

1 John Lesson 12 Articles

1 Jn 5: 1 John states that all who believe that Jesus is the Christ (i.e., the Messiah) have been born of God. As the book has already indicated, this requirement includes believing specifically that “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” (4:2), that he is God’s Son, and that he is the Savior of the world (4:14–15). One should not think that John is promoting mere intellectual assent as the requirement for being a child of God, since the second half of the verse indicates that Johannine faith includes an ethical dimension. That is, faith and love are inseparable (cf. 3:23).¹⁴⁸ The phrase “Jesus is the Christ” corresponds to 2:22 and is possibly an early creedal formulation.¹⁴⁹

The text goes on to declare that those who have faith in Jesus as the Messiah are “born of God.” Thus faith is a sign of sonship. John has previously mentioned the theme of sonship in this epistle. He states that being born of God leads to right behavior (2:29), prevents one from habitually sinning (3:9–10), and causes one to love others (4:7). In the fourth Gospel we read that faith is not only a sign but also a condition of the new birth: “To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (John 1:12). Marshall writes: “Here, however, John is not trying to show how a person experiences the new birth; his aim is rather to indicate the evidence which shows that a person stands in the continuing relationship of a child to God his Father: that evidence is that he holds to the true faith about Jesus.” The perfect tense of the verb *gegennētai* suggests a past action with results that continue in the present. In other words, Smalley concludes, “The regenerate Christian (past) must constantly live out (present) his faith in Jesus as Messiah, and also give his sustained allegiance to the love command.”¹

1 Jn 5:3 —Only when we try to obey God through our own power do His commandments feel burdensome. When we rely on His Spirit to enable us to do what we can’t, we find great joy in obedience.²

Most people in the world do not know what a Christian is or how they can become Christians. They trust in religious works and good intentions, depending on the energy of the flesh. God says that a Christian is someone who has been born again. It is faith in the finished work of Christ that makes a child of disobedience into a child of God (see John 1:12–13; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:3). John uses the phrase “born of God” seven times in his first epistle and describes the “birthmarks of believers”: (1) they practice righteousness, 2:29; (2) they do not practice sin, 3:9; (3) they love other Christians, 4:7; (4) they overcome the world, 5:4; and (5) they keep themselves from Satan, 5:18.³

¹⁴⁸ Strecker states, “In the Johannine writings, dogmatics and ethics cannot be played off against one another; instead, every faith statement has an ethical quality” (*Johannine Letters*, 174).

¹⁴⁹ O. A. Piper, “1 John and the Didache of the Primitive Church,” *JBL* 66 (1947): 438.

¹ Akin, D. L. (2001). *1, 2, 3 John* (Vol. 38, p. 189). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

² Stanley, C. F. (2005). *The Charles F. Stanley life principles Bible: New King James Version* (1 Jn 5:3). Nashville, TN: Nelson Bibles.

³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). *Wiersbe’s expository outlines on the New Testament* (pp. 776–777). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.