

AT THE MANGER

Love at the Manger

1 John 4:9-10; 16-19

Main Idea: The love of God is revealed through the gift of his Son, Jesus Christ.

God's love is revealed in the gift of his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sin (9-10, 19).

- *In love, God sent his Son into the world to give life to sinners condemned to death (9).*
- *In love – before we even loved him – God sent his Son to die for our sin (10, 19).*

These powerful verses are contained in a section of 1 John 4, which is focused on the command to love one another as disciples of Jesus Christ. But the love that we're called to have for one another is the very love of God. These verses are the articulation or definition of the love of God. The truth of God's love is so clearly and beautifully given to us in this passage, and that truth is that God's love is revealed in the gift of his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sin. There are two important factors to understanding the gift that God gave the world through Jesus. First, in love, God sent his Son into the world to give life to sinners condemned to death. God's love was manifested in a physical, tangible, and historical way when he sent his Son to come to earth and to take on flesh in order to bring life to those who will believe in him. The apostle John knew Jesus in the flesh. He walked and talked with him. He was encouraged, challenged, corrected, and comforted by the Lord Jesus. He saw with own eyes the crucifixion of Jesus, and he saw with his own eyes the resurrected Jesus Christ who ascended into heaven. John knew that Jesus came to bring life, and this was possible because of the fact that Jesus came to die for sin! This leads to the second, important factor. In love, – before we even loved him – God sent his Son to die for our sin. Verse 10 – reinforced in verse 19 – emphasized the fact that God's gift of his only Son was a gift that was given not in response to our love; rather, it was given because of God's love! Even before we could or would love God, God loved us! The gift of his Son was planned before the foundation of the world because of the love of God that is unconquerable and unchangeable. The love of God was made manifest at the manger in the precious gift of Jesus!

1. Use the BlueLetterBible app to do a word study on "manifest" in verse 9. What does this mean? How does it apply to God's love in this verse? What is the "so that?" In other words, why did God send his only Son into the world? Do you have the "so that" in your life?
2. Now use the BlueLetterBible app to do a word study on "propitiation" in verse 10. What does this mean? What did Jesus accomplish on the cross according to this verse? Does this apply to your sin? If so, how? If not, why not?
3. Why does the Lord emphasize that he loved us first in verse 10 and 19? Since it's repeated, it must be important. What's the significance of the fact that God loved us first? Make sure to use the passage in 1 John 4 to help answer these questions.

The gift of Jesus gives us absolute certainty of God's love for us (16-18).

- *In the gift of Jesus, we have knowledge and faith in God's love for us (16).*
- *Knowledge and faith in God's love for us in Christ gives us confidence in God's forgiveness of sin and freedom from the fear of God's judgment of sin (17-18).*

John wrote that "we have come to know and to believe" What an important statement! He combined two interesting words in verse 16. The first word is a Greek word for knowledge that means to truly and intimately know or understand something or someone. John's knowledge of

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God's love wasn't speculative. It was certain. The second word is the Greek word for faith (belief). John not only had a sure knowledge of God's love but he had faith or full belief in God's love in Christ. Remember, John had walked and talked with Jesus. The Christian faith – the gospel – isn't some myth not experienced, but it is the faith that's built on the certain knowledge of the historical facts of the life, death, and resurrection of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. There's no doubt in God's love for us. We can have knowledge and faith in his love because of his gift of Jesus. Also, knowledge and faith in God's love for us in Christ gives us confidence in God's forgiveness of sin and freedom from the fear of God's judgment of sin. Verses 17-18 are incredibly good news! Jesus came into the world to give us life, and he accomplished that by sacrificing his life as a propitiation for our sin. His death satisfied God's wrath against our sin; therefore, for those in Christ Jesus, there's no fear of God's judgment of sin! We are set free from the fear of God's judgment because Jesus paid it all. Our confidence in God's love brings this tremendous gift of freedom from fear of God's judgment. What a wonderful gift this is in the life of those who have God's love. The gift of Jesus at the manger over 2,000 years ago gives us absolute certainty of God's love for us today.

1. Some may argue that "knowing" and "believing" are two different things. How are these two things connected in biblical faith? What is that John knew and believed? Do you know what he knew? Do you believe what he believed? Why, or why not?
2. There is so much in verse 17! What is the "this" that love is perfected in us? What is the result (the "so that") of God's love in our lives? What confidence does it give us? Do you have that confidence in your life? Do you know someone who needs their fear taken away and the confidence of God's grace in their heart? Share and pray right now.
3. How does the love of God conquer fear? Have you experienced this or are experiencing this right now in your life? If you have the chance to share this with someone who told you they feared God's judgment, how would you tell them about this gift through Jesus Christ?

Because of the love of God revealed in the gift of his Son, love God, and one another (7-21).

Verses 9-10 and 16-19 above are found in a passage that's focused on our response to God's love. Because God's love is revealed in the gift of his Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sin and the gift of Jesus gives us absolute certainty of God's love for us, the only appropriate response is to love! Love God, and if the love of God is in us, love one another. May the love of God at the manger remind us this Christmas to love the one, true God of love and to share his love in Christ Jesus with one another!

1. Read through the entire passage (7-21), and answer the questions below:
 - a. What does it say about loving God in this passage?
 - b. What does it say about loving one another (other believers in the church)?
 - c. What do these two things look like in your life?
2. Break into groups of 3-4 and spend time in prayer, thanking God for his love, confessing your love for him, and asking him to grow and to protect your love for one another this Christmas!