

“God Is Love”

Lesson
44
Summary

1, 2 and 3 John

Scripture Summary:

1 Jn. 1: Saints gain fellowship with God by obedience—We must confess our sins to gain forgiveness. 1 Jn. 2: Christ is our Advocate with the Father—We know God by obedience—Love not the world—Antichrists shall come in the last days. 1 Jn. 3: Sons of God shall become like Christ—Love for the brethren required to gain eternal life—Obedience assures us an answer to our prayers. 1 Jn. 4: Try the spirits—God is love and dwells in those who love him. 1 Jn. 5: Saints are born of God through belief in Christ—Water, blood, and Spirit testify of Christ—Belief in Christ required in order to gain eternal life. 2 Jn. 1: John rejoices because the children of the elect lady are true and faithful. 3 Jn. John commends Gaius for his help to those who love the truth.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

John’s Poetic Witness of the Savior – Full of Tender Imagery: He allows the account of one event to become part of an overall lesson, always pointing to the Lord’s mission. Among many interesting features in the first three chapters of John is a simple chiasmus featuring one of the lesser-known names of the Messiah, the “New Wine.”

Wine and Marriage: Marriage festivities two millennia ago is reflected in the account of Jesus and his mother at a wedding in Cana. It is appropriate to bring one’s “fruit of the vine” to the celebration. The host has the prerogative to sample each wine offering. The older wine usually has the best flavor and is usually given to the guests first. The newer wine is kept for the last.

Old and New Wine: The biblical metaphor of “old wine” may be what the Jews still follow every Sabbath as they partake of a sip of wine followed by a piece of bread. The prayers connected with this practice await a future deliverance, greater than from Egypt under Moses’ direction. After Jesus’ atonement, the practice among Christian believers became the “new wine” with bread taken first and followed by wine. This is done in remembrance of the greatest deliverance. An insight about the “new wine” can be derived from the prophet Joel’s statements: drunkards (wine drinkers) prefer old wine, the new wine is taken away (dried up), and then new wine will be returned when the temple is built again. (Joel 1:5)

Understand John by Perceiving Messages in the Names: As new wine is a name of the Lord, John uses several other names to identify the Savior, such as “The Word.” The opening statement of the Book of John is another chiasmus (“beginning,” “Word was with God, Word was God,” “beginning”). (John 1:1-2) He is “The Life” and He is “The Light.” (John 1:4-5) He was born of God. (John 1:13) We must be born of God. (John 3:5-7) We receive everlasting life by coming to the light. (John 3:16) We are to accept the words of God. (John 3:34) John’s beautiful language also uses the word “love” to portray the name and the immense gift God gave to us.

Love and Fear Have Related Meanings about God: “The Hebrew word for “revere” is (*yirah*) which is usually translated as “fear,” and that for “love” is (*aha’vab*). These two concepts, although they may seem contradictory at first glance, are the essence of Judaism’s view of man’s attitude to God.” “The “fear” referred to is not the fright or scaredness which a person feels when he is confronted, for example, with a hungry lion. It is rather a feeling of awe or reverence felt when witnessing greatness or grandeur . . . the thought of the infinity and greatness of God.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Love, God and Fellow Men: “A third century Rabbi, Abbaye, who worked in his fields at night so that he could study during the day . . . taught that the commandment to love God means that “God should come to be loved by other people through your behavior.” “In Jewish tradition, Abraham’s life is an example to this day of supreme faith and devotion to God, and of love for one’s fellow man.” “The first verse of the *Keri’at Shema*, the declaration of faith that every Jew is required to recite twice daily, reads: ‘And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.’ The rabbis asked: How is it possible to command a human being to love? And they answered that this commandment in fact means that the human being must try to imitate God as much as he can: “Just as He is merciful, so must you be merciful; just as He is gracious, so must you be gracious; just as He helps the needy, so must you too help the needy.” Thus God is the ultimate example for man.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Love of One's Fellow Man Is a Biblical Commandment: “. . . ‘Love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord’ (Leviticus 19:18). This law is the basis for all the other laws which prohibit unfair dealings and the bearing of grudges, and stress concern for the defenseless. The great sages Akiva and Hillel regarded love of one's fellow as a basic precept of the Torah. From this commandment was drawn moral responsibility toward all men, including gentiles. In the last century, technology has brought the world and all its people closer together so that all mankind are essentially ‘neighbors.’” “. . . Samson Raphael Hirsch makes the love of all mankind a condition of being a Jew. Sympathy for one's neighbor is basic to Martin Buber's I-Thou philosophy.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Many Kinds of Love: “Many kinds of love are represented in the Bible --- the sensuous love between man and woman; affection; concern; the theological idea of love between man and God. The most common term used is *ahav*. Parents have a special compassionate love for their children; affection, esteem and loyalty formed the essential relationship between David and Jonathan, or Naomi and Ruth. Love between man and woman is almost always connected with marriage or the intention to marry. The Song of Songs, described by the rabbis as an allegory of God's love for Israel, has been classed among the world's great love poetry. Its lyric quality and range of imagery have pictured the generosity and understanding which love creates and sustains, and have made these the ideal in human relationships. Love of God is sometimes signified indirectly, such as loving justice, or loving His commandments.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Moses' Farewell Speech: “Just before he died, and on the eve of the Children of Israel's entry into the Promised Land, Moses made a farewell speech to the Jews. In it, he reviewed their history and gave direction for their future. In one sentence (Deuteronomy 10:12) he summed up what the Bible considers to be the entire purpose of human existence: "And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God demand of you? Only this: to revere (fear) the Lord your God, to walk only in His paths, to love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and soul.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Beautiful Reminders of the Lord's Continual Presence: His many names are ever present reminders. “. . . through Jesus Christ his Son – He that ascended up on **high**, as also he descended **below** all things, in that he comprehended all things, that he might be in all and through all things, the **light** of truth; Which **truth** shineth. This is the light of Christ. As also he is in the **sun**, and the light of the sun, and the power thereof by which it was made. As also he is in the **moon**, and is the light of the moon, and the power thereof by which it was made; As also the light of the **stars**, and the power thereof by which they were made; And the **earth** also, and the power thereof, even the earth upon which you stand. And the light which shineth, which giveth you light, is through him who enlighteneth your **eyes**, which is the same light that quickeneth your **understandings**; Which light proceedeth forth from the presence of God to fill the immensity of **space** – The light which is in all things, which giveth life to all things, which is the **law** by which all things are governed, even the **power** of God who sitteth upon his throne, who is in the bosom of **eternity**, who is in the midst of all things.” (Doctrine and Covenants 88:5-13) “Yea, they were encircled about with everlasting darkness and destruction; but behold, he has brought them into his everlasting light, yea, into everlasting salvation; and they are encircled about with the matchless bounty of his love; yea, and we have been instruments in his hands of doing this great and marvelous work.” (Alma 26:15)

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Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament and Book of Mormon Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available *FREE* at www.HolyLandsRevealed.com. (Just click “LDS SUPPLEMENTS”)

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