

## I John 2:12-14

- Intro.**
- Can you detect any connection between these verses and the previous verses?
  - Is there a continued polemic or adversarial attitude in these verses?
  - Can you see the duplicated triad of statements that comprises the structure of these verses?
  - Why do the verbs change from present tense in the first triad of statements, to aorist tense in the second triad of statements?
    - “I write”/”I am writing” – Do these refer to...
      - what has preceded in these epistle?
      - what is presently being written? ...this paragraph?
      - this epistle as a whole?
    - “I have written” – Do these refer to...
      - a previous document?
        - Gospel of John?
        - II John?
        - III John?
        - Revelation?
        - unknown document?
      - what has preceded in this epistle?
      - what was written in verse 13 before John was interrupted or distracted and returned to his writing in verse 14?
    - Do the different verb tenses of both triads refer to the same present tense exhortation of John?
      - Are the aorist tenses used as present tenses? (cf. 2:21,26; 5:13)
      - Are the aorist tenses used as epistolary aorists taking into account the time-interval between the writing and the receipt of the letter by the recipients?
      - Did John change to past tense because he thought he might be dead by the time this letter arrived?
      - Did a redactionist add the second triad at a later date?
      - Did John change tenses only as a stylistic variation?
      - Did John change tenses only for the purpose of reiterative emphasis?
  - What does John mean by the conjunction “that” or “because” used in all six statements?
    - Explanation of content?
      - information? “...that which you do not know” (cf. 2:21)
      - confirmation? “...that which you know, and I am reminding you of” (2:21)
    - Explanation of purpose and objective?
      - affirmation? “...because these spiritual realities are foundational...”
      - application? “...because practical Christian behavior is based on these spiritual realities”
  - What does John mean by the triads of people groupings?
    - Should differentiation be made between “little children” (*teknia* - vs. 12) and “children” (*paidia* - vs. 14)?
      - infants vs. school-children?
      - or are these essentially synonymous?
    - Is a gender bias apparent in reference to “young men” and “fathers”?
    - Are these three designations simply a rhetorical device used to refer to the same people?
      - Can all Christians be referred to as “children”, “young men”, and “fathers”?
      - Can what is said of each group be true of all Christians?
      - Was John thinking of the designations of people made by the prophet Joel? (cf. Joel 2:28; Acts 2:17)

- Are these designations a two-fold distinction whereby the latter two designations subdivide the first designation?
  - Does “children” refer to all Christians? (cf. 2:1,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21)
  - Do “young men” and “fathers” refer to...
    - Physical age distinction?
      - youth and older persons
    - Ministry distinction?
      - followers and leaders?
      - deacons and elders?
    - Maturity distinction?
      - immature and mature?
      - growing and grown
- Are these three designations distinguishing between three different groupings of people?
  - Physical age distinction?
    - children, adolescents, parents?
  - Spiritual maturity distinction?
    - babes in Christ, those in growing process, spiritually mature?
    - neophytes, trainees, reproducers?
  - Metaphorical or figurative distinction?
    - child-like, young-at-heart, mature?
    - dependent, exuberant, responsible?
- Would John be differentiating between different levels, stages, classes of spiritual maturity when Gnostic teaching advocated such spiritual progression?
- Would John have referred to anyone as “father” in the spiritual or metaphorical sense in light of Jesus’ comment in Matthew 23:9 - “Call no one on earth, ‘Father’, ...”? (cf. I Cor. 4:15)

- Vs. 12**
- Does “little children” refer to all Christians? (cf. 2:1,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21)
  - Is John writing to the “little children” to explain...
    - “that your sins are forgiven” (information or confirmation)?
    - “that because your sins are forgiven” your behavior should be consistent with the character of Christ” (affirmation and application)?
  - Does “your sins are forgiven” mean...
    - pardon of sins?
    - remission of sins?
    - absolution of sins?
    - deliverance from sins?
    - replacement of sins with godliness?
  - Why does John explain that “your sins are forgiven *for His name’s sake*”?
    - to emphasize that divine Being expressed in divine action is the only basis for forgiveness?
    - to emphasize that it was by Christ’s performance, not by our performance, that our sins are forgiven?
    - to emphasize that the name of “Jesus” means “Jehovah saves”?
    - to emphasize that one must believe in Jesus’ name to receive forgiveness of sins” (cf. John 1:12)
    - to emphasize that the expression of the nature and character of Christ are to be the consequences of forgiveness of sins?
    - to emphasize that God’s redemptive and restorative action in Jesus is unto His own glory?

- Vs. 13** • Who are the “fathers” that John is writing to?
- elderly?
  - grown-ups”
  - leaders?
  - spiritual reproducers?
- What does it mean to “know Him...”?
- to have accurate information about?
  - to have intimate personal relationship with?
  - to have a long-standing relationship with?
- Who is the “Him” who is “known” and “has been from the beginning”?
- God, the Father
  - Jesus Christ?
- In what sense has He “been from the beginning”?
- beginning of time? - creation
  - beginning of redemptive mission? - incarnation
  - beginning of public ministry? - baptism and temptation
  - beginning of the church? - Pentecost
  - beginning of Christian experience? - conversion
- Who are the “young men”?
- physical adolescents or juveniles?
  - growing Christians?
  - young Christians striving to prove themselves?
- What does it mean to “overcome the evil one”?
- to win the battle of spiritual warfare by putting on the full armor of God? (Eph. 6:10-20)
  - to win the battle of spiritual warfare by casting out demons?
  - to win the battle of spiritual warfare by repeating Jesus’ name?
  - to overcome temptation in Christian behavior? (cf. 2:15-17)
  - to partake of a spiritual exchange in regeneration? (cf. Acts 26:18; Eph. 2:2,3; Col. 1:13)
- In what way do children “know the Father”?
- infants know their daddy?
  - Christians have a personal relationship with God?
  - babes in Christ have an implicit trust and dependence upon God?

- Vs. 14** • Why is the same thing said about “fathers” as was stated in verse 13?
- Is John emphasizing the “young men” by expanding the explanation of them in these three statements?
  - Does John perceive that most of his readers qualify as “young men” in the growing stage of their Christian lives?
  - Of the three explanations of “young men”, should one be regarded as prior or predominant, and the others as predicate, subsequent or consequent on the one?
  - Can it be stated of all Christians that...
    - they have overcome the evil one? (cf. Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13; Eph. 2:2,3)
    - the Word of God abides in them? (cf. Col. 3:16; James 1:18; I Pet. 1:23)
    - they are strong? (cf. Phil. 4:13; Eph. 1:19; 6:10)

- Conc.** • What is the primary objective of John in writing these verses?
- to make clear-cut distinctions and categories of Christians?
  - to separate the sequential stages of spiritual progress?
  - to remind Christians, wherever they are in their Christian maturity, of the spiritual realities they have in Christ?
  - to encourage all Christians to practical Christian behavior that flows out of the sufficiency that is theirs in Christ?
- What personal application can you make for your life from these verses?