

1 John Lesson 5 Articles

John helps us look within to discover evidence of the reality of our relationship with Jesus. Now John warned that in order to love and respond to God, we must stop acting from the motives that reflect the world's value system.

Again John gave a common word a distinctive moral slant. *Kosmos* ("world") in Greek can mean the universe itself, the planet on which we live, or mankind. In a moral sense, however, "world" refers to the created universe and to mankind *as fallen*. This world, John says later (5:19) "is under the control of the evil one." The values and the attitudes that characterize the world—"cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has" (2:16) do not come from God.

A Christian cannot live with a divided heart, responding one moment out of love for God and at the next turning to the world for pleasure. If we want to demonstrate (to ourselves, as well as to God) that we know Him, we need to make a clear-cut commitment to do the will of God rather than respond to the world's passions.¹

Do not love the world, he says, and some see a contradiction here with 'God so loved the world' (Jn. 3:16). But that passage speaks of God's love for all people, whereas this one is concerned with setting one's heart on worldliness. John makes two points: first, love for the world in this sense is incompatible with love for the Father (Jas. 4:4), and secondly, in any case the world and all that is in it are temporary.

16 *The cravings of sinful man* (lit. 'the lust of the flesh') points to the gratification of our fleshly desires. *The lust of his eyes* is the strong desire for what is seen, for the outward form of things; it is the lust after the superficial. *The boasting of what he has and does* (lit. 'the boastfulness of life') is the empty haughtiness of the worldly-minded. (With these three things compare the three things that led Eve to disobey God; Gn. 3:6.) None of these has its origin in God (*not from the Father*). They are all *from the world*, that world that is but a passing show on its way to ruin. *Everything* points to totality: evil is found throughout the world. **17** By contrast, whoever *does the will of God lives forever*. Obedience is an important part of eternal life.²

Smalley notes that the exhortations can be divided into the following three interconnected stanzas:

2:15 Love of the world

Love of the Father

2:16 comes from the world

comes from the Father

¹ Richards, L., & Richards, L. O. (1987). *The teacher's commentary* (p. 1053). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

² Carson, D. A., France, R. T., Motyer, J. A., & Wenham, G. J. (Eds.). (1994). *New Bible commentary: 21st century edition* (4th ed., p. 1402). Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press.

³Akin, D. L. (2001). *Vol. 38: 1, 2, 3 John* (electronic ed.). Logos Library System; The New American Commentary (108). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.

2:17 the world passes away the one who obeys remains forever.

Those who are members of the believing community should see that the things of the world, though they are alluring, lead to death and not life. ³