

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

Message One

**The Fellowship of the Eternal Life—
the Reality of Living in the Body of Christ**

Scripture Reading: 1 John 1:1—2:2

**I. John's Epistles (especially his first Epistle) unfold the
mystery of the fellowship of the eternal life—1 John
1:3-4, 6-7:**

- A. Fellowship is the flow of the eternal life within all the believers, illustrated by the flow of the water of life in the New Jerusalem; the reality of the Body of Christ, the church life in actuality, is the flow of the Lord Jesus within us, and this flowing One must have the preeminence within us—vv. 2-4; Rev. 22:1; Col. 1:18b; cf. Ezek. 47:1.
- B. Fellowship is the flowing Triune God—the Father is the fountain of life, the Son is the spring of life, and the Spirit is the river of life; this flowing issues in the totality of eternal life—the New Jerusalem—John 4:14b; Rev. 22:1-2.
- C. Fellowship is the imparting of the Triune God—the Father, the Son, and the Spirit—into the believers as their unique portion and blessing for them to enjoy today and for eternity—1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Cor. 13:14; Num. 6:22-27.
- D. Fellowship indicates a putting away of private interests and a joining with others for a certain common purpose; hence, to be in the divine fellowship is to put aside our private interests and join with the apostles and the Triune God for the carrying out of God's purpose—Acts 2:42; 1 John 1:3.
- E. Fellowship comes from teaching; if we teach wrongly and differently from the apostles' teaching, the teaching of God's economy, our teaching will produce a sectarian, divisive fellowship—Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 1:3-6; 6:3-4; 2 Cor. 3:8-9; 5:18.
- F. First John reveals the principles of the divine fellowship, 2 John reveals that we must have no fellowship with those who deny Christ (vv. 7-11), and 3 John reveals that we should stay in the one fellowship of God's family by sending forward those who travel for the gospel and the ministry of the word in a manner worthy of God and by not loving to be first in the church (vv. 5-10).

CRYSTALLIZATION-STUDY OUTLINES

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II. The fellowship of the eternal life is the reality of living in the Body of Christ in the oneness of the Spirit—1 Cor. 10:16-18; Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:3:

- A. We enter into the vertical aspect of the divine fellowship by the divine Spirit, the Holy Spirit; this aspect of fellowship refers to our fellowship with the Triune God in our loving Him—2 Cor. 13:14; 1 John 1:3, 6; Mark 12:30.
- B. We enter into the horizontal aspect of the divine fellowship by the human spirit; this aspect of fellowship refers to our fellowship with one another by the exercise of our spirit in our loving one another—Phil. 2:1; Rev. 1:10; 1 John 1:2-3, 7; 1 Cor. 16:18; Mark 12:31; Rom. 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-15.
- C. The one divine fellowship is an interwoven fellowship—the horizontal fellowship is interwoven with the vertical fellowship:
 1. The initial experience of the apostles was the vertical fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ, but when the apostles reported the eternal life to others, they experienced the horizontal aspect of the divine fellowship—1 John 1:2-3; cf. Acts 2:42.
 2. Our horizontal fellowship with the saints brings us into vertical fellowship with the Lord; then our vertical fellowship with the Lord brings us into horizontal fellowship with the saints.
 3. We must maintain both the vertical and horizontal aspects of the divine fellowship in order to be healthy spiritually—cf. 1 John 1:7, 9.
- D. The divine fellowship is everything in the Christian life:
 1. When fellowship disappears, God also disappears; God comes as the fellowship—2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 22:1.
 2. In this divine fellowship God is interwoven with us; this interweaving is the mingling of God and man to bring the divine constituent into our spiritual being for our growth and transformation in life—Lev. 2:4-5.
 3. The divine fellowship blends us, tempers us, adjusts us, harmonizes us, and mingles us together into one Body—1 Cor. 10:16-18; 12:24-25.

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III. In order to remain in the enjoyment of the divine fellowship, we need to take Christ as our sin offering for the indwelling sin in our nature and as our trespass offering for the sinful deeds in our conduct—1 John 1:8-9; 3:20-21; Lev. 4:3; 5:6; John 1:29; Rom. 8:3; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Pet. 2:24-25:

- A. Sin is the evil nature of Satan, who injected himself into man through Adam's fall and has now become the sinful nature of lawlessness that is dwelling, acting, and working as a law in fallen man—Rom. 5:12, 19a, 21a; 6:14; 7:11, 14, 17-23; Psa. 51:5; 1 John 3:4; cf. 2 Thes. 2:3, 7-8.
- B. Taking Christ as our sin offering means that our old man is dealt with (Rom. 6:6), that sin in the nature of fallen man is condemned (8:3), that Satan as sin itself is destroyed (Heb. 2:14), that the world is judged, and that the ruler of the world is cast out (John 12:31):
 - 1. The word *ruler* in "the ruler of this world" implies authority or power and the struggle for power—Luke 4:5-8; cf. Matt. 20:20-21, 24; 3 John 9.
 - 2. The struggle for power is the result, the issue, of the flesh, sin, Satan, the world, and the ruler of the world—Gal. 5:16-17, 24-26.
 - 3. The law of sin in our flesh is the spontaneous power, strength, and energy to struggle with God; the law of the sin offering is the law of the life of the pneumatic Christ, whom we enjoy, to automatically and spontaneously free us from the law of sin—Rom. 7:23; 8:2; Lev. 6:24-30; cf. 7:1-10.
- C. We partake of Christ as our sin offering in the sense of enjoying Him as our life, the life that bears others' sins, so that we may be able to bear the problems of God's people by ministering Christ to them as the sin-dealing life for them to be kept in the oneness of the Spirit—1 John 5:16; Lev. 10:17.
- D. Through our genuine, intimate, living, and loving fellowship with God, who is light (1 John 1:5; Col. 1:12), we will realize that we are sinful, and we will take Christ as our sin offering and trespass offering:

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1. The more we love the Lord and enjoy Him, the more we will know how evil we are—Isa. 6:5; Luke 5:8; Rom. 7:18.
2. Realizing that we have a sinful nature and taking Christ as our sin offering cause us to be judged and subdued, and this realization preserves us, for it causes us not to have any confidence in ourselves—Phil. 3:3; cf. Exo. 4:6.
3. Man, created by God for the purpose of expressing and representing God, should be for nothing other than God and should be absolutely for God; thus, anything we do out of ourselves, whether good or evil, is for ourselves, and since it is for ourselves and not for God, it is sinful in the eyes of God; sin is being for the self—Gen. 1:26; Isa. 43:7; Rom. 3:23:
 - a. Serving the Lord for ourselves is sin; preaching ourselves is sin—Num. 28:2; 2 Kings 5:20-27; Matt. 7:22-23; 2 Cor. 4:5.
 - b. Doing our righteous deeds, such as giving alms, praying, and fasting, for ourselves to express and display ourselves is sin—Matt. 6:1-6.
 - c. Loving others for ourselves (for our name, position, benefit, and pride) is sin; raising up our children for ourselves and for our future is sin—Luke 14:12-14; cf. 1 Cor. 7:14.
4. The Lord uses our failures to show us how horrible, ugly, and abominable we are, causing us to forsake all that is from the self and to completely depend on God—Psa. 51; Luke 22:31-32; Rom. 8:28.
- E. To take Christ as the reality of the trespass offering is to experience Him as the redeeming One, the shining One, and the reigning One in order to enjoy Him as the supply of life in the fellowship of life—1 John 1:1—2:2; Rev. 21:21, 23; 22:1-2:
 1. In taking Christ as our trespass offering, we need to make a thorough confession of all our sins and impurity to have a good and pure conscience—Acts 24:16; 1 Tim. 1:5, 19; 3:9; 2 Tim. 1:3; Heb. 9:14; 10:22.

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2. If we confess our sins, God is faithful in His word to forgive us our sins and righteous in His redemption to cleanse us from all unrighteousness; furthermore, Christ as our elder Brother is our Advocate with the Father to restore our interrupted fellowship with the Father that we may abide in the enjoyment of the divine fellowship—1 John 1:7, 9; 2:1-2.
3. The cleansing of the blood of Jesus the Son of God solves the problem of separation from God, the problem of guilt in our conscience, and the problem of accusations from Satan, thus enabling us to have a daily life full of God's presence—Psa. 103:1-4, 12-13; 32:1-2; Rev. 12:10-11.
4. Taking Christ as our trespass offering with the confession of our sins in the divine light is the way to drink Christ as the living water for us to become the New Jerusalem—John 4:14-18.
5. Taking Christ as our trespass offering to receive the forgiveness of sins issues in our fearing God and loving God—Psa. 130:4; Luke 7:47-50.

IV. As we are enjoying Christ in the divine fellowship, we continually experience a cycle in our spiritual life of four crucial things—the eternal life, the fellowship of the eternal life, the divine light, and the blood of Jesus the Son of God; such a cycle brings us onward in the growth of the divine life until we reach the maturity of life to corporately arrive at a full-grown man, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ—1 John 1:1-9; Heb. 6:1; Eph. 4:13.