

OpenTheo

May 14th: Job 42 & 1 John 2:7-29

May 13, 2021



Alastair Roberts

The restoration of Job. Do not love the world or the things in the world.

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net/>). My reflections are searchable by Bible chapter here: <https://audio.alastairadversaria.com/explore/>.

If you have enjoyed my output, please tell your friends. If you are interested in supporting my videos and podcasts and my research more generally, please consider supporting my work on Patreon (<https://www.patreon.com/zugzwanged>), using my PayPal account (<https://bit.ly/2RLaUcB>), or by buying books for my research on Amazon (https://www.amazon.co.uk/hz/wishlist/ls/36WVSWCK4X33O?ref_=wl_share).

The audio of all of my videos is available on my Soundcloud account: <https://soundcloud.com/alastairadversaria>. You can also listen to the audio of these episodes on iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/gb/podcast/alastairs-adversaria/id1416351035?mt=2>.

Transcript

Job chapter 42. Then Job answered the Lord and said, I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted. Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know.

Hear and I will speak, I will question you, and you make it known to me. I have heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eyes seize you. Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

After the Lord had spoken these words to Job, the Lord said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My anger burns against you and against your two friends, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has. Now therefore take seven bulls and seven rams, and go to my servant Job and offer up a burnt offering for yourselves. And my servant

Job shall pray for you, for I will accept his prayer not to deal with you according to your folly, for you have not spoken of me what is right, as my servant Job has.

So Eliphaz the Temanite and Bildad the Shuhite and Zophar the Naamathite went and did what the Lord had told them, and the Lord accepted Job's prayer. And the Lord restored the fortunes of Job, when he had prayed for his friends. And the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.

Then came to him all his brothers and sisters, and all who had known him before, and ate bread with him in his house. And they showed him sympathy and comforted him for all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him. And each of them gave him a piece of money and a ring of gold.

And the Lord blessed the latter days of Job more than his beginning. And he had fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, one thousand yoke of oxen, and one thousand female donkeys. He had also seven sons and three daughters.

And he called the name of the first daughter Jemima, and the name of the second Kizia, and the name of the third Kerenhapuk. And in all the land there were no women so beautiful as Job's daughters. And their father gave them an inheritance among their brothers.

And after this Job lived one hundred and forty years, and saw his sons and his sons' sons, four generations. And Job died an old man and full of days. Job chapter 42 is the final chapter of the book, and the conclusion and resolution of the entire drama.

The Lord had challenged Job in chapters 38 to 41, declaring his insufficiency for the task of just government and control of the creation that he had presumed to judge the Lord concerning. Job, although he had rightly maintained his own integrity against the friend's accusations, had wrongly charged the Lord with fault in the handling of his case. And now after the Lord confronts him, he finally repents.

He confesses the Lord's unrivaled sovereignty. In verse 3 he quotes a version of the Lord's opening charge to him at the beginning of the first speech in chapter 38 verse 2. Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Job responds to the quoted charge by a confession of his guilt in the matter. He had spoken presumptuously of matters beyond his understanding, competence or station.

As a result he had obscured rather than illuminating the truth of God by his statements. In verse 4 Job quotes the second half of the Lord's introductory statement with which he opened his initial speech from chapter 38 verse 3. Dress for action like a man, I will question you and you make it known to me. Job confesses that until this point he had been working chiefly with others teaching about God.

Now however the Lord has spoken directly to him and into his situation. His old theology

which was another species of retribution theology, not that far removed from that of the Friends, lies in tatters and he sees something of his former ignorance. His response is to repent in dust and ashes, an expression of humble mortality which he employed earlier in chapter 30 verse 19.

God has cast me into the mire and I have become like dust and ashes. Of what exactly is Job repenting? Job is soon going to be vindicated of the charges made against him by the Friends. Job's sufferings did not come upon him on account of any sin on his part.

However Job had been in the wrong, in his bitterness towards the Lord and in the charges that he had made against the Lord for injustice. Job had not, contrary to Satan's insistence that he would, curse God to his face, but he had impugned the Lord's justice. He had failed to recognise that it was possible to insist on his own innocence while also insisting upon the Lord's justice.

Faced with the Lord himself he dropped his defiant claims and confessed the justice and goodness of the Lord and the illegitimacy of his earlier charges. In confessing himself to be dust and ashes, Job resumes an appropriate creaturely position before the Lord, expressing his creatureliness in an unresting way that anticipates his future mortal dissolution to the elements of his composition. He recognises that the Lord alone is the ruler of all.

This need not entail a shrinking back from appeal to the Lord for justice. The only occasion outside of the book of Job where we encounter the expression dust and ashes is Genesis chapter 18 verse 27. In that chapter Abraham is in the presence of the Lord interceding for Sodom.

Abraham answered and said, In this interaction Abraham is both recognising his creaturely limitation and speaking from that consciously acknowledged position to the judge of all of the earth, appealing to him as the free and sovereign God to manifest his justice in the handling of Sodom. The discourses that represent the main body of the text of Job have now come to an end and we return to the prose form of the prologue in the epilogue that corresponds to it. From addressing Job in his speech the Lord turns to speak to the three friends, speaking to Eliphaz the Temanite as their representative.

Eliphaz was probably the oldest of the three friends and was also the one who led them as he had spoken first and at greatest length of the friends in each of the three cycles of speeches. No mention is made of Elihu. Lest we forget Job's crisis was never merely one of private and personal suffering.

Job was a public figure, indeed he was a prominent leader or even king of his people, and his sufferings concerned not merely the loss of his possessions and members of his household but also social opprobrium and scapegoating. He had desired more than relief of his suffering and restoration of his personal relationship with the Lord. He longed for

public vindication, sufficient to counteract the supposed condemnation that he had earlier suffered by means of the Lord's signal actions against him.

He had seemingly been marked out by the Lord's judgement as a wicked man. That sentence needs to be publicly reversed. The confrontation of the friends and the declaration that Job is in the right with the Lord to them is necessary to the resolution of the conflict.

Satan, the adversary and accuser, had wrongly charged Job in the heavenly court, but his unwitting servants, the three friends, had served as the accusers of Job in the court of Job's own society on earth. They also had to be silenced for the Lord's victory over the false charges of the adversary to be accomplished. The friends are blamed for their failure to speak truthfully concerning the Lord, their dogmatic yet narrow retribution theology and their insistent yet unjust and often cruel accusations of Job marked them out as badly in the wrong.

However, the Lord surprisingly contrasts them with Job himself, who is said to have spoken of the Lord what is right. Considering the fact that the Lord has just rebuked Job for his claims during the discourses, this might not be what we would expect. In what way has Job spoken truthfully about the Lord? Despite his insinuations of divine injustice, Job had addressed himself to the Lord.

He had expressed elements of hope, looking to the Lord to act into his situation and vindicate him. He had also just repented of his past faults. In the final statements of his final speech to Job, Eliphaz had declared that Job, if he were to repent, an outcome in which Eliphaz probably had limited confidence, he would be restored and would indeed be able to act as an intercessor for others.

22-26 For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty and lift up your face to God. You will make your prayer to Him and He will hear you and you will pay your vows. You will decide on a matter and it will be established for you and light will shine on your ways.

For when they are humbled you say, It is because of pride, but He saves the lowly. He delivers even the one who is not innocent, who will be delivered through the cleanness of your hands. The irony is that Job does indeed get established as an intercessor on his restoration, but for Eliphaz and his friends.

The fact that Abraham's self-description of himself as dust and ashes also occurs in the context of an act of intercession is perhaps worthy of further reflection. The way that the Lord deals with the friends is a departure from strict retribution. He does not deal with them according to their folly, but shows them mercy on account of the prayers of Job.

It is important to see in this, for instance, the freedom of the Lord's dealing with his creatures and their sin and folly. God's justice has a free and creative character to it that

human justice lacks. It is so much more than just an administration of a retributive code, even though it includes retribution as an element.

As Gerald Janssen observes, the freedom of God's own grace and forgiveness offers the possibility of actions on the part of Job and his friends that restore and overcome the breaches between them and open up the possibility of a future liberated from the evils that had befallen them and had occurred between them. Job must forgive and seek the good of his friends, much as the Lord had dealt graciously with him, and the friends, for their part, have to humble themselves before the Lord and acknowledge their fault against Job and seek good through reconciliation with him. In the creative liberty of God's action in the face of sin and folly, he can liberate us from the bondage of past sins and wrongs, whether committed by us or against us.

We should also consider the contrast between the accusations of Satan against Job at the beginning of the book and Job's intercessions for his friends at the end. The friends are instructed to offer sacrifices for their fault, as James Bergeon notes that they are instructed to offer seven sacrifices of each kind may be assigned to Job who had offered such sacrifices for his sons at the beginning of the story of the book. Perhaps God is giving Job a reassurance of the fact that his earlier sacrifices and prayers were also received by him and that his lost children will be reunited with him at the resurrection of the just for which he had so longed.

The full restoration of Job occurs after Job heals the breach with his friends. This restoration is again an act of God's gracious and good freedom, bringing about a fitting outcome, not a strict reward or retributive justice, giving Job his just desserts. Commenting on the possibility of an allusion to Exodus chapter 22 verse 4 and the law demanding that double restitution of a stolen sheep be made, mentioned by Francis Anderson and others, Janssen argues that perhaps, rather than thinking of the action of God in Job in terms of the law, we ought to think of the law in terms of the action of God in Job.

He suggests that rather than regarding the law as a formulaic retribution and a narrow demand, we might see it in terms of a felicitous enactment of freedom. These final verses of the chapter alternate between divine action and human action within Job's restoration. The visiting of Job's kinsfolk and their gifts in verse 11 overcome the social breach that had occurred between him and his relations and his society.

It also grants him the comfort necessary for the grieving process to proceed. The book of Job began with an enumeration of Job's family and then of his possessions – Job chapter 1 verses 2-3. There were born to him seven sons and three daughters.

He possessed seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen and five hundred female donkeys, and very many servants, so that this man was the greatest of all the people of the east. It concludes, chiasmatically, with an enumeration of

his possessions and then of his family. Now, however, the numbers of Job's livestock are doubled, both in their total number and for each type of animal.

As it was in the opening prologue, the number seven is prominent in the epilogue. The number of Job's sheep and camels in the prologue was seven thousand and three thousand – a seven to three ratio, which both adds up to the number ten and represents in the single numbers fullness and glory. We see a similar ratio in the number of Solomon's seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines in 1 Kings chapter 11 verse 3, which, while not recorded in praise of Solomon, is an indication of the greatness and prominence that he had as a king by near eastern standards.

The ratio here is the same as that of the prologue, but the number of the animals has doubled. Job's sons and daughters are not doubled in their number, perhaps because his lost sons and daughters would be restored to him at the resurrection. This said, some have seen in the unusual form of the Hebrew word used for the number of Job's sons in verse 13, a dual form of the number seven, suggesting to some that he had fourteen sons after his restoration.

The number of daughters is not doubled, however, which is one of the considerations weighing against such a reading. On the other hand, in 1 Chronicles chapter 25 verse 5, we have another biblical character, Heman David Seir, who is said to have been exalted by being granted fourteen sons and three daughters. Surprisingly, it is not upon the sons, but upon the daughters that the text elaborates.

We are given their names and their birth order, Jemima the oldest, Kezia the second and Kerenhapuk the youngest. David Klein suggests that their names mean turtle dove, cassia and horn of coal, suggesting that they might invoke the three senses. Jemima, who is associated with the turtle dove, hearing, Kezia, taste or smell, being cassia, and Kerenhapuk, whose name means horn of coal, associated with eye make-up, would be sight, possibly.

Whatever else we are to make of their names, the names do seem to be suggestive of their delightful and pre-possessing appearance and characteristics. Indeed, their remarkable beauty is then mentioned. Just as Job was uniquely great in the land in the prologue, his daughters are uniquely beautiful within it in the epilogue.

What might the beauty of the daughters and their names add to the story? The beauty of the daughters and the language of sensual delights by which they are named implies that not merely the strength that sons chiefly offered was restored to Job, but also the delight, the joy and the colour that is more particularly associated with young and beautiful daughters. Job's life, which had been under the darkness of affliction, all of the colour sapped out of it, is once more vibrant with life and youth in its season of new love. Daughters did not usually inherit as sons did, save in exceptional situations where no sons were born in a clan, as we see in Numbers chapter 27 verse 8 and the case of the

daughters of Zelophehad.

While other daughters of wealthy families might have enjoyed a generous dowry, it seems likely that Job's daughters had something more. The point of this note might be that since Job had such bountiful wealth, he did not have the same worries that a poorer man might have had about the significant diminishing of his wealth as it might be sapped into other families as his daughters married. Job had so much that he could give as much to his daughters, who would leave for other families, as to his sons, who would more continue the legacy of Job's own clan.

Another possible aspect of this is the gracious character of Job's bequest. Job isn't merely doing what is expected in the law and cultural custom, he is going over and above in a gratuitous generosity. Job lives for 140 more years, twice 70, which is described elsewhere as the typical human lifespan.

That said, Job is set in a patriarchal period where human lifespans were longer. He sees four generations of his offspring. The blessing on Job continues to those that follow after him.

When he finally dies, he dies as an old man and full of days, not prematurely as we might have thought he would earlier on in the book. James chapter 5 verse 11 declares, Behold, we consider those blessed who remain steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

Finally arriving at the conclusion of the book of Job, what are we to make of the purpose of the Lord? Toby Sumter perceptively maintains, in keeping with James, that the Lord's purpose was never merely winning the challenge with Satan, with Job's sorrows as collateral damage and the blessing at the end merely compensatory. No, the Lord's intention was always one that involved raising Job up to a new level of sonship. Job learns obedience through the things that he suffers.

He has rendered a sort of sacrifice, he suffers a death, and is, in a sort of resurrection, raised up to a new level of maturity and glory at the end of the book. At the end of the book, he enjoys a greater glory. He is also advanced in his knowledge of and relationship with the Lord.

He receives a double portion of what he had once enjoyed, perhaps suggesting a rise to the status of firstborn son. A question to consider, how might the Christian reader of this book see the character of Job as a type of Christ? First John chapter 2 verses 7 to 29 Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard.

At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him

and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling.

But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. I am writing to you little children, because your sins are forgiven for his namesake. I am writing to you fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you children, because you know the father. I write to you fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning.

I write to you young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one. Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the father is not in him.

For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and the pride of life, is not from the father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever. Children, it is the last hour, and you have heard that Antichrist is coming.

So now many Antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us.

For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out that it might become plain that they all are not of us. But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and you all have knowledge.

I write to you not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist, he who denies the father and the son. No one who denies the son has the father.

Whoever confesses the son has the father also. Let what you heard from the beginning abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, then you too will abide in the son and in the father.

And this is the promise that he made to us, eternal life. I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. But the anointing that you receive from him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you.

But as his anointing teaches you about everything, and is true, and is no lie, just as it has taught you, abide in him. And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears, we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming. If you know

that he is righteous, you may be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of him.

In 1 John 2, verse 7, John moves into a discussion of a new commandment. The language of commandment isn't that common in the New Testament, apart from references to aspects of the Mosaic law. Here John speaks about the message of Christ in terms of the language of commandment, and this might strike us as very strange.

However, in both his gospel and in his epistles, John uses the language of commandment on several occasions in such a manner. In John chapter 13, verse 34, A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

In John chapter 15, verse 12, This is my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you. This is both an old and a new commandment. It is the same commandment that was given to Israel at Sinai.

The law was always summed up in the commandment to love God and one's neighbour as oneself. Jesus teaches this in places such as Matthew chapter 22, verses 35-40. And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law? And he said to him, You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment, and a second is like it. You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

On these two commandments depend all the law and the prophets. The multitude of the commandments were always refractions of this single great principle of love for God and neighbour. However, something changes with the coming of Christ.

In Christ, the fulfilment of the law in love is made manifest. In Christ, we discover what love really means. God's love is seen, heard, touched, and people bear witness to it.

And what is more, the Christ-shaped reality of love is worked out in our lives by the Spirit of Christ that He has given to us. This new commandment is the fulfilment of the law. It is also the writing of the law upon the heart that was promised long ago as the fulfilment of the new covenant.

This new covenant is not merely an external commandment. It is something that is true in Christ and true in us. It is a commandment that is being fulfilled in the love of Christ that is at work in our lives by His Spirit.

All of this is a manifestation of the passing away of the darkness of the old age and the rising of the true light of Christ in the world. Where do we stand relative to this rising light? The test, once again, is that of love. Do we love our brothers? Hatred and hostility

are the way of darkness.

The darkness is a realm of blindness where people constantly bite and devour each other. However, the light is a realm of illumination and love. Those who dwell in it will be marked out by their love.

As Jesus says in John 13, 35 By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another. In verses 12-14 of this chapter, John addresses three different groups within the church in succession. Twice in a row in the same order.

Little children the first time, next time it's children. Fathers and young men. This is a perplexing passage in many ways.

Why does John interrupt the flow to address these groups and to explain his reasons for writing? Why these groups in particular? Who are the groups in question? Are these different ways of speaking about the same people or distinct categories of persons? Why does he repeat himself within it? How do we account for the structure and the order? Why, for instance, is there a three-fold reason for writing to the young men at the conclusion of the second cycle? The children, the word used of them changes in the second cycle, are associated with forgiveness and knowledge of the Father. The father is with knowledge of the one who is from the beginning. And the young men with strength and overcoming.

As those begotten by God, the children have had their sins forgiven. And as those in the family of God, they enjoy access to the Father through Jesus. By speaking of children, John is probably speaking of all Christians, but especially of young converts.

The fathers are likely the more mature believers, and the elders and overseers of the congregation. He writes to them on account of their knowledge of him who is from the beginning, presumably a reference to Christ, perhaps looking back to chapter 1, verse 1. He may be suggesting that they enjoy a deeper and longer-standing knowledge and experience, but the expression itself doesn't seem to make this clear. By repeating it in both cycles, he underlines it, tightens the connection between the two cycles more generally, and invites us to reflect upon the difference between it and the other two categories.

The young men are likely the younger, but not the new believers. The church is a family with different levels of maturity and experience. A rounded church needs the sense of dependence and free welcome enjoyed by children in the faith, the vigour and the fervour of the young men, and the maturity and the wisdom of the fathers.

Where one or two of these are lacking, churches will tend to be stunted in various ways. Churches ought to be intergenerational bodies, informed by each of these generational constituencies in the faith. Opposed to the love that characterises those dwelling in the

light is the love of the world and the things in the world.

There is an antithesis between the people of God and the world, which is discussed at various points in John's Gospel. In John chapter 15, verses 18-19, for instance, If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you are of the world, the world will love you as its own.

But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. John chapter 17, verses 14-16 I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one.

They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. By the term world here, John is referring not so much to material objects, but to a system of life in all of its constitutive aspects. Peter Lighthouse expresses this very well in the following passage.

Probably drawing on the temptation of Eve in Genesis chapter 3, John details the law of the world under three headings. First, the world revolves around the desire of the flesh, which might include sexual and sensual desire, but also might include the desires that lead to the works of the flesh. Second, the world operates by spectacle and show, arousing the desire of the eyes.

Finally, the world operates according to the pride of life. Life here, as in chapter 3, verse 17, probably refers to wealth, and includes the status that often accompanies wealth. Loving the world means idolizing mammon, and striving for celebrity and fame.

The relationship between the world and desire is complex. Verse 16 indicates that desires and boastfulness make up the contents of the world. The desire of flesh, eyes, and boastfulness of life constitute the all that is in the world.

The end of verse 16, however, suggests that the world is the source of desires and boasts. The desire of flesh, desire of eyes, and boastfulness of life are from the world. Desires thus make up the world.

Yet the world is also distinguished from the desires, such that the world produces, evokes, and provokes desires and boastfulness. Verse 17 distinguishes the world from its desires, as if the desires are accompaniments of the world. To put it more sociologically, sinful human culture, its institutions, practices, products, are all embodiments of evil desire or boastfulness.

John hints that we should evaluate the world not only on the basis of what's done, or what things it contains, but on the basis of desire. And desire has a multiple relationship with culture. Desires are the contents of culture.

Culture is made up of embodied dreams, aspirations, lusts. On the other hand, the world is the source of desire, evoking certain kinds of desire. As Lightheart recognises then, for John, the world is a vainglorious complex of unruly desires and drives.

It's a realm that provokes us to think, and to act, and to love, and to desire, and to imagine in particular ways, rather than others. It excites our appetites. It calls us to consume.

It tells us what we should want, and how we should want it. And it is very hard not to become deeply entangled and enmeshed within such a realm. However, this world is transitory, it's passing away, whereas those who do the will of God will endure.

The Apostle Paul makes similar points about how we have to loosen our grip upon the world, upon its desires, its treasures, and its relationships, as those looking for the reign of Christ, in 1 Corinthians 7, verses 29-31. This is what I mean, brothers. The appointed time has grown very short.

From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, and those who mourn, as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice, as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy, as though they had no goods, and those who deal with the world, as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus had warned his disciples of false teachers and messiahs arising at the end of the age.

The fact that many such persons had already arisen was proof that it was the last hour, and that the coming of Christ was imminent. Within a few years, Christ would come in judgment on Jerusalem, and the whole Old Covenant order would collapse with its temple. The Antichrist, as he goes on to explain, is the one who denies that Jesus is the Messiah, the person who denies both Father and Son.

The false teachers with whom he is dealing seemingly went out from the apostolic group on teaching missions. However, they were not truly of the apostolic group, which was demonstrated by the fact that they all went in their own ways, departing from the apostolic teaching. This made their true character plain.

People will generally reveal their character if you give them time and watch them closely, and these false teachers were no exception to that rule. Christians have been anointed by Christ, who is the Anointed One. John might allude here, perhaps, to the promise of the New Covenant in places such as Jeremiah 31, 34, And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour, and each his brother, saying, Know the Lord, for they shall all know me from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

In declaring that they have all knowledge, and later on that they have no need that

anyone should teach them, we should see some reference to the work of the Spirit in the congregation. In John 16, verses 13-15 When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

All that the Father has is mine, therefore I said that he will take what is mine and declare it to you. The anointing that has been received is the gift of the Spirit then. In the Spirit the Church has been given all knowledge.

It has been given the fullness of this knowledge in principle in the once for all gift of the Spirit at Pentecost. It is given this knowledge in the opening of our spiritual perception to recognize God's truth. By his Spirit within them, the sheep of Christ hear their Master's voice.

They answer to his voice, but they do not answer to the voice of a stranger. This knowledge is also given in the ministries of teaching within the body. The people of God have all that they need to recognize and grow in the truth of God in what they have been given in the Spirit.

And they must abide and grow in the truth that they have been given. They must do this so that when Christ comes they can stand before him without any shame. We prepare for the full advent of the light by walking in the light at the moment, by living as people of the day, by being people that do not shrink back from the exposure and the judgment that comes in the light, but rather receiving the forgiveness of Christ, walking in the light, so that when he comes we will rejoice at his advent.

Once again, people are known by their fruits. If God is righteous, and he is righteous, then we can be sure that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of God. The sons and the daughters of God will share the character of their father.

A question to consider, how might John's analysis of the world, his understanding of the world in terms of pride, lust and desire and other such things, help us to understand our own societies and their systems better?