2:24-28)

Class Discussion Time



*Class Discussion Time

- It is common in our day among those who believe in an unqualified “once saved always saved” that once someone “gets their ticket punched” by walking down an aisle and getting baptized (or whatever), it no longer matters how they live their life they’re going to heaven. After looking at today’s text, what do you think John would say to someone who thinks this way?
- There is a school of thought today that argues that when scripture tells us to forgive one another *as God has forgiven us* (Colossians 3:13), that we are to forgive people who have sinned against us, even if they never come to us and *ask* forgiveness. Do you think the fact that God requires us to first confess our sins to Him in order to restore (temporal) fellowship with Him could have have any bearing on how, and under what conditions, we should forgive those who sin against *us*?