



International Bible Study Commentary

Verse-by-Verse Bible Lessons Thru the Bible

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1 John 4:13-21 Commentary New Revised Standard Version

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

follow the verse-by-verse [International Bible Study Commentary](#). **Study Hints for Discussion and Thinking Further** will help with class preparation and in conducting class discussion: these hints are available on the *International Bible Study Commentary* website along with the *International Bible Lesson* that you may want to read to your class as part of your Bible study. You can discuss each week's commentary and lesson at the [International Bible Study Forum](#).

(1 John 4:13) By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit.

If someone wanted to know whether they were Christians or not, John's answer in this verse could help them. First, Christians abide in or remain in Christ and Christ abides in or remains in them. Second, the Holy Spirit within them can give them the assurance that Christ abides within them and they are abiding within Christ. Third, the Holy Spirit will usually give that assurance through the promises and teachings in the Holy Scriptures that a true follower of Jesus Christ will believe (see the verses below

and 1 John 3:24; 2 John 1:9, and John 15:5-10). The Apostle Paul wrote, “And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” (Romans 5:5). We can know and feel the love of God in our hearts, and we can know when our love for God motivates what we say and do. We love because the Holy Spirit lives and loves in us, and the Holy Spirit reveals the love of Jesus Christ for others in and through us. We can know when we love other followers of Jesus as followers of Jesus Christ, and not only as neighbors.

(1 John 4:14) And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world.

John and the other apostles saw and touched Jesus. They heard what He taught and saw what He did in human history. They saw Him crucified, dead, and buried on Good Friday. They saw Jesus risen and alive from the dead on Resurrection Sunday. They received the Holy Spirit that He promised as the Power from on High on the Day of Pentecost. They accepted His Great Commission and they obeyed Him and they fulfilled Jesus' purposes (1 John 1:1-4; Matthew 28:18-20). They testified with evidence that only eye-witnesses could give (which is acceptable in a court of law) that God the Father truly exists, that the Father sent His Son into the world, that His Son is the Savior of the world (John 3:16).

(1 John 4:15) God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God.

John gave additional evidence that someone can use to know if they are a Christian. The Christian will confess that “Jesus is the Son of God.” John gave the reason God abides in someone. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God—not “a” son of God or one of many important prophets or people, but Jesus is “THE” Son of God (see also John 3:16). God abides in those who confess Jesus is the Christ, their King, and the King of kings. And when they abide in God and God in them, they “bear much fruit” (John 15:5). Bearing much good fruit flows from a loving and right relationship between God and the follower of Jesus Christ. Truly confessing that Jesus is the Son of God will lead the follower of Jesus to abide in God, which gives them additional evidence and assurance that they are a Christian, a child of God.

(1 John 4:16) So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them.

Christians believe Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior of the world. And they know and believe that God loves them. John restated such truths as we find in John 3:16—because God loved the world so much, “God gave” His only Son. The Father did not simply “send” Jesus into the world to teach us truths about how to live for God and serve others.

Jesus did that, but we know and believe that God loves us because God “gave” His only Son to die as the “atoning sacrifice for our sins” (see 1 John 2:2; 1 John 4:10). God is love. God’s nature is love. God’s character is love. God’s choices are to love and do what is best and wisest for all concerned. Love motivates God to do all God wisely can to promote the happiness and well-being of every creature. Those who abide in love abide in the circle of love that God has created with His commandments through the Scriptures and the perfect example of His Son, Jesus Christ. God empowers and enables true believers in Jesus Christ to live within His circle of love as God lives within them and through them. Christians remain (abide) in love in all they do. Love motivates them and they remain (abide) in God. They express their love for God and all the followers of Jesus Christ by obeying His commandments, the Law of Love (the moral law).

(1 John 4:17) Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world.

God perfects His love within and among the true followers of Jesus—through those who truly believe Jesus is the Son of God and who relate to Jesus as the Scriptures have revealed Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. A Day of Judgment is coming. Those who are born-again are transformed by the presence and love of God in Christ within them; therefore, they can boldly come before God

as a child of God and remain unafraid of God's punishment on that Day. In this world they become increasingly like Jesus. They develop and display His moral and spiritual character in what the Bible calls the process of "sanctification" as they love God and others. They draw closer to Jesus and become more like Jesus; therefore, as Jesus is, they are in the world. Because the love of God is perfected in them day-by-day, they have confidence in God in this life and on the Day of Judgment.

(1 John 4:18) There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love.

When God in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit come to live within us, they fill our hearts with their love, and we love others and bear much fruit as their love overflows out of our hearts. Their love in us and our loving response to their love as described in the Bible casts out all fear of punishment from God on the Day of Judgment. If we fear punishment from God on a future Day of Judgment, we need to move closer to God in Christ, believe in Jesus as the Bible teaches about Jesus, and pray for the Holy Spirit to help us love God and others according to the Bible's teachings. We need to remind ourselves of all God the Father, Jesus Christ (the Son of God and our Savior), and the Holy Spirit have done for us and will do for us according to the Scriptures now and forevermore.

(1 John 4:19) We love because he first loved us.

We love God and others according to the commands, example, and teachings of Jesus Christ only because God first loved us, sent His Son to die for us, raised Him from the dead for us, and then sent His Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, to live in us, guide us, empower us, and help us understand and wisely apply the Bible's teachings in everyday life. We did not first love God. God created us in His love; we rebelled against God; then God in love redeemed us, and we came to love God, others, and ourselves as we ought.

(1 John 4:20) Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen.

John had written, "No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). Now, John writes and basically asks, "How can you love God whom you have not seen and not love a brother or sister in Christ that you have seen?" If you hate others, you cannot love God. Those who hate others do not know the true God. The followers of Jesus can know from observation those who hate their brothers or sisters, and they can know that they are liars who cannot be trusted. The teaching of the Bible insists that Christians love and forgive one another. We can know if

we hate someone or if we have not forgiven someone. We can know in our hearts when we are obeying Jesus' command to love.

(1 John 4:21) The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also.

The Bible, Jesus, and the Apostles have given us commands in the New Testament that God expects us to obey in daily life. We must love God, we must love our brothers and sisters in Christ, we must love our enemies (Matthew 5:44) and we must love our neighbors (Matthew 22:37-40). The indwelling Holy Spirit can help true Christians love God and others and obey God in every situation they face every day. The Holy Spirit can help the true Christian love, act, and speak wisely so others are benefitted as well as themselves. The Father and the Son can love others through their children, through those who follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The Holy Spirit can help believers reveal the love and teachings of Jesus Christ and lead others to repent of their sins and trust in and obey Jesus Christ, the Son of God and Savior of the world.

Questions for Discussion and Thinking Further

1. How does a follower of Jesus know that God is living within them?
2. What did John testify to? How could he testify to this truth?

3. Who does God abide (remain) in?
4. How did John describe God and how does a believer abide in God?
5. How are the followers of Jesus to be “in this world”?

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