



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

1 PETER &
1, 2, 3 JOHN

Week 3

Have You Tasted My Jesus?

At the University of Chicago Divinity School, all the Christians in the area were invited to the school one day every year because the school needed their financial support. It was customary for each person to bring a lunch to be eaten outdoors in a grassy picnic area, and for the school to invite a famous theologian to lecture in the theological education center.

One year they invited the famous theologian Paul Tillich. Dr. Tillich spoke for two and one-half hours “proving” that the resurrection of Jesus was false. He quoted scholar after scholar and book after book. He concluded that since he felt there was no such thing as the historical resurrection, the religious tradition of the church was groundless, emotional mumbo-jumbo, because it was based on a relationship with a risen Jesus, who, in fact, never rose from the dead in any literal sense. He then asked if there were any questions.

After about 30 seconds, an old country preacher stood up in the back of the auditorium.

“Docta Tillich, I got one question,” he said as all eyes turned toward him. He reached into his sack lunch, pulled out an apple and began eating it.

“Docta Tillich...” CRUNCH, MUNCH... “My question is a simple question,” CRUNCH, MUNCH... “Now I’ve never read them books you read” CRUNCH, MUNCH... “and I can’t recite the scriptures in the original Greek” CRUNCH, MUNCH... “I don’t know nothin’ about Niebuhr and Heidegger” CRUNCH, MUNCH...

He finished the apple. “All I wanna know is: This apple I just ate—was it bitter or sweet?”

Dr. Tillich paused for a moment and answered in scholarly fashion: “I cannot possibly answer that question, for I haven’t tasted your apple.”

The white-haired preacher dropped the core of his apple into his crumpled paper bag, looked up at Dr. Tillich and said calmly, “Neither have you tasted my Jesus.”

The 1,000 people in attendance could not contain themselves. The auditorium erupted with applause and cheers. Dr. Tillich thanked his audience and promptly left the platform.

“My dear children,” as John would say, “Have you tasted Jesus?” If you have, rejoice in the hope of the resurrection that your faith in Him brings.

—Source unknown

Walking in the Light

DAY 15

1 John 1:5-10

Are you bothered by any “What ifs”—or “If onlys”? Which conditions or circumstances, in retrospect, would have made the biggest difference if they had happened differently?

1. Which three claims or propositions are false or impossible (1:5-10)?
2. Which claims or promises are true—are said to characterize the “Word of life” (1:1) and serve as antidotes to the falsehoods?
3. How can one enjoy intimacy with God? (a) follow Jesus, (b) be purified by the Holy Spirit living in you, (c) tell the truth, (d) admit to sin, (e) enjoy fellowship with other Christians.
4. What is the remedy prescribed for us when we “walk in the darkness”?
5. How is God described? What is it about God that makes it easier for believers to confess their sins to him?

1. Which of the conditions or circumstances stipulated here have you based your life on? Which, if proven wrong, would alter the entire course of your life?

*The assertion that “**God is light**” (1:5) resonates with Greek thought, which often used light as a symbol for the divine, also for wisdom, integrity and excellence. The Jews at Qumran also used the word light for divine truth. In Christian thought and in this context, light symbolized intellectual truth and moral purity. The “God of light” stands in contrast to the many “dark gods” said to cause evil in that first-century world.*

OPENING
up to the Word

DIGGING
into the Word

LIVING
out the Word

WINDOW
on the Word

Need a Good Lawyer?

1 John 2:1-6

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever hired an attorney to defend your interests? Have you ever wished you could afford one?

DIGGING
into the Word

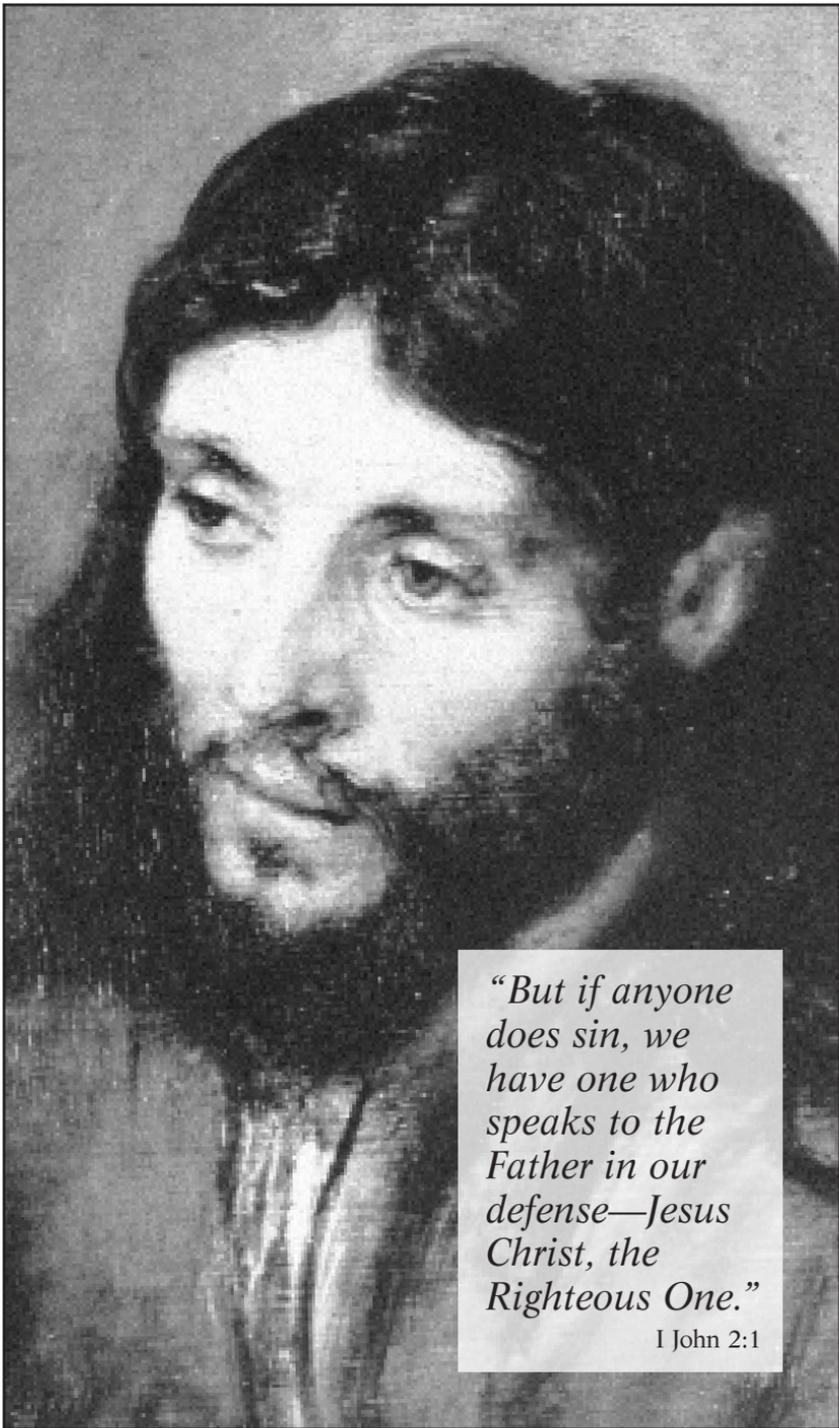
1. What heretical claims is John trying to counter in this context?
2. How can one enjoy a close friendship with God? Conversely, how would someone realize their relationship with God is primarily a relationship with an earthly institution or a religion?
3. What is “knowing God” all about? (a) loving others, (b) thinking theologically, (c) studying the Bible, (d) doing what the Bible says, (e) knowing and experiencing Jesus, who is the “exact representation” of the Father (Jn 14:9; Heb 1:3).

LIVING
out the Word

1. Do you really know God, or are you still searching for him? How so?

WINDOW
on the Word

*To claim to be **without sin** (1:8) is false and impossible, since God makes provision for when and **if anybody does sin** (2:1), but his remedy is available **so that you will not sin** (2:1). These three apparently disparate statements about sin, by themselves, may open John to misinterpretation, but taken together, in context, they are not contradictory (see notes at 2:28–3:10). The remedy is “**the one who speaks... in our defense—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One.**” He is our legal advocate and the only perfect example of a sinless life. As such, only Christ could be the **atoning sacrifice**.*



*“But if anyone
does sin, we
have one who
speaks to the
Father in our
defense—Jesus
Christ, the
Righteous One.”*

I John 2:1

Something Old, Something New...

1 John 2:7-14

OPENING
up to the Word

Consider all the roles you play and the groups to which you belong: To whom are you a parent? A child? A sibling? An old-timer? A newcomer?

DIGGING
into the Word

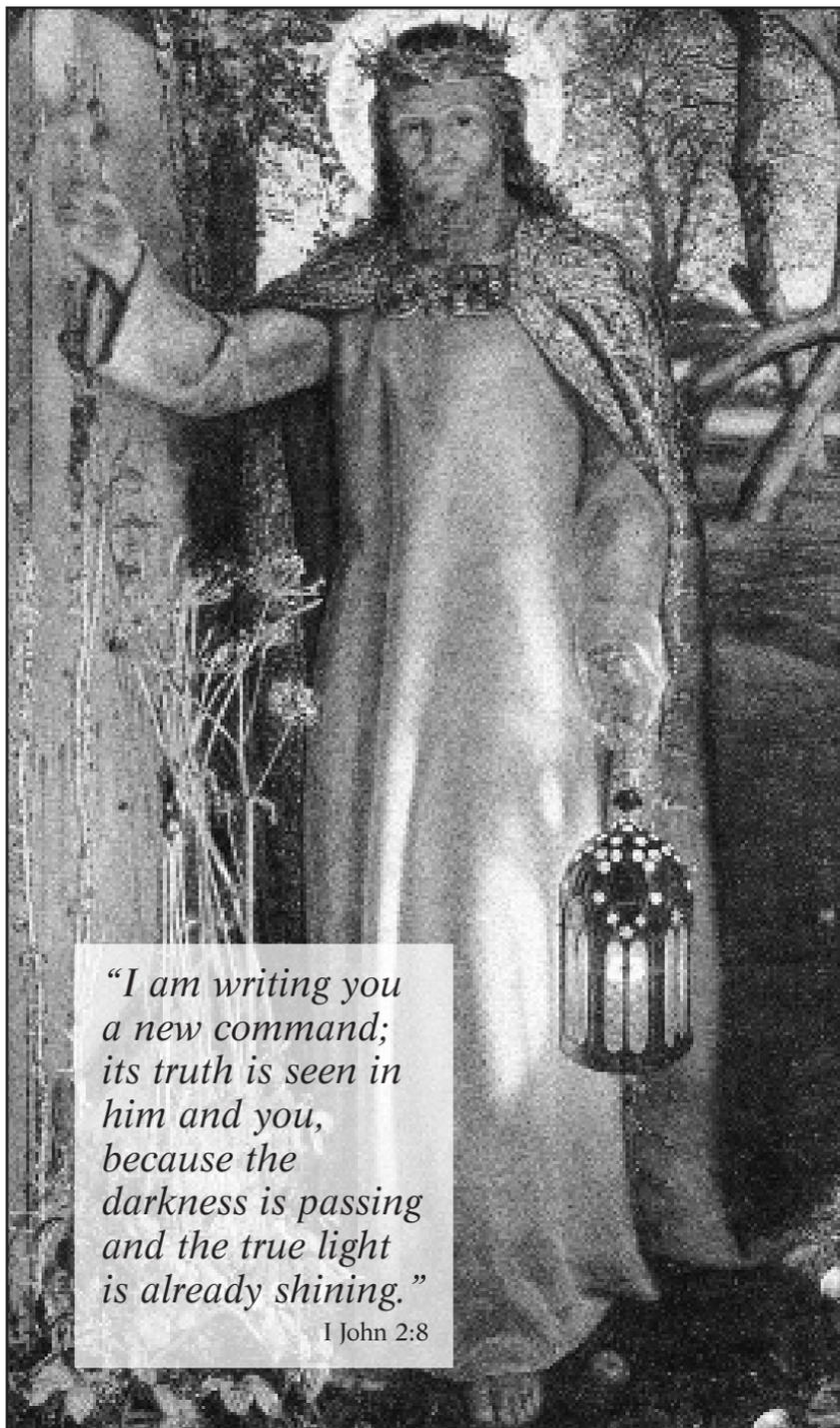
1. Which groups or what stages in life are being addressed here?
2. What is the “old” and “new” command? What difference does the light make?
3. What or who is the “true light” (2:8; see also Jn 1:9)?
4. For those who may have doubted they are accepted by God, what reassurances are offered here? What continuing impact do past events have on their present experience?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Which of the groups or stages addressed by John best represents you?
2. What “darkness” (or spiritual blind spots, caused by hate) are you contending with? How will you “overcome”?
3. How can you yield to Jesus so that his light may shine through you this week? (a) forgive someone, (b) tell someone of God’s forgiveness, (c) help someone whose life is messed up, (d) confess your sins—and experience God’s forgiveness.

WINDOW
on the Word

***Friends** (2:7; also 3:2,21; 4:1,7,11) and **children** (2:12; also 2:1,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21) are John’s favorite terms of affection for his flock. Within that group are the **fathers** (2:13)—that is, those who are supposed to be spiritually mature—and **young men**, who are the relatively new Christians. The English word **love** may be translated from the word for sexual desire (Greek, eros) or the word for brotherly affection (Greek, phileo), but here (2:10) the word love refers to a self-sacrificing love—a love-in-action (Greek, agape) that gives in response to another’s need, no matter what the cost to self.*



*“I am writing you
a new command;
its truth is seen in
him and you,
because the
darkness is passing
and the true light
is already shining.”*

1 John 2:8

Love or Lust?

1 John 2:15-17

OPENING
up to the Word

What do you love more than anything else in the world?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. John has just exhorted his flock to choose love over hate (2:11). Why are the two incompatible?

2. What's wrong with "the world" that we should not love it? Give examples of...

- (a) a government organized against God,
- (b) anti-Christian values,
- (c) the intense desire for things of this world,
- (d) the world passing away.

3. Based only on 1 John 2:15-17, and using your own words, write a 50-word summary of a Christian short story entitled, *Loving, Lusting and Living*. What would the moral of the story be?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Which things of this world do you love? Why those things? (a) "here and now" is all you can see, (b) you haven't got much but it's all you've got, (c) you're proud of what you've earned, (d) some other reason.

2. How does your "love of the Father" compare to the things you crave, lust for or boast about? Which do you think about more?

3. Are you a person who enjoys a personal relationship with God? How do you know?

WINDOW
on the Word

The world (2:15-17) that God created and loved (Jn 3:16) is not in view here; rather, the world of sin is condemned. Not everything in the world is evil, just those things that have become objects of sinful cravings, wanton lust or egotistical boasting (2:16).

Liar, Liar!

DAY 19

1 John 2:18-27

Have you ever known a habitual liar? Were you always able to tell when he or she was lying? How?

1. Christ did not return in John's lifetime, nor for the next two millennia, so how could John write that it was the "last hour" (2:18)?
2. Who were these "antichrists" (2:18, 22 also 4:3)? Where did these teachers of Christ-less religion get their start? What errors did they commit?
3. Failing the truth test makes one a liar. Answer, in your own words, John's question: "Who is the liar?"
4. Can a true Christian love God but deny that Jesus is Lord? If so, how? If not, why not?

1. What do you find most threatening about the antichrist(s)? Could they be masquerading as Christians—teaching something that seems to have a form of Christianity, but denies the true gospel?
2. How can we avoid antichrists?
3. Are you steeped in the truth of Christ "from the beginning"? Is truth merely an academic acquisition or is it personified in Jesus and experienced in and through him (John 14:6)?

*"The last hour" (2:18) refers to the final moments before the second coming of Christ. Although Christians still await the return of Christ, the "last days" began in the time of Christ. We already experience some aspects of the future age. That **"none of them belonged to us"** is obvious to John only in hindsight. **Eternal life** or salvation (2:25) is not the reward for faithful adherence to the truth (2:20-21), but perseverance-to-the-end is given to Christians who express faith in Christ, by God's grace.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

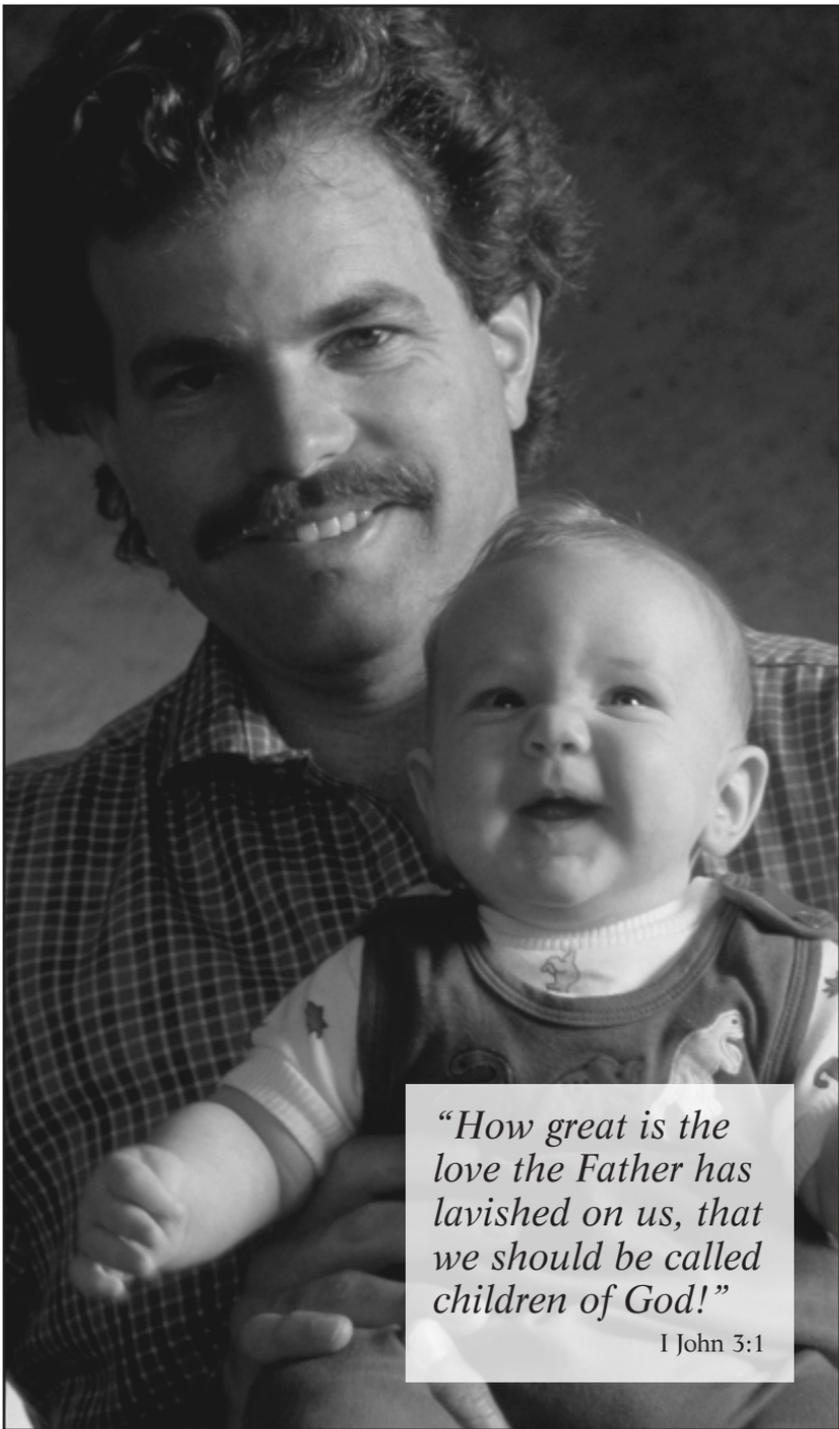
into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word



*“How great is the
love the Father has
lavished on us, that
we should be called
children of God!”*

I John 3:1

Like Father, Like Son—Part I

DAY 20

1John 2:28–3:10

How can others tell that you belong to your parents or to your kids? (a) same hair color/style, (b) same face/body shape, (c) same voice/laugh, (d) same mannerisms/personality, (e) other chip-off-the-old-block qualities.

1. Why is it not readily apparent to others who is a child of God and who is not (3:1-2,10)?

2. From this passage (3:4-10), what is the nature of sin—its origin, its effect, its remedy, its continuance?

3. How is it that Jesus lived without sin (3:5)? How is it possible for anyone else to live without sin—or is it?

1. Are you a true “child of God”? How do you know for sure?

2. Would everyone who knows you readily concur? Why or why not?

Doing “what is right” (2:29; 3:10) is the result of being born of God (2:29; 3:9). That is, holy living marks the children of God in whom Jesus lives his risen life. God’s paternal characteristics are transferred to us in the rebirth experience. No child of God keeps on sinning (3:6), for we **cannot go on sinning** with God’s seed (Greek, sperma) in us (3:9). This does not mean that sinless perfection is possible (see 1:8-10), nor that Christians cannot sin, but that by God’s grace Christians will not make a habit of sinning (2Pe 3:18). Sin is not impossible for Christians, but is incompatible or incongruous with their Father’s nature. Sin is the work of the devil (3:8), or “the evil one” (2:13-14; 3:12; 5:18-19).

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Like Father, Like Son—Part II

1 John 2:28–3:10

OPENING
up to the Word

Are you—a *moralist* (committed to doing the right things), or a *perfectionist* (committed to doing things right)? Do you seek general principles or focus on details? Give an example.

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Having passed the moral purity test (2:1-6), the social concerns test (2:7-14), and the doctrinal or “truth” test of the Christian (2:18-27), which test does John revisit here (2:28–3:10) and why?
2. What does the devil have to do with how well we do on this test (3:8)?
3. What did Christ’s appearance the *first* time (3:5, 8) have to do with how well we do on this test?
4. What does Christ’s appearance the *second* time (2:28; 3:2-3) have to do with it?
5. Doesn’t our grade on any spiritual test depend solely on Jesus and not our own efforts or righteousness?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Where do you look, and why, for the motivation and means to live a morally pure life—one without habitual sin?
 - (a) looking to Christ—being thankful for God’s great love demonstrated on the cross, where Christ died for your sin and joined in your suffering, and to the victory achieved by him in his glorious resurrection.
 - (b) looking inward and upward—being united with Christ within and among us and receiving his indwelling power not to sin;
 - (c) looking outward—seeking to conform to social expectations, and expecting support and accountability.



“Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.”

1 John 3:2