

Does Knowledge Save You? The Heresy of Gnosticism.

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:13)

These Gnostics who were causing the problems in Ephesus were characterized in three ways by the apostle John. They were false prophets (1 John 4:1), they were deceivers (2 John 7), and lastly, they are antichrists (1 John 2:18,22; 4:3, 2 John 7). These false teachers had broken with the true church and had “gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). This break showed that they were not really of the truth (1 John 2:19).*

*The Nicolaitans by Moe

What is Gnosticism?

Gnosticism took the Greek opposition between spirit and matter and the Persian dualism as the basis for its system. It is difficult to impossible to fully fathom all the specific doctrinal arguments of the particular brand of Gnosticism that influenced the writings of John at that time, but one may be assured that several of the following dogmas were part and parcel to it:

- Gnostics are more enlightened, possessing a special knowledge, than ordinary Christians.
- Spirit and matter, which is evil, is strictly separated.
- Christ was not incarnate—His humanity was only apparent and His sufferings were unreal.
- Denial of personality of God.
- Denial of the free will of man.
- The *demiurge*—a supernatural being who created and fashioned the world and who is subordinate to the Supreme Being. Intermediate beings between God and man formed the universe and are responsible for evil; thereby, the source of evil was located in the *demiurge*—but it is unclear how evil got into him initially. The *demiurge* produced the Old Testament, who is the God of the Jews.
- Union of Christian and pagan doctrines.

- Asceticism—the doctrine that a person can attain a high spiritual and moral state by practicing self-denial, self-mortification, and the like.
- Antinomianism—maintains that Christians are freed from the moral law by virtue of grace as set forth in the gospel. It was based on the concept that the soul and body are separate entities and have nothing in common; therefore, each may go its own way and will have no effect upon the other.

*Bibleone.net

Some claim, in order to support their unique interpretation of various passages within 1 John, especially Chapter 1, one must suppose the readers of chapter 1 are intended to be a group of “professing Christians” and whose regeneration is dubious to John. They claim that it was written to Gnostics. But if the statements by John are taken at face value, this cannot be so. The following passages make it clear that John is addressing genuine “born again” Christians:

- He addresses them as *little children* whose sins are forgiven for Christ name’s sake (**1 John 2:12**).
- He calls them *fathers* who have known *Him who is from the beginning* and *young men* who have overcome the wicked one (**1 John 2:13, 14**).
- He states that the readers *have an anointing from the Holy One* and know all things (**1 John 2:20**); and that this anointing *abides* in them so that no one needs to teach them because the anointing teaches them all things, and is true (**1 John 2:27**).
- He appears to affirm the reader’s regenerate state by saying of them: *I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it* (**1 John 2:21**).
- He assumes that truth presently abides within the readers, and he wants this to continue (**1 John 2:24**).
- He affirms of himself and the readers that *we should be called children of God* (**1 John 3:1**).
- He again affirms that the readers are true believers by saying: *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world* (**1 John 4:4**).
- He contrasts his readers from unregenerate people who *are of the world* (**1 John 4:5**).

- He strongly affirms that his readers are true believers when he says to them: *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:13, see John 3:15, 16)*; therefore, his readers have overcome the world because they believe that Jesus is the Son of God (**1 John 5:5**).
- He concludes that he and his readers *are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one (1 John 5:19)*.

1 John 1 are written several hypotheticals to combat the false teachings that had infiltrated the church:

1 John 1:1-10

Knowledge/enlightenment verses reality.

Romans 1:20-23

For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things.

1 John 2:3-6

And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. 4 He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. 5 But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. 6 He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked.

There are some that believe that once you are “truly saved” you are always saved. Let’s examine this in light of just a few verses as there are many:

1 John 2:19 (KJV Strong's) They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but

they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.

Matthew 7:21-23 (KJV Strong's) 21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? 23 And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

Revelation 3:14-16 (KJV Strong's) 14 And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; 15 I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. 16 So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth.

Revelation 3:1-6 (KJV Strong's) And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. 2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God. 3 Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee. 4 Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. 5 He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels. 6 He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

2 Peter 2:18-22 (KJV Strong's) 18 For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error. 19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. 20 For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them

than the beginning. 21 For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. 22 But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

Matthew 12:43-45 (KJV Strong's) 43 -- When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. 44 Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. 45 Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.

Mark 13:5 (KJV Strong's) 5 And Jesus answering them began to say, Take heed lest any man deceive you:

1 John 3:6-9 (KJV Strong's) 6 Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. 7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. 8 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 9 Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

1 John 5:18-19 (KJV Strong's) We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not. 19 And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.