

The First Epistle of John

BYU New Testament Commentary Translation

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and
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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY
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About the Brigham Young University New Testament Commentary Series

Welcome to the BYU New Testament Commentary (BYUNTC), a project by a group of Latter-day Saint (LDS) specialists offering to readers a careful, new look at the biblical records that witness the life and ministry of Jesus Christ and the first generation of his Church. The commentary series seeks to make the New Testament more accessible to LDS general readers and scholars by employing much of current biblical scholarship while reflecting important LDS insights. At the same time, this effort may also be helpful to interested readers of other faiths who want to learn how a group of LDS scholars understands the Bible. A fundamental article of faith for Latter-day Saints (Mormons) affirms the Bible “to be the word of God” while adding, understandably, that it needs to be “translated correctly” in order for it to be accurately comprehensible to modern language speakers (A of F 1:10).

These objectives have helped shape the purposes and parameters of this commentary series. Serious LDS readers of the Bible search the scriptures, looking for depth and breadth in passages whose meanings and mandates may ultimately be plain but not shallow. Such readers and interpreters are served by treatments that unite faith and research, reason and revelation, in prayerfully confronting profound and difficult issues that arise in the texts and affect one’s path of progression. The New Testament has served as an influential guide to Western civilization for centuries. As such, its records have long been studied by lay people and scholars alike, resulting in a rich reservoir of information that illuminates the New Testament era culturally, historically, and linguistically. Selectively, the BYUNTC builds upon this vast body of knowledge, resting on the Greek texts of the New Testament and connecting helpful elements of linguistic, literary, historical, and cultural research and traditional scholarship together with LDS scriptures and doctrinal perspectives. The combination of all these

features distinguishes the BYUNTC from other commentaries, which are readily available elsewhere and which readers may also want to consult for more encyclopedic or specialized discussions.

The tone of the BYUNTC aims to be informative rather than hortatory, and suggestive rather than definitive in its interpretation. The opinions expressed in this series are the views of its contributors and should not necessarily be attributed to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints; Brigham Young University, where many of those involved here are headquartered; or anyone else, though these works have benefited from input and guidance from a number of colleagues, advisors, editors, and peer reviewers.

Each volume in this series contains a new working translation of the New Testament. Calling it the “BYU New Testament Commentary Translation” ties it to the Commentary series and clarifies that it does not seek to replace the authorized KJV adopted by the LDS Church as its official English text. Rather, it aims to enhance readers’ understanding conceptually and spiritually by rendering the Greek texts into modern English with LDS sensitivities in mind. Comparing and explaining the new Translation in light of the KJV then serves as one important purpose for each volume’s notes, comments, analyses, and summaries. This effort responds in modest ways to the desire President J. Reuben Clark Jr. expressed in his diary in 1956 that someday “qualified scholars [would provide] . . . a translation of the New Testament that will give us an accurate translation that shall be pregnant with the great principles of the Restored Gospel.”

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1 John

Chapter 1

¹ We proclaim to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have beheld and our hands have handled concerning the Word of life— ² for the life was manifested, and we have seen and we testify and we proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us— ³ what we have seen and we have heard, that you also might have fellowship with us. Our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴ We are writing these things that our joy may be full.

⁵ This is the message that we have heard from Him and we proclaim to you: God is light and there is no darkness in Him at all. ⁶ If we say, “we have fellowship with Him,” and yet we walk in darkness, we lie and we do not act in the truth. ⁷ If we walk in the light, as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses¹ us from every sin. ⁸ If we say, “we have no sin,” we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, He who is faithful and just will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say, “we have not sinned,” we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Chapter 2

¹ My little children, I write these things to you that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father: Jesus Christ, the righteous one. ² He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, not for ours only but for the whole world. ³ And this is how we know that we have come to know Him: if we keep His commandments. ⁴ The person who says, “I know Him” and does not keep His commandments is a liar, and

1. Or purifies.

the truth is not in such a person. 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly in such a person the love of God has become perfected. This is how we know that we are in Him. 6 The person who claims to abide in Him ought to walk just as He walked.

7 Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word that you have heard. 8 Yet I am writing a new commandment to you that is true in itself and in you, that the darkness is dispersing and the true light now shines. 9 The person who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. 10 The person who loves a brother or sister abides in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling. 11 But the person who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know the way to go because darkness has blinded their eyes.

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven through His name. 13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you have known Him who was from the beginning. I am writing to you, young people, because you have overcome the evil one. 14 I have written to you, children, because you know the Father. I have written to you, fathers, because you have known Him who was from the beginning. I have written to you, young people, because you are strong and the word of God abides in you and you have overcome the evil one. 15 Do not love the world neither the things in the world; if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in them. 16 For everything that is in the world—the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride concerning one’s life—comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the person who does the will of God remains forever.

18 Children, it is the last hour, and just as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, even now, many antichrists have appeared; this is how we know that it is the last hour. 19 They went out from us, but they did not belong to us, for if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but they made it plain that none of them belong to us. 20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know this. 21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, rather because you do know it and that no lie is of the truth.

22 Who is the liar? Is it not the person who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist: the person who denies the Father and the Son. 23 Every person who denies the Son does not have the Father; the person who confesses the Son also has the Father. 24 Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you will also abide in the Son and in the Father. 25 And this is the promise that He promised us: eternal life. 26 I have written these things to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you. 27 And the anointing that you received from Him abides in you, and so you have no need that anyone should teach you, but just as His anointing teaches you about everything—and it is true and not a lie—even as He taught you, abide in Him.

28 And now, little children, abide in Him so that when He appears we may have confidence and not be put to shame before Him at his coming. 29 If you know that He is righteous, then you also know that every person who does what is right has been born of Him.

Chapter 3

1 See what great love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we may be called “children of God”—and that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is because it did not know Him. 2 Beloved, we are now children of God, and what we shall be has not yet been revealed. We know that when He appears, we shall be just like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And every person who has this hope purifies themselves in Him, just as He is pure.

4 Every person who commits sin also commits lawlessness: for sin is lawlessness. 5 You know that He appeared in order to take away sins, and there is no sin in Him. 6 Every person who abides in Him does not continue to sin; every person who continues sinning has neither seen Him nor known Him.

7 Children, let no one deceive you. The person who acts righteously is righteous, just as He is righteous. 8 The person who commits sin is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. 9 Every person who has been born of God does not continue to sin, because His seed abides in them and they cannot sin because they have

been born of God. 10 The children of God and the children of the devil are manifest in this way: every person who does not act righteously and does not love their brother or sister is not of God.

11 For this is the message that you heard from the beginning: that we should love one another. 12 Not like Cain, who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his works were evil, but those of his brother were righteous.

13 Don't be surprised, brothers and sisters, if the world hates you. 14 We know that we have passed from death to life because we love our brothers and sisters; the person who does not love remains in death. 15 Every person who hates their brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in them. 16 This is how we know love: that He laid down his life for us; thus, we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. 17 How can the love of God abide in the person who has worldly goods and sees their brother or sister in need and yet refuses to show them compassion? 18 Little children, let us not love only in word or speech, but in action and truth.

19 And this is how we will know that we are of the truth, and we will reassure our heart before Him 20 whenever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart and knows everything. 21 Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God, 22 and whatever we ask we receive from Him because we are keeping His commandments and doing what pleases him.

23 And this is His commandment: that we believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and we love one another as He commanded us. 24 And the person who keeps His commandments abides in Him and He in them; and this is how we know that He abides in us, by the Spirit that He has given us.

Chapter 4

1 Beloved, do not trust every spirit but test whether the spirits are of God because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is also the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming, and even now it is already in the world.

4 You are from God, little children, and you have overcome them because He who is in us is greater than he who is in the world. 5 They

are from the world, therefore, what they speak is from the world and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God; the person who knows God listens to us; the person who is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

7 Beloved, let us love one another because love is from God, and every person who loves is born of God and knows God. 8 The person who does not love does not know God, because God is love. 9 This is how the love of God is revealed in us: God sent His uniquely begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him. 10 Herein is love: not that we loved God but that He loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

11 Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. 12 No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and His love is perfected in us. 13 This is how we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit. 14 And we have seen and we testify that the Father has sent His Son as the Savior of the world. 15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in them and they in God. 16 And we have known and have believed the love that God has for us. God is love and the person who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in them.

17 This is how love has been perfected in us so that we have confidence on the day of judgment; that as He is, so are we in this world. 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear because fear has to do with punishment and whoever fears has not been made perfect in love. 19 We love because He loved us first. 20 If anyone should say, "I love God" and hates their brother or sister, they are a liar; for the person who does not love their brother or sister whom they have seen is not able to love God whom they have not seen. 21 We have this commandment from Him: that the person who loves God also loves their brother or sister.

Chapter 5

1 Every person who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and every person who loves the Father² also loves the One who has been begotten of Him. 2 This is how we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and observe His commandments.

2. Literally, the one who begets.

3 For this is the love of God: that we keep His commandments—and they are not burdensome, 4 for whatever has been born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that overcomes the world: our faith.

5 Who is the person who overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. 6 This is He who came through water and blood: Jesus Christ. Not by water only but by water and blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, for the Spirit is the truth.

7 For there are three who testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood, and these three are in agreement. 9 If we receive human testimony, the testimony of God is greater; for this is the testimony of God: He has testified concerning his Son. 10 The person who believes in the Son of God has the testimony within themselves. The person who does not believe in God has made Him a liar, because they have not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. 11 And this is the testimony: God gave us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 The person who has the Son has life; the person who does not have the Son of God does not have life.

13 I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 And this is the confidence that we have in Him: If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we get the requests that we asked from Him.

16 If anyone sees their brother or sister committing a sin that does not result in death, they shall ask and He shall give them life—that is, to those who commit sin that does not result in death. There is a sin that results in death; I am not saying that one should entreat about that. 17 All unrighteousness is sin, but there is sin that does not result in death.

18 We know that every person who has been born of God does not continue to sin, but the person born of God guards themselves and the evil one is not able to take hold of them.

19 We know that we are of God and the whole world is subject to the evil one. 20 We also know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true—in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.

21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.