

“My Brother’s Keeper”
(1Jn 3:11-12)



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Overview of our passage



Theme: Jesus commanded us to love one another

☞ 1Jn 3:11-12

Doctrine: Love for God will show itself in obeying His commands to love one another

Application: We are to love in faith

Scripture Reading



1 John 3:11-12 (NASB)

11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another; 12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

Exposit: 1Jn 3:11



11 For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;

- ❧ “the message” (more on this)
- ❧ “heard from the beginning” (more on this)
- ❧ That message is “that we should love one another”

“the message”



- ❧ “message” is ‘aggelia’ from root ‘aggelos’ which means messenger and depending on context the messenger could be from a person, an angel, or God Himself
 - ❧ NOTE: the 7 letters to the 7 churches was written to 7 aggelos
- ❧ John is the only NT author to use “the message” or aggelia
- ❧ John uses aggelia 2x in this very epistle
 - ❧ Here in v.11
 - ❧ And earlier in the opening of this letter in 1Jn 1:5:
 - 5 This is the message (aggelia) we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.
 - ❧ “Him” in context is the Lord Jesus Christ
 - ❧ The message John heard is directly from the Lord Jesus Christ
 - ❧ That message in v.5 is that “God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness”

“the message”



- ❧ NOTE: The other time in the NT where a Greek word is transliterated to “the message” in English is the Greek is ‘logos’ which means ‘a word, statement, or speech’
- ❧ Some examples of logos being used vs. aggelos:
 - Acts 4:4
 - 4 But many of those who had heard **the message (logos)** believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.
 - Acts 10:44-45
 - 44 While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who were listening to **the message (logos)**. 45 All the circumcised believers who came with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.
- ❧ In other words, logos is the spoken Word vs. aggelos is the message concerning the spoken word brought by a messenger

“the message”



- ❧ Why did I go through that?
- ❧ In order to understand where John is coming from, we need know what he is referring to when he says “this is the message”
- ❧ In v. 11 “the message” he is not referring to the logos, but is referring to the message or spoken Word he heard and was taught directly from Jesus Christ

“heard from the beginning”



- ❧ “heard” is ‘okouō’ which means to hear or listen with one’s own ear
- ❧ “beginning” is ‘archē’ which also means origin
- ❧ In context the beginning or origin is connected with the message they heard or received
- ❧ Again “the message” is referring to is the message or spoken Word John heard and was taught directly from Jesus Christ and John is passing that message he received and proclaiming that to them
- ❧ Thus, “the beginning” is referring to the first preaching of the gospel they heard when John first brought the gospel to them!
 - ❧ When was that? When did his readers first hear the first preaching of the gospel?

“heard from the beginning”



John 13:34-35

34 A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

John 15:12-17

12 “This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 You are My friends if you do what I command you. 15 No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you. 16 You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. 17 This I command you, that you love one another.

“heard from the beginning”



- ✧ Thus, John is specifically referring to his gospel (gospel of John)!
- ✧ John is recanting what Jesus said and taught, what he recorded in the gospel of John, and reminding them that they heard it when they first received the gospel of John

Catarroja AMP: 1Jn 3:11



11 For this is the [gospel] message which you have heard from the beginning [when you received and heard the gospel of John], [and that gospel relays the message John received directly from Jesus Himself, and that is,] that we should love one another;

Exposit: 1Jn 3:12



12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

- ❧ As John customarily does, he contrasts between two things
 - ❧ Black or white
- ❧ In v. 12 he contrasts love with one another vs not loving one another
 - ❧ Uses Christian brother love vs. Cain
- ❧ “and for what reason did he (Cain) slay him”
 - ❧ Cain's deeds were evil vs. Abel's deeds was righteous
- ❧ With that let's take a close look at the account of Cain and Abel to see where John is coming from...

Exposit: 1Jn 3:12



Genesis 4:1-12

1 Now the man (Adam) had relations with his wife Eve, and she conceived and gave birth to Cain, and she said, "I have gotten a manchild with the help of the LORD." 2 Again, she gave birth to his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 So it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the LORD of the fruit of the ground. 4 Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the LORD had regard for Abel and for his offering; 5 but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. 6 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? 7 If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it." 8 Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.

9 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" And he said, "I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?" 10 He said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. 11 Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth."

Exposit: 1Jn 3:12



- ❧ Cain and Abel were twins
 - ❧ Gen 4:2 say “***Again**, she gave birth to his brother Abel”
 - ❧ Hebrew yasaph which means to do again, or to continue
- ❧ Abel was a keeper of flocks (a shepherd)
- ❧ Cain was a tiller of the ground (a land laborer; a farmer)
- ❧ Gen 4:3 says “So it came about in the course of time that” both brought an offering to the LORD
 - ❧ Implied they must have received instruction from their parents (Adam/Eve) about the offering
 - ❧ It is reasonable to deduce they told their sons about the Fall and God slewing an animal for their covering
 - ❧ Cain brought fruit
 - ❧ Abel brought the “firstlings” (first born) and it’s fat portions
- ❧ Gen 4:4 says “And the LORD had *regard for Abel and for his offering”
 - ❧ Hebrew shaah which means pay attention to, to gaze upon
- ❧ Gen 4:5 says “but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard (shaah)
 - ❧ God did not pay attention to Cain’s, stared Abel’s way

Exposit: 1Jn 3:12



- ☞ Cain became very angry and his countenance fell
 - ☞ Cain looked away in his anger and his facial expression showed it
- ☞ God addressed Cain and said why are you angry and countenance fallen
 - ☞ “if you do well (if you do what is pleasing to God), will not your countenance be lifted up”
 - ☞ “if you do not do well (if you do not do what is pleasing to God), sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is for you, but you must master it (sin)”
- ☞ Gen 4:8 “Cain *told Abel his brother”
 - ☞ Hebrew amar, and depending on context could mean something said vocally, but also internally
 - ☞ Often times when amar is referring to something said vocally, it is often followed up with quotes
 - ☞ But since Cain is not quoted, the context suggests that Cain said to Abel not vocally, but internally (in his heart which God saw)
- ☞ This flows perfectly into latter part of v. 8 “And it came about when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him”
 - ☞ God saw the sin in Cain’s heart and warned Cain must master it
 - ☞ TRUTH: Sin starts in the heart
- ☞ James makes this very clear...

Exposit: 1Jn 3:12



James 1:13-15

13 Let no one say when he is tempted (under a trial and being tested to do evil), “I am being tempted by God”; for God cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. 14 But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. 15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

- ❧ When a person is under a trial to commit evil (like Cain), he cannot blame God (or anyone else), but does so “by his own lust” (by his own evil heart)
- ❧ When your own personal lust to do evil is conceived (you considered to do evil in your heart and thoughts), it (your evil lust) gives “birth to sin”
 - ❧ Sin 1st is internal, sin starts in the heart/mind (it’s a newborn baby if-you-will)
 - ❧ But if you don’t master that sin and allow it to become fully mature, then sin(is no longer a new born baby, but a fully mature man, and therefore,) will accomplish its purpose
 - ❧ When you act on your sinful thoughts (you obey it with your actions)
 - ❧ Then, sin is accomplished resulting in death (literally will kill you like a plague)

Exposit: 1Jn 3:12



- ❧ Back to Cain and Abel
 - ❧ When Cain's offering was not regarded or looked upon by God, Cain immediately thought in his heart to kill Abel and even told him internally
 - ❧ God warned Cain not to carry out that evil act
 - ❧ "sin is at the door, but you must master it"
 - ❧ In other words, God warned Cain if you don't control sin, it will control and destroy you like a plague!
- ❧ But Cain did not heed to God's warning
- ❧ Cain did not repent of his evil thoughts to kill Abel
- ❧ But instead Cain opened the door of his heart (if-you-will), and allowed his evil lusts to fully mature
- ❧ And instead of mastering his sinful and evil thoughts, he gave into them and carried it out and murdered Abel his brother
 - ❧ Jas 1:15 "Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death"

Exposit: 1Jn 3:12



- ❧ Let's continue on with what happened after Cain murdered Abel...
- ❧ When God asked Cain where was Abel, Cain said "I do not know, Am I my brother's *keeper"
 - ❧ Hebrew shamar means doorkeeper, bodyguard, security guard, watchman
- ❧ God then asked Cain ""What have you done?" The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground."
 - ❧ Quite literally God heard the loud screaming of Abel's blood from the ground
 - ❧ As if the blood itself is personified
 - ❧ NOTE: Come judgment day, the cries of those murdered will be heard by God (Christ) the Judge and will take vengeance ("Vengeance is mines I will repay" - Heb 10:30)
- ❧ God then judged Cain since Abel's blood from the ground is heard, when Cain cultivates the land, it will no longer yield its strength.
- ❧ Thus, Cain's punishment going forward was:
 - ❧ When Cain cultivates the land, it will not be fruitful; no more big harvests
 - ❧ He will be in perpetual fear, dread, and mourning (in a grieved and sorrowful state)
 - ❧ He will be driven from one place to another (will be a wanderer the rest of his days)
 - ❧ No peace, no contentment, no fulfillment, no joy

Exposit: 1Jn 3:12



Back to our main verse, 1Jn 3:12:

12 not as Cain, who was of the evil one and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.

- ☞ John is saying we are not to follow the example of Cain who instead of loving his brother Abel, hated him, and that hatred lead to murder
- ☞ NOTE: much has been said about why God favored Abel's offering over Cain's
 - ☞ The reason why God favored Abel's over Cain, was because Cain's deeds (which was a reflection of his heart) were evil and Abel's deeds (which was a reflection of his heart) was righteous
 - ☞ God looks at the heart!
 - ☞ And when Abel brought his offering, he offered in faith!
 - ☞ When Cain brother his offering, he did not offer it in faith!
 - ☞ Is this not what Barnabas said in Hebrews...

Exposit: 1Jn 3:12



Hebrews 11:4

4 **By faith** Abel offered to God a *better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, **and through faith**, though he is dead, he (through his faith) still speaks.

- ☞ Abel's offering was "better" (greater in its worth) because it was more in line with the atonement of Christ!
 - ☞ First born belongs to God
 - ☞ Blood sacrifice
 - ☞ Fat portion was offered as a burnt offering by Aaron and his sons
- ☞ All Cain needed to do was recognize the worth and significance of the atonement and align this offering to that (then God would have been pleased and Cain's anger turned into joy)

Exposit: 1Jn 3:12



Here is where John is getting at in v. 11-12:

- ❧ The message John heard and observed and witnessed directly from the Lord Jesus, is that we are to love one another
- ❧ Loving one another and hating one another is black and white
- ❧ Loving one another begins in the heart and is carried out by our actions
- ❧ Hating one another too begins in the heart and is carried out by our actions
- ❧ We are to love our fellow Christian brothers and sisters and do so with our actions
- ❧ We are not to be like Cain who hated his own brother
- ❧ “and for what reason did he (Cain) slay him (Abel)”
 - ❧ Cain’s deeds were evil vs. Abel’s deeds was righteous

APPLICATION:

- ❧ We are to love in faith because God looks at the heart!
- ❧ We are to love in faith which should be a reflection of our heart!
- ❧ We are to love one another, just as Jesus loved us!
- ❧ If we aren’t loving one another, repent, and begin loving one another!