

I. Introduction and review: The social (love) test.

II. Love is both an old commandment and a new commandment. v. 7-8

A. In what sense is love an old commandment? v. 7

1. Love was commanded under the Old Covenant. Lev. 19:18
2. Love eternally springs from God's very nature. Eph. 1:4
3. These believers were taught about love from the beginning of their Christian experience: Love is an essential part of the gospel. v. 7b 3:11,23 2:24
4. Application: Many today are falling short of the standard set by the Apostles.

B. In what sense is love a new commandment? v. 8

1. The old commandment has new significance with the coming of Jesus Christ. John 13:34 15:12-13 Mt. 22:37-40 Gal. 5:14
2. Never before had love been revealed in this way. Eph. 3:17-19
 - a. God the Father shows His love by giving His Son. 4:9 John 3:16
 - b. Jesus' life demonstrates love in a unique way. John 13:1-17,34 *Washed feet.*
 - c. Jesus teaches us to love even our enemies. Luke 10:35-37 Mt. 5:43-44
 - d. Jesus shows the extent of His love by willingly giving up His life for us. 3:16 John 15:13 II Co. 5:21 Mark 15:34 Gal. 3:13 Isa. 53:4f Phil. 2:5-8
 - e. God's love is extended to both Jews and Gentiles. Acts 1:8 Mt. 28:19-20

C. The new age of light has already dawned. 1:5

1. The world is in spiritual and moral darkness because of sin. 5:19
2. The Old Testament looked forward to a new day of light. Isa. 9:2 60:19-20
3. The coming of Christ inaugurates the new age. John 8:12 9:5 Luke 1:79 Mt. 4:16
4. The darkness is already fading. 2:17 3:8 Mt. 12:28-29 John 16:33
5. The final consummation of the new age is yet to come. Rev. 21:5 I Co. 10:11

D. You *also* love because you are a part of the new age of light. I Th. 5:5 Eph. 5:8

1. A surprising statement: This new commandment is true in you. John 15:12-13
2. God has changed your life. Col. 1:13-14 I Pe. 2:9
3. Now you are able to love as He loves.
4. God's light is shining more brightly in the world because of your love. John 13:35 Mt. 5:14-16 I Pe. 2:9

E. John doesn't just tell you to love.

1. He points to Christ who perfectly exemplifies love.
2. He tells you how you can love because God has given you a new nature.
3. Those who know Christ will shine forth His love. John 8:12

III. If you hate your brother, you remain in darkness. v. 9.11

A. Love is a test of your profession of faith in Christ. v. 9, 4

1. A person who is still living in darkness hasn't yet truly come to the light.
2. For John there is no middle ground.
3. It is impossible to have a right relationship with God if you don't love your brother. 4:20 I Co. 13:2,13

- B. In what sense do all unbelievers hate?
 - 1. Many would object to this characterization.
 - 2. The old nature is characterized by selfishness which leads to murderous anger, bitterness, envy, etc. Mt. 5:21f Titus 3:3
 - 3. The one who fails to love his brother, hates him. v. 9 3:17 Luke 10:30-37
- C. Your failure to love has deadly consequences. v. 11
 - 1. You are in the darkness (of this fading evil world).
 - 2. You yourself are spiritually blind. John 12:40 3:19-21
 - 3. Your life lacks perspective and direction.
 - 4. Your fall is inevitable. v. 10 Pr. 4:19

IV. If you love your brother, you prove you are in the light. v. 10

- A. John's focus is upon loving your spiritual family. v. 10 1:3 Gal. 6:10 I Th. 3:12
 - 1. Elsewhere we are taught to love outsiders and enemies. Mt. 5:43-44 Luke 10:27f
 - 2. Here John is emphasizing our special relationship with other believers.
- B. What is meant by love? I Cor. 13
 - 1. Love is a Christlike attitude of self sacrifice for the good of others. John 15:12-13 13:1f Phil. 2:3-8 I Co. 13:5 Eph. 3:17f 4:32
 - 2. Love is expressed through action. 3:18 Mt. 25:42-43
Are you committed to the community of believers?
- C. When you love, you will be blessed.
 - 1. Your love proves God has truly worked in your life.
 - 2. Because you are in the light, you will not stumble. v. 8b Ps. 119:165
 - 3. Your loving in the light will bring blessing to the brethren and will be a witness to the world.

V. Concluding applications: Do you pass the love test?

Eph. 3:17-21

Discussion questions.

1. Of which commandment is John speaking in verses 7-8?
2. In what sense is this an old commandment? v. 7
3. In what sense is it a new commandment? v. 8
4. What does the darkness passing away and the light shining have to do with love? v. 8b
5. How is the commandment true in Christ? v. 8
6. How is the commandment true in us? v. 8
7. Why does lack of love prove someone is not really a true believer? v. 9
8. How can John imply that all unbelievers hate? v. 9
9. What are the consequences of hatred? v. 11
10. What is the nature of the love which should be found in every Christian? v. 10
11. How should that love be expressed?
12. What are the benefits of loving the brethren? v. 10
13. Do you pass the love test?