



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Love It Or Leave It- 1 John 2:15-17

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¹⁵Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life^[a]—is not from the Father but is from the world. ¹⁷And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

In the segment from 2:6-2:14, we learned the believer's three-fold obligation: 1) to love God, 2) to love their neighbor and, 3) to live a life characterized by Love.

We also learned of the believer's implied obligation relative to spiritual growth. It is the purpose of God that each believer moves from spiritual infancy, through adulthood and on to the status of a Senior Citizen capable of accurate and correct teaching. (Hebrews 5:11-14).

At this juncture in his epistle John commands what the believer IS NOT to love. This seems reasonable, especially in the context of instructing those who transitioned from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of light. For the "newbie" it is essential; for those established in the faith it serves as a reminder.

In the Greek it is a strong admonition, generally meaning "stop", implying they had not correctly assessed their relationship with "the world" and quite possibly implying they had already begun to wander in that direction. **Hence: Love It Or Leave It**

Given the historical realities, this is not surprising.

The Neronic persecutions had begun and, added to the growing intensity of persecutions emanating from the Judaism branch, the temptation of "another world" seemed somewhat appealing.

That this was the case is evidenced in a reading of the epistle "To The Hebrews", though the audience to which John is writing may not have had exposure to this particular epistle.

Unfortunately, John does not explicitly inform us as to what he means by "the world", leaving us to deduce a meaning from the context. That the audience he was writing to did understand, is a given. John isn't writing in a vacuum.

This aspect, i.e. deducing from what is written as to what is to be believed and/or obeyed is part and parcel of the New Covenant.

This is most clearly expressed in one of the Confessions of Faith from the 17th Century where it was written: "VI. The whole counsel of God concerning all things necessary for His own glory, man's salvation, faith and life, is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by good and necessary consequence may be deduced from Scripture: unto which nothing at any time is to be added, whether by new revelations of the Spirit, or traditions of men" WCF. Section 1, article 6.

This sets in stage the believer's relationship to Confessions of Faith and Catechisms. (That is reserved for another discussion)

This aspect is in stark contrast to the reality of the Hebrew Old Covenant where nothing was left to individual discretion/deduction from principle, but all things were laid out in a strict code of conduct.

An illustration of the Old Covenant would be that of a doting father taking by the hand a doddering, stumbling child and seeking to lead it onward.

Candidly, this is part of the legitimate process of raising infants; but limiting it to that ignores the process of developing adults. (This aspect of covenantal comparison has led me to describe the Old Covenant as one made with spiritual infants, whereas the New Covenant addresses spiritual adults).

In raising children we move from rules for infants, to the introduction of principles tempered by rules during the pre-teen years and transitioning to a distinct focus on principles with the teens, about the time we launch them from the nest!

Forgive another personal illustration which, in one sense, I suggest as a possible manner in which God deals with His children.

When my kids were young (almost a half century ago), I suggested to them their individual need to keep Dad's "anxiety index" low. When it was "low", they correspondingly had great freedom of action, whereas when it was high, Dad was pressed to bring in restrictions limiting and/or controlling certain freedoms.

They were instructed as to the dynamics or content of Dad's "anxiety index". I needed to have 1) Confidence in their competence, 2) respect for their character and, 3) rapport with

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their personality in order for my Index to be low. Whenever one of the 3 aforementioned was absent or deficient their freedom of action was correspondingly affected.

In my mind, something similar comes into play within the context of the New Covenant.

John has implicitly established spiritual growth to maturity as the objective in 2:11-14.

Now, in 15-18 he introduces what the believer IS NOT to love.

As the Psalmist has indicated, He will instruct us with His eye upon us (Psalm 32:8). So, what is this "eye upon us"? Might I suggest it is The Spirit's utilization of that which has already been emblazoned on the psyche of everyone born? (Romans 2:14, 15 & Prov. 20:27)

Just as there is a divine command to love, there is a corresponding divine command as to what ought not to be loved.

John says: love not the world. What world? The physical world? Obviously not; since it is a given; this is where we exist and was already designated by God as good (Genesis 1:31) .

If we are commanded to Love not the world, then it appears the World John is referring to stands in direct contrast to loving God and Loving one's neighbor, which is the ethic of The Kingdom.

So, we have two realms in mind: 1) The World and, 2) The Kingdom. If such is the case, then it might be suggested The World stands for self-centeredness in direct contrast to the believer's obligation to be others centered, i.e. God and neighbor.

If we step outside John's epistle, we see the same focus in Jesus' ministry (Matt. 7:12; Luke 6:31; Leviticus 19:18) and in the ministry of Paul (1 Cor. 10:24; Phil. 2:3, 4; 1 Cor. 16:14).

So, if we reduce the two major categories, we are left with "The World" and "The Kingdom of God", or as one of the early church teachers stated it "The City of God and The City of Man".

One is self centered and the other, "other's centered". Suggesting, in the nature of things, an implied conflict.

John then says the World has three driving forces: 1) the flesh, 2) the eyes and, 3) pride. (We will interact on these areas during our session)

We see this reality manifest at the beginning of creation. Adam and Eve are given free reign throughout creation, restricted by only one solitary proscription: Do Not Eat of one particular tree. (We also see the dynamics in Achan's conduct in Joshua 7.)

Sadly, they were sorely tempted in respect of that one tree, where it was said the fruit was "good, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise: Blam-all three aspects of the "World's" focus were brought to bear and they succumbed.

Their decision transported them immediately into a state of spiritual blindness such that their understanding was darkened (Ephesians 4:18), having lost in one fell swoop, all the data God had placed in their minds and upon which they had not trusted (Prov. 3:5, 6).

So, in this brief segment, John is challenging his audience with respect to their focus: The Kingdom or The World.

In the Kingdom, one's focus is on bringing every thought, etc. into captivity to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5) so as to advance God's agenda. In the World, the focus is on The Self; its expressions, its satisfactions, etc. For a seeming moment, the focus of the world seems "right".

But, as we have all learned, things are not always as they seem and we are challenged to think things through. John says, "...and the world passeth away (Good News for 17th Century Man translation) and the lusts thereof.

This has been the historical reality of every "World View" vaulting itself on the scene of human history. In theory and initially, the proffered idea seems so wonderful.

In reality the innate status of mankind, i.e. tainted by Adam's violation, is such that the orientation of "Self" versus "The Other" takes center stage and forces the "idea" of the other into the trash heap of history. Along with countless lives who had believed the suggestion.

In conclusion, John admonishes his audience as to the ultimate destiny of this other "world view", it passes away. Much like the breath one breathes out on a very cold night.

Jesus' promise was for an "abundant life", not one that passed as a cold breath on a very cold winter night!