

# *A Short Exegesis of I John 2*

*J. Scott Sheridan*

2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. ***So that his readers would not sin, willingly or unwillingly, he is telling them the following***

And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ***We have an “Advocate.” This word in Greek in Paraclete and refers to an attorney type of relationship. So that the one who sinned does not have to defend himself before an all-righteous judge, Jesus is his advocate. Jesus uses this same word in the “Upper Room Discourse” in John 14:16 et al, where it is translated as “Helper.” It literally has the meaning of a word-giver.***

2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world. ***Jesus can be the sinners paraclete because of the fact that He is the sin offering in person.***

3 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. ***If we keep the commandments of the paraclete then we know that we have come to know Him as well. This way of speech cannot be separated from the early Gnostic beliefs which taught that a person must have a secret knowledge in order to truly know Jesus. John is countering this cultic teaching by making his readers aware that there is not a spiritual secret that a person must know in order to know Him, but it is actually keeping His commandments.***

4 The one who says, “I have come to know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; ***This again has reference to the early Gnostic teachings.***

5 but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. ***Keeping the commandments of Christ, the advocate, is how the sinner is made complete (perfected). He is not made complete by the secret so-called knowledge of the Gnostics.***

By this (***keeping His word***) we know that we are in Him:

6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. ***This is the same thing that James said in Jas 2:18 “You have faith and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works.” Walk the talk. If you truly know Jesus you will keep His commandments.***

7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. ***What John is telling them is the same thing they have had from the beginning of the Gospel message on the Day of Pentecost. The Gnostics were teaching a “new and improved” message. At least that was their claim. And only the Gnostics had the secret understanding it took to comprehend. John refutes that thinking by letting his readers know that there is nothing new and it cannot be improved.***

8 On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. ***The concepts of light and darkness were used a great deal by the Gnostics and John is using their terms to refute them. The darkness is passing and the true light is ALREADY shining. It is as John stated above, not something new that they have not heard before. It is the same Gospel they have had.***

9 The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. ***This person is not keeping the commandments of Jesus if he is hating his brother. Therefore he is not abiding in Jesus and is only fooling himself.***

10 The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. ***Because he is keeping the word of Christ.***

11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven you for His name's sake. ***John is probably speaking to new Christians when he says “little children” and is reassuring them that they do not need the secret knowledge of the Gnostics, they can rest assured that their sins are forgiven because of the paraclete they have with the Father.***

13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. ***John is more than likely speaking to older Christian men when he uses the term “fathers” because they knew what the Gospel was from the beginning before the cultists came.*** I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because

you know the Father. *John seems to be talking to people at various stages of their Christian walk. He lastly refers to “children” probably referring all of the people he has mentioned.*

14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. *Again, John is advocating that the word of Christ be kept. The importance of the word of Christ cannot be over-stressed here. The fathers knew the word from the beginning and they should not be duped into believing the new stuff that the Gnostics were proclaiming. It was not the word of Christ. Yet in order to abide in Christ, His word must be kept and it must abide in His true followers. Through the paraclete Jesus, and the affect of His word upon man, the evil one, the devil, is overcome. Rom. 10:17, “faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” Faith comes through the word of Christ and man is saved by faith. The word creates faith and we must abide in the word to maintain faith and to know what the commandments of Christ are in order to keep them.*

15 Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. *The teachings of Gnosticism were a blending of worldly philosophy with a diluted Christian teaching. Besides this being a worldly religion, let’s remember that John is writing this so that his readers would not sin. Therefore, make sure that your treasures are heavenly ones.*

16 For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

17 The world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever. *Once again, John returns to his theme of keeping the word of Christ. For it is the one who DOES the will of God that lives forever. Jesus once said that “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.”(Lk 21:33)*

18 Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have appeared; from this we know that it is the last hour. *We know it’s the last hour because antichrists have arisen. The word anti in the Greek means substitute. The Gnostics were offering a substitute Christ. Many substitute christs have appeared. This is exactly as Jesus said it would be. Since there are so many “other” christs, this is definitely the last hour. The phrase “last hour” should remind us of Peter’s use of “last days,” by which he meant the last covenant period (dispensation). It does not mean that it is the final moment before Jesus’ return. If that were the meaning here, it makes no sense, for it would mean that two-thousand years ago was the final moment before His return. The antichrists were the Gnostics.*

19 They (*the Gnostics*) went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, so that it would be shown that they all are not of us.

20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know. *This word “anointing” has caused problem in it’s understanding. Some believe this anointing is the Holy Spirit. This would not make much sense for that would have John saying that we have a Holy Spirit from the Holy One. There are two words that are translated an “anoint” in the NT. The first is aleipho which is the common anointing someone would have when entering someone’s home. The other word is chrisma which is the formal anointing setting something or someone apart. So the question becomes, What is this anointing he is referring to? It is the same thing that he has been talking about all along: The word of Christ. The Greek grammar actually makes it say “you have something anointed from the Holy One.” With that understanding, it seems unlikely that he could be referring to anything other than the old commandment which is the word which they had heard, i.e., the word of Christ. John wrote this letter in the late 90’s and most of the NT had already been penned and was being circulated.*

21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

24 As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning (*the anointing*). If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. *This goes right back to verse 3.*

25 This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.

26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. (*i.e., the Gnostics*)

27 As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.

28 Now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

29 If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.