

## 5. Walking in the Light: Renouncing Worldliness (3Q 2009—Loved and Loving: John’s Epistles)

**Biblical material:** Dan. 5:13; John 15:19; Col. 1:14; 2:8, 13; 2 Pet. 3:10–12; 1 John 2:12–17.

### Quotes:

- It were better to have no opinion of God at all, than such an opinion as is unworthy of Him. *Francis Bacon*
- When men make gods, there is no God. *Eugene O’Neill*
- As a man is, so is his God; therefore was God so often an object of mockery. *Goethe*
- That God has managed to survive the inanities of the religions that do Him homage is truly a miraculous proof of His existence. *Ben Hecht*
- The Worldly Hope men set their Hearts upon/ Turns ashes—or it prospers and anon,  
/Like Snow upon the Desert’s dusty Face,/ Lighting a little hour or two—is gone.  
*Omar Khayyam*
- The world is fleeting; all things pass away; Or is it we that pass and they that stay?  
*Lucian*

### Questions

Why is knowing God so important? How do we do this? How can we be sure we have a correct picture of God? How do we see our place in this world? Are there dangers in the message to “renounce the world”? How is our future entwined with the answers in the great controversy? What is our role in speaking for God?

### Bible discussion

“I write to you, dear children, because you have known the Father.” (1 John 2:13b NIV). *That’s the key!* Knowing God, as Jesus came to reveal him. Knowing in that true and intimate sense, not simply knowing *about*, but truly knowing... For only through knowing God as He is can we find salvation. Only with him, on in him only through him. That’s the essential message of John—and the only hope for each and every one of us. “Life eternal is this: to know you, the true God, the only one, and Jesus Christ whom you sent. (John 17:3 FBV).

“The world and everything in it that people desire is passing away; but he who does the will of God lives forever.” (1 John 2:17 TEV). “Who wants to live forever?” asked rock band *Queen*, with the conclusion “Who wants forever anyway?” This sad aspect has its roots in our sense of dissatisfaction with this world, and who would want an eternity here in our current state? But our view on eternity is so different. It’s not in this state of evil and death, but an eternal life—and not just that. It is with the God we love! And he is altogether good and trustworthy! That’s what makes all the difference.

We don’t “renounce the world” as if it has something important and good that we need to give up. There’s nothing for us there anyway! Nor do we turn our backs on the people of this world—our role is not to seclude ourselves in some isolated commune

awaiting our Lord's return, but to actively share the good news with all we can. We don't "long for the things of this world" (2:15), for they're no longer attractive, and we recognize that they won't do us any good. It's only the things of God that are worthwhile, and that really matter.

The key concepts in this section are forgiveness, knowledge of God, and "the world." In other words, all the issues of the great controversy that are playing out here, in determining not only our fate but the answers to the charges of the devil, made against God and all who follow him.

### **Comment**

"Such is the case with information about God. People sometimes accept facts about God without checking their sources. Information about Him may be passed subtly through the media (which normally give the God of the Bible a bad press). Other images of Him come from parents or ourselves. As a result, the God we perceive may be a God of our own making. Psychologists are partially correct in stating that 'God' often is nothing more than a father figure or the projection of our own desires.

"A concept of God based on such perceptions *will* be erroneous. Yet Christians have an authentic and reliable knowledge of God. Why? Because our source is 'God the only Son, who is at the Father's side [who] has made Him known' (John 1:18).'" Roy Matheson, Loving God's Family (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1988), 37.

### **Ellen White Comments**

The whole spiritual life is molded by our conceptions of God, and if we cherish erroneous views of His character, our souls will sustain injury. We should see in God one who yearns toward the children of men, longing to do them good. . . . All through the Scriptures, God is represented as one who calls, woos by His tender love, the hearts of His erring children. No earthly parent could be as patient with the faults and mistakes of their children as is God with those He seeks to save. No one could plead more tenderly with the transgressor. No human lips ever poured out more tender entreaty to the wanderer than does He. O shall we not love God, and show our love by humble obedience? Let us have a care for our thoughts, our experiences, our attitude toward God, for all His promises are but the breathings of unutterable love. {TMK 263.4}

As we see Jesus dying upon the cross to save lost man, the heart echoes the words of John, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not" (1 John 3:1). There is nothing that more decidedly distinguishes the Christian from the worldly man than the estimate he has of God. {ISM 183-4}

It is peace that you need—Heaven's forgiveness and peace and love in the soul. Money cannot buy it, intellect cannot procure it, wisdom cannot attain to it; you can never hope, by your own efforts, to secure it. But God offers it to you as a gift, "without money and without price." Isa. 55:1... As you read the promises, remember they are the expression of unutterable love and pity... Yes, only believe that God is your helper. He wants to restore His moral image in man. As you draw near to Him with confession and repentance, He will draw near to you with mercy and forgiveness. {FLB 103}