

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 336 – December 2nd – 1 John 2:18-3:6

Works frequently referenced in these notes on John's Epistles

Marshall, I Howard	<i>The Epistles of John</i> , The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1978
Smalley, Stephen S	<i>1, 2, 3 John</i> , Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 51, Word Books, Dallas, 1984
Stott, John R.W.	<i>Epistles of John</i> , Tyndale Commentary, IVF, London, 1964
Westcott, B.F	<i>The Epistles of St John</i> , MacMillan & Co, Cambridge & London, 1886

Verses 18ff

The spiritual warfare between the forces of Christ and of the prince of darkness is not a simple warfare between the church and the world: that warfare is to be found even within and among those claiming to be the people of God. Smalley argues strongly (contra Marshall) that this section continues the themes of the preceding section.

Verse 18

Παιδιά, ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν, καὶ καθὼς ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, καὶ νῦν ἀντίχριστοι πολλοὶ γεγόνασιν· ὅθεν γινώσκομεν ὅτι ἐσχάτη ὥρα ἐστίν.

παιδιον, ου n see v.14

The relationship implied is that of a fatherly teacher to pupils who are childlike in their understanding, and in need of instruction.

ἐσχατος, η, ον adj last, final
 ὥρα, ας f hour, period of time

The last period of time before the consummation of the purposes of God in the perfect establishment of his kingly reign. It is a period marked by conflict. Smalley notes, "The eschatological associations belonging to the term ὥρα, 'hour', are familiar to us from John's Gospel: e.g. John 2:4; 4:23; 16:2; cf. also Luke 22:53. Nevertheless, the exact phrase ἐσχάτη ὥρα occurs in the NT only here."

ἀντίχριστος, ου m Antichrist (of one who claims to be Christ or is opposed to Christ)

Some witnesses introduce ὁ before ἀντίχριστος.

Westcott says that they had heard warnings that the last days would be marked by apostasy and false teaching (Mk 13:16ff; Matt 24:5,24; Acts 20:30; 1 Tim 4:1-3) and even that such false teaching would find its focus in a particular adversary to Christ (2 Thess 2:3).

The use of the term 'antichrist' without an article shows it had "become current as a technical (proper) name."

Smalley comments, "The popular expectation of antichrist, marking the arrival of the end-time (ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἀντίχριστος ἔρχεται, 'you heard that antichrist is to come') has been realized, in John's view, by the 'appearance' of 'many antichrists'... Clearly John regards the heretical secessionists from his community as 'antichrists'; and he sees the erroneous christology of these professed believers (whose character has been in view since 1:5) as both dangerous for the life and unity of the church (cf. v 19), and a mark of the arrival of the end-time."

And Marshall writes, "It seems ... that he regarded the false teachers of his day as being possessed by the spirit of the antichrist, whose coming still lay in the future."

γεγόνασιν Verb, perf act indic, 3 pl γινομαι
 ὅθεν from where, therefore, for which
 reason

Verse 19

ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐξῆλθαν, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἦσαν ἐξ ἡμῶν· εἰ γὰρ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἦσαν, μεμενήκεισαν ἂν μεθ' ἡμῶν· ἀλλ' ἵνα φανερωθῶσιν ὅτι οὐκ εἰσιν πάντες ἐξ ἡμῶν.

ἐξῆλθαν Verb, aor act indic, 3 pl ἐξερχομαι

"Till the moment of separation they were undistinguishable from the rest of the Christian society." Westcott.

μεμενήκεισαν Verb, pluperf act indic, 3 pl
 μενω

φανερωθῶσιν Verb, aor pass subj, 3 pl
 φανεροω reveal, make known, make
 evident

"For this ellipse see John 1:8; 9:3; 13:18; 14:31; 15:25. The departure of these false teachers after a temporary sojourn in the Christian society was brought about that they might be shewn in their true character, and so seen to be not of it." Westcott.

Westcott argues that the construction means that 'they are not at all of us', rather than, 'they are not all of us'. Smalley favours 'none of them belonged to us.'

Verse 20

καὶ ὑμεῖς χρισμα ἔχετε ἀπὸ τοῦ ἁγίου καὶ οἴδατε πάντες·

Note the emphatic contrast, καὶ ὑμεῖς 'and as for you...' The force of the καὶ here is adversative. John moves from the marks of the false 'Christians' to the marks of the true believer (vv. 20-23).

Smalley comments, " In the passage which begins here (vv 20–28) there is an emphasis on three leading ideas: χρισμα ('consecration'), ὁ ἠκεύσατε ἀπ ἀρχῆς ('what you heard from the beginning') and μένειν ('to abide'). Together these three motifs highlight the concept of God's indwelling word, in a context which deals with the eschatological benefits of the new covenant. Such a stress has already been anticipated in the forceful section 2:12–14."

χρισμα, τος n anointing

"The readers of the Epistle had the power of discerning the real character of 'Antichrists.' 'Christians' are themselves in a true sense 'Christs', anointed ones, consecrated to God as 'prophets', 'priests', and 'kings' (1 Peter 2:5 (9); Apoc 1:6; 5:10; 20:6); and in virtue of that consecration endowed with the corresponding blessings." Westcott.

Smalley comments, "A play on words is apparent in this passage. Central to the apostolic preaching is the confession of Jesus as 'Christ' (χριστός, the anointed one). Those who deny this are his opponents (ἀντίχριστοι, 'antichrists,' v 18); whereas the faithful have received a divine 'anointing' (χρισμα)."

ἅγιος, α, ον holy

I.e. they have received the gift of the Holy Spirit from Christ, the Holy One of God. By this gift they have Christ and remain in Christ (cf. John 14-16).

οἶδα know, understand

There are variant readings here. παντες (read by κ B P Ψ etc.) means 'you all know', whereas παντα (read by A C K Byz Lect etc.) means 'you know all things'. UBS cautiously favour παντες. This is followed by Smalley though Marshall prefers 'all of you know the truth'.

On the theme of knowledge, cf. John 16:13.

Verse 21

οὐκ ἔγραψα ὑμῖν ὅτι οὐκ οἶδατε τὴν ἀλήθειαν, ἀλλ' ὅτι οἶδατε αὐτήν, καὶ ὅτι πᾶν ψεῦδος ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας οὐκ ἔστιν.

γραφω write

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

ψεῦδος, ους n lie, untruth, that which is false/imitation

"The object of the apostle in writing was not to communicate fresh knowledge, but to bring into active and decisive use the knowledge which his readers already possessed."

Westcott.

Verse 22

τίς ἐστὶν ὁ ψεύστης εἰ μὴ ὁ ἀρνούμενος ὅτι Ἰησοῦς οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ χριστός; οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀντίχριστος, ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν.

ψεῦστης, ους m liar

ἀρνεομαι deny, disown, renounce

Cf. 4:2f. "A common 'Gnostic' theory was that 'the aeon Christ' descended upon the man Jesus at His Baptism, and left Him before the Passion. Those who held such a doctrine denied that 'Jesus was the Christ'; and in so denying, denied the union of the divine and the human in one Person. This heresy then St John signalises here, the direct contradiction to the fundamental truth which he proclaimed, *the Word became flesh*." Westcott.

Marshall comments, "For John the height of heresy is to deny that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God and Saviour. To reduce Jesus to the status of a mere man, or to allow no more than a temporary indwelling of some divine power in him is to strike at the root of Christianity. Modern thinkers may have more refined ways of stating similar denials of the reality of the incarnation. It may be doubted whether they are any more immune to John's perception that they take the heart out of Christianity."

The meaning of the phrase ὁ ἀρνούμενος τὸν πατέρα καὶ τὸν υἱόν is explained in the verse that follows.

Verse 23

πᾶς ὁ ἄρνούμενος τὸν υἱὸν οὐδὲ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει· ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει.

"If the heretics thought that they could 'have' God without believing in Jesus, they were completely mistaken. It is only through the Son that we know that God is Father, and it only through the Son and his propitiatory death that we can have access to God as Father."
Marshall.

The second half of v 23 (ὁ ὁμολογῶν τὸν υἱὸν καὶ τὸν πατέρα ἔχει) appears in the best MSS (x A, B C, et. al.), but is omitted in later texts (K L et al.). Such an omission was presumably the result of homoeoteleuton, as the scribe's eye traveled from the first τὸν πατέρα ἔχει to the second, and left out everything in between.

ὁμολογεω confess, declare

To confess and know the Son is to know the Father also (Jn 14:7ff.).

Verse 24

ὁμοίως δὲ ἠκούσατε ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ἐν ὑμῖν μενέτω· ἐὰν ἐν ὑμῖν μείνη ὁ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ἠκούσατε, καὶ ὁμοίως ἐν τῷ υἱῷ καὶ ἐν τῷ πατρὶ μενεῖτε.

ὁμοίως 'as for you...'

Cf also 1 Tim 6:3; 2 Tim 1:13; 4:3f.; Tit 1:9; 2 Pet 3:2; Jude 17,20 for similar emphasis on holding to the apostolic message.

Westcott writes, "The Gospel is described both as a medium in which the believer lives (John 8:31), and as a quickening spirit which dwells in him (Col 3:16; 2 John 2)."

Again, there are echoes of 1:1-4. The word of life, which became flesh in Christ, now animates the Christian.

Verse 25

καὶ αὐτὴ ἐστὶν ἡ ἐπαγγελία ἣν αὐτὸς ἐπηγγείλατο ἡμῖν, τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον.

ἐπαγγελια, ας f promise

ἣν αὐτός 'which He himself'

ἐπηγγείλατο Verb, aor midd dep indic, 3 s
ἐπαγγελλομαι promise

Some MSS (including B) read ὑμῖν in place of ἡμῖν.

ζωη, ης f life

αἰωνιος, ον eternal, everlasting

Marshall comments, "There is something to be said for the view that John is explaining that the experience of remaining in the Son and the Father is, precisely, eternal life – available here and now. This would fit in with the teaching of the Gospel where eternal life is a blessing which commences to be enjoyed in this present life (Jn 3:36; 6:40, 47); it also fits in with the definition of eternal life in John 17:3 as knowing the Father and the Son. Naturally the future dimension (cf. 2:17) is not lacking on this interpretation."

Verse 26

Ταῦτα ἔγραψα ὑμῖν περὶ τῶν πλανώντων ὑμᾶς.

ἔγραψα ὑμῖν refers back to vv 18-25.

πλαναω lead astray, mislead, deceive

Present tense = those actively engaged in seeking to lead you astray. Smalley, however, writes, "The present participle πλανώντων ('leading you astray') is conative in force. The heretics were *intent* upon leading others astray; they were *trying* to do this. But evidently the danger is present, continuing and real. Not only were the heretics attempting to win others to their heterodox views about Jesus; obviously (in view of the incipient schism alluded to in v 19, and given the increasing disintegration of the Johannine church to which 2 and 3 John bear witness) they were being successful in their efforts."

Verse 27

καὶ ὁμοίως τὸ χρῖσμα ὃ ἐλάβετε ἀπ' αὐτοῦ μένει ἐν ὑμῖν, καὶ οὐ χρεῖαν ἔχετε ἵνα τις διδάσκη ὑμᾶς· ἀλλ' ὡς τὸ αὐτοῦ χρῖσμα διδάσκει ὑμᾶς περὶ πάντων, καὶ ἀληθές ἐστιν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ψεῦδος, καὶ καθὼς ἐδίδαξεν ὑμᾶς, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ.

καὶ ὁμοίως 'but as for you,' again in contrast with the false teachers.

χρῖσμα, τος n see v.20

ἐλάβετε Verb, aor act indic, 2 pl λαμβανω

Cf. v. 20 for *χρῖσμα*. Smalley writes, "Word and Spirit complement each other. The proclamation of the gospel is an objective exercise (cf. 1:1–3, 5); whereas the 'consecration' of the Spirit is received directly from him, 'from the holy one' (vv 20, 27). Such a balance, between the objective truth of the preached gospel and its subjective interpretation in the Spirit, must be maintained in any attempt to 'keep the faith.' Cf. the similar balance in 2:7 and 14 between 'hearing the message' (ὁ λόγος ὃν ἠκούσατε, 'the message which you heard') and God's word 'dwelling' in the believer (ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει, 'God's word dwells in you')."

χρῖμα, ας f need

"The outpouring of the Spirit, the characteristic of the last days (Jer 31:34; Joel 2:28; Heb 8:11; Acts 2:17ff.), gave to each one who received it a sure criterion of truth. Christians needed not fresh teaching even from the apostles, still less from those who professed to guide them into new 'depths'." Westcott.

διδασκω teach

The statement is to be understood corporately – not that each individual Christian is self-sufficient, but that the Christian community possesses sufficient resource in Word and Spirit.

Smalley comments, "As many commentators point out, this absolute declaration about the dispensability of earthly teachers appears in the course of a document which is heavily didactic! ... Teaching was obviously an important spiritual gift and form of ministry in the early Church (cf. Acts 5:28; Rom 12:7; 1 Cor 12:28–29; Eph 4:11). Yet the teachers themselves needed to be taught by the chrism of the Spirit, and their teaching had to be 'tested' for its truth (cf. 4:1, 5; 2 John 9–10...). The claim that the true Christian has no need of any further teaching may include a deliberately antignostic thrust.... It may be aimed precisely at those within the Johannine church whose gnostic inclinations had led them to suppose that they knew the truth about everything (cf. v 27*b*). In answer to this John may be saying that, on the contrary, it is the 'consecrated' Christian (the genuine initiate!) who has no need of (basic?) spiritual instruction. He is already 'set apart' for God's truth."

ἀληθης, ες true, truthful, honest, genuine

The Spirit bestowed is the Spirit of truth (Jn 14:17).

ψευδος, ους n see v.21

The implication of the false teachers was that the Gospel message preached by the apostles was a lie. Though Smalley interprets *καὶ ἀληθές ἐστιν καὶ οὐκ ἔστιν ψεῦδος* as 'and it is real, not an illusion' – of the anointing they have as the genuine article as opposed to the pretended knowledge of the 'gnostics'.

Smalley writes, "The invitation to 'abide' in Jesus clearly harks back to the farewell discourse of John's Gospel (John 15:4–7); and the very words *μείνατε ἐν ἐμοί* ('remain in me') may well have been used as a catchword by heretical as well as orthodox adherents around and within the Johannine community (see the comment on 2:6). It would thus be natural for the writer to remind his readers of the true implications of this command. To 'abide' or 'dwell' in Jesus, as he instructed his disciples, is only possible when there is a genuine relationship with God through Christ (cf. vv 22–24); and this is guaranteed and confirmed by the indwelling knowledge of the truth imparted through the anointing Spirit."

Verse 28

Καὶ νῦν, τεκνία, μένετε ἐν αὐτῷ, ἵνα ἐὰν φανερωθῆ σχώμεν παρρησίαν καὶ μὴ αἰσχυνθῶμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ αὐτοῦ.

τεκνιον, ου n little child, child

ἐν αὐτῷ = in Christ

φανερωθῆ Verb, aor pass subj, 3 s φανερωω see v.19

σχώμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl *έχω*

παρρησια, ας f boldness, assurance

Cf. 3:21; 4:17; 5:14 also Heb 3:6; 10:19; Philemon 8. Cf. the lines from Charles Wesley, *Bold I approach the eternal throne, and claim the crown through Christ my own.*

αἰσχυνθῶμεν Verb, aor pass subj, 1 pl
αἰσχνομαι be (made) ashamed

Cf. Mark 8:38 // Luke 9:26.

It is *possible* to understand the subject of these verbs to be John and the other apostles, cf. 1 Thess 2:19f; Phil 4:1. But it is more natural to understand that John simply identifies himself with believers generally, cf. 2 Thess 1:7-9.

παρουσια, ας f coming, arrival, presence

Of *παρουσία* Marshall writes, "This word was used for the visit of a ruler to some part of his dominions, an occasion for celebrating and rejoicing... It is this kind of atmosphere which is conveyed by this word. It conceives of the return of Jesus to this world in visible splendour, like a monarch."

Verse 29

ἐὰν εἰδῆτε ὅτι δίκαιός ἐστιν, γινώσκετε ὅτι πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν δικαιοσύνην ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται.

Verse 29 is transitional: it "looks backward to vv 18–28 as well as forward to 3:1–4:6." Smalley. The theme of new birth introduced here features prominently in the rest of the epistle, cf. 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; cf. John 1:12–13; 3:3–8.

εἰδῆτε Verb, perf/pres act subj, 2 pl οἶδα
δικαιός, α, ον righteous, just

δίκαιός the thought moves from judgment (v. 28) to the character of the judge – and from abiding in him to its outward evidence.

ὁ ποιῶν – present continuous, "who realises in action little by little the righteousness which corresponds with the Divine Nature." Westcott.

δικαιοσύνη, ης f righteousness
γεγέννηται Verb, perf pass indic, 3 s γεννω
bear; pass be born

Is the reference in this verse to God (the Father) or to Christ? Continuity with v.28 (and the parallel with v.1) would suggest that it is Christ who is spoken of as the righteous one, but it seems strange to refer to believers as being born of Christ. It may be best to understand the thought to move from Christ to God. "When St John thinks of God in relation to men he never thinks of Him apart from Christ (comp 5:20). Again he never thinks of Christ in his human nature without adding the thought of His divine nature. Thus a rapid transition is possible from the one aspect of the Lord's divine-human Person to the other. Here the passage is from 'Christ' to 'God'." (Westcott). Hence the thought is that those who do what is righteous are born of God and are like his Son. "The presence of righteous action is the sure sign of the reality of the divine birth... It must be further observed that righteousness is not the condition but the consequence of Sonship." Westcott.

1 John 3:1 ff.

Smalley writes, "The second major division of 1 John begins at this point... In the second division of this document (3:1–5:13) John concentrates on the developing spiritual life of his followers, rather than sustaining his attack on the heretics, some of whom have already seceded from his church (2:19). The latter, however, are still in view (cf. 3:4, 7; 4:1–6)."

Verse 1

ἴδετε ποταπὴν ἀγάπην δέδωκεν ἡμῖν ὁ πατήρ ἵνα τέκνα θεοῦ κληθῶμεν, καὶ ἐσμέν. διὰ τοῦτο ὁ κόσμος οὐ γινώσκει ἡμᾶς ὅτι οὐκ ἔγνω αὐτόν.

Marshall comments, "From the thought of the new birth ... John's thought moves to the great love shown by God, as a result of which we have become his children. The train of thought has an interesting parallel with John 3 where the conversation with Nicodemus about the new birth from above through which alone men can enter the kingdom of God is followed by the magnificent declaration of the divine love which sent God's only Son so that we might have eternal life."

ἴδετε Verb, aor act imperat, 2 pl ὄρω see

The word introduces a sense of excitement.

ποταπος, η, ον of what sort, what kind

Here, 'how lavish'.

δέδωκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s δίδωμι

Smalley writes, "The phrase ἀγάπην δέδωκεν (unique in the NT) suggests – in combination with ποταπὴν – the extent of God's love, which has graciously been 'showered' on believers as their 'inalienable possession'."

κληθῶμεν Verb, aor pass subj, 1 pl καλεω

καὶ ἐσμέν = 'and such we are.' Several later witnesses, including TR and followed by AV, omit these words.

ἔγνω Verb, aor act indic, 3 s γινώσκω

The world does not comprehend the Christian because it does not know God.

Verse 2

ἀγαπητοί, νῦν τέκνα θεοῦ ἐσμέν, καὶ οὐπω ἐφανερώθη τί ἐσόμεθα. οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἐὰν φανερωθῇ ὅμοιοι αὐτῷ ἐσόμεθα, ὅτι ὁσόμεθα αὐτόν καθὼς ἐστιν.

ἀγαπητος, η, ον beloved

"The Christian has now, even in the present life, that which carries with it potentially infinite blessings, but the manifestation of his sonship is hindered by the circumstances in which he is placed. He will not be anything essentially different hereafter, but he will be what he is now essentially more completely, though in ways wholly beyond our power of imagination." Westcott.

οὐπω not yet

ἐφανερωθῇ Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s

φανερω see 2:19

ἐσόμεθα Verb, fut indic, 1 pl εἶμι

οἶδα know, understand

φανερωθῇ see 2:28

When he appears in all the glory of his risen and reigning power.

ὁμοιος, α, ον like, of the same kind as

Cf. Phil 3:20,21.

ὁφόμεθα Verb, fut midd dep indic, 1 pl ὄρω see

Cf. 2 Cor 3:18.

Smalley comments, "The thought which is voiced here with such vividness and simplicity has deeply influenced the tradition, and especially the mystical tradition, of the Christian Church (see further Underhill, *Mystic Way*, 257). As Dodd (71) says, John's 'serene certainty that we shall see our Lord and be like Him, is the model for all our thinking about the life to come.' But, as the next verse immediately reminds us, such a vision of heaven cannot be detached from Christian experience and responsibility here on earth."

Verse 3

καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἔχων τὴν ἐλπίδα ταύτην ἐπ' αὐτῷ ἀγνίζει ἑαυτὸν καθὼς ἐκεῖνος ἀγνός ἐστιν.

πᾶς ὁ ἔχων lays stress on the personal responsibility of every believer who is a true child of God.

ἐλπις, ιδος f hope, ground of hope

ἐπ' αὐτῷ could mean 'in himself' or 'in God'

ἀγνίζω purify, cleanse

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/herself, itself

ἐκεινος, η, ο that (one), he, she, it

ἀγνος, η, ον pure, holy

"He who looks forward to becoming like God hereafter must strive after His likeness now: Matt 5:8; Gal 5:5." Westcott.

Verses 4-9

Smalley comments, "John now pursues the connection between Christ and the Christian, as the means for living properly within God's family, by dwelling first on the need to renounce sin (vv 4-9; cf. the reference to 'purity' in v 3). There is 'nothing sinful' in Jesus (v 5), and we are to avoid the constant practice of sin (vv 6, 9). We can do this because he 'appeared in order to abolish sins,' and to 'destroy the devil's works' (vv 5, 8). On the positive side, the Christian is to 'practice righteousness' in a way that echoes the activity of God in Christ (v 7). Both the renunciation of sin and right conduct are marks of divine sonship."

Verse 4

Πᾶς ὁ ποιῶν τὴν ἁμαρτίαν καὶ τὴν ἀνομίαν ποιεῖ, καὶ ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία.

ἁμαρτια, ας f sin

ἀνομια, ας f wickedness, lawlessness, sin

"Sin and lawlessness are convertible terms.

Sin is not an arbitrary conception. It is the assertion of a selfish will against a paramount authority." Westcott.

The believers to whom John is writing were being told that sin could be regarded as a matter of indifference. John tells them that it is rebellion against God.

For 'lawlessness' cf. 2 Thess 2:3, 7. To commit sin is to place oneself on the side of the devil and the antichrist and to stand in opposition to Christ.

Verse 5

καὶ οἴδατε ὅτι ἐκεῖνος ἐφανερώθη ἵνα τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἄρῃ, καὶ ἁμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν.

ἐκεινος, η, ο that (one), he, she, it

ἐφανερωθη see 2:28; 3:2

Some MSS (e.g. ⳨ C K L Vg, followed by NIV) add ἡμῶν after τὰς ἁμαρτίας. The addition appears to be secondary.

ἄρῃ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s αἰρω take, take away

Cf. John 1:29; Heb 10:4. "As Westcott (103) says, the thought is not simply that of the self-sacrifice of Jesus, but of the *opposition* to sin which he expressed on the cross. He came to 'abolish' sins, and not only to 'bear' them (cf. 1 Pet 2:24)." Smalley. Cf. the parallel phrase in v.8. Sin opposes Christ's work and his person.

Verse 6

πᾶς ὁ ἐν αὐτῷ μένων οὐχ ἁμαρτάνει· πᾶς ὁ ἁμαρτάνων οὐχ ἐώρακεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ ἔγνωκεν αὐτόν.

ἁμαρτανω sin, commit sin

Cf. 1:6. "It describes a character, 'a prevailing habit' and not primarily an act." Westcott. Cf. Tit 3:11; Heb 10:26. Most commentators understand the present tense as continuous in force, i.e. 'does not make a habit of sinning' (NIV, 'does not keep on sinning'). Marshall, however, prefers to understand the phrase as both an expression of what the Christian is called to be, shall be and therefore now ought to be: he argues that the language is eschatological. John, like Paul, is calling Christians to 'be what they are.'
Schnackenburg adds to this discussion a useful reminder that the eschatological tension between the 'is now' and the 'not yet,' typical of John's theology of salvation, is probably relevant at this point.
It may also be added that the intensity of John's language is shaped by the false claims of his opponents. Smalley expresses this view as follows, "Those who belong to God do right, and do not sin; while those who are children of the devil act wrongly (cf. vv 7–8, 10). The polarity is understandably exaggerated in such a context."

ὁραω see

ἔγνωκεν Verb, perf act indic, 3 s γνωσκω