

Study Guide 21

I John 3:9–12

- Getting Started
- Featured Element of Syntax: Review Infinitives
- Interacting with the Text: I John 3:9–12
- Pulling It All Together

Getting Started

Step 1

Learn the vocabulary.

σπέρμα, σπερμάτος, τό = seed, offspring

φανερός, ά, όν = clear, plain, evident

Κάϊν, ό = (indeclinable) Cain

σφάζω = I slay, kill

Step 2

Provide a simple translation.

Step 3

Identify and color verbs and verbals in the Greek text.

Step 4

List clauses and underline structural markers.

Featured Element of Syntax

Step 5

Review Infinitives: Reread your syntax grammar about the infinitive (**Bl**, 113–19 [differs from **W**]; **DM**, 214–20; **G**, 52–54; **W**, 588–607; **Wabr**, 254–63; **Y**, 165–75).

Step 6

Review Uses of Infinitives: In SGs 4 and 8, you created a list with definitions of six basic adverbial uses and six substantival uses of the infinitive. Review that list, and add to it any examples of infinitives used in the Johannine letters so far.

Purpose	Result	Subject	Apposition
Time	Cause	Direct Object	Absolute
Means	Complementary	Indirect Discourse	Epexegetical

Interacting with I John 3:9–12

Contextual Orientation: In this SG, we will conclude our study of 1 John 2:28–3:10, which addresses the theme of conduct, namely that one’s conduct demonstrates one’s paternity. Thus far we have studied in their entirety two subdivisions (2:28–29; 3:1–3). We began the third division in SG 20 but will complete it in this SG (3:4–9). Thus we will examine the last of the “Everyone who . . .” statements that distinguish the children of God, those who practice righteousness (vv. 6a, 7, 9) from the children of the Devil, those who practice sin (vv. 4, 6b, 8). We will then examine the fourth and final subdivision (3:10), which serves as both a summary statement for the unit as well as a transitional statement to the next major division of the epistle (3:11–5:12).

We will then begin a new unit of thought (1 John 3:11–18). It is the first unit of thought for the second half of the book (3:11–5:12). The emphasis of 1 John 3:11–18 is simply this: Love and hate are incompatible passions among true followers of Jesus. In this SG, we will see how the author states the love command to be honored among the family of believers (i.e., children of God, v. 11) and sets it in opposition to Cain’s example (i.e., children of the Devil, v. 12). In other words, Cain’s example is incompatible with God’s command to love one another.

■ 1 John 3:9

1. Is πᾶς ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἁμαρτίαν οὐ ποιεῖ an independent or a dependent clause? (Circle one.)

- Underline the verb in the clause above and parse it below.

Which semantical classification best the tense of fits this verb? Why?

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 107; **DM**, 181–86; **G**, 48–49; **W**, 513–39; **Wabr**, 219–31; **Y**, 107–13).

- What is the subject of this clause?

Parse γεγεννημένος _____

Identify how the KJV, NASB, and NIV differ from the NRSV and NET translations in their rendering of γεγεννημένος. Which semantical classification do you think is best? Why?

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 107–8; **DM**, 200–205; **G**, 50; **W**, 572–82; **Wabr**, 246–50; **Y**, 126–29).

- How is ἁμαρτίαν functioning grammatically in this clause?

Lexical Issue: What is the meaning of ἁμαρτία? In 1 John 3:4, the author defines sin as lawlessness. Reread the entry “Lexical Issue: What does the noun ἀνομία mean?” in SG 20. What was your conclusion? How does it impact your interpretation here? How might 1 John 3:10 and 12 help in our definition of ἁμαρτία in 1 John?

Keep your answer in mind as you read the discussion below under “Theological Issue: How can a believer be incapable of sinning?”

2. Is ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει an independent or a dependent clause? (Circle one.)

- Underline the verb in the clause above and parse it below.

- What is the syntactical (functional) category for ὅτι? Is it a logical, adverbial, or substantival conjunction? Which *semantical* classification best fits this ὅτι clause? Why?

Translate ὅτι σπέρμα αὐτοῦ ἐν αὐτῷ μένει in a manner that reflects your decision.

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 129–33 [differs from **W**]; **DM**, 239–58; **G**, n/a; **W**, 666–78; **Wabr**, 293–302; **Y**, 179–92; or **Bl**, 143–44; **DM**, 252, 274, 293–99; **G**, 61, 65; **W**, 453–61; **Wabr**, 197–201; **Y**, 190–91).

- Lexical/Theological Issue: What does σπέρμα mean? The term may indicate a physical lineage. In the GJohn, the term indicates a literal descendant (John 7:42; 8:33, 37; cf. BAGD, 761d 2b; BDAG, 937a

2). A literal rendering, however, seems unlikely here. If σπέρμα were taken to mean “descendant,” either Jesus or the believer could be indicated as being God’s literal descendant. It is unlikely that Jesus is so indicated, since contextually the first half of v. 9 refers to the believer. Equally unlikely is that σπέρμα speaks of believers as literal descendants of God, though one might appeal to people being image bearers of God. Yet if people being image bearers of God were the case, there would be no distinction between believers and the secessionists, which is an important distinction being made by the author.

If the term is taken metaphorically for God’s seed, it is unclear what spiritual reality the author intends by this figure (cf. BAGD 762b 2c; BDAG 937a 3).

- a. Some draw parallels between the seed and the word in Matthew 13:3–9, 18–23 (cf. Luke 8:11; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:23; see Westcott, 108; HJS, 85).
- b. Others argue that it refers to the Holy Spirit. Especially in the context of a covenant interpretation of 1 John, the identification of God’s seed with the Holy Spirit becomes possible (Ezek. 36:26–27). Divine remaining is also associated with the Spirit (1 John 2:27; 3:24; 4:13; John 14:16). See Brown (p. 411) and Schnackenburg (Epistles, 175).
- c. Still others argue that σπέρμα is used of believers who share in God’s nature or character traits. Strecker muses, “Anyone who is born of God and therefore is of one nature with God lives in irreconcilable opposition to every kind of sinful behavior” (Strecker, 175; cf. Culy, 77).

It seems a combination of the three also might be argued in that the author emphasizes the word (i.e., commandment, 2:7–8), the anointing (2:20, 27), and the expectation to exhibit God’s character trait of love (4:7–8, 16; cf. 3:17; 4:16, etc.). Thus the author’s point may be that, through the believer’s continuing communion with God in the form of the Word and the Spirit, the believer is remade into God’s image and caused more and more to function out of the sphere of his or her relatedness to God. How do Painter (p. 224) and Smalley (pp. 172–74) differ from my conclusion?

3. Is καὶ οὐ δύναται ἁμαρτάνειν an independent or a dependent clause? (Circle one.)

- Underline the verb and verbal in the clause above and parse them below.

What kind of infinitive is ἁμαρτάνειν? _____

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**BI**, 113–19 [differs from **W**]; **DM**, 214–17; **G**, 52–54; **W**, 588–99; **Wabr**, 254–65; **Y**, 165–72).

- Syntactical Issue: What is the syntactical category for the conjunction *καί*? Is it a logical conjunction, an adverbial conjunction, or a substantival conjunction? What *semantical* classification best describes this *καί*? Why?
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If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 129–33 [differs from **W**]; **DM**, 239–58; **G**, n/a; **W**, 666–78; **Wabr**, 293–302; **Y**, 179–92).

- Theological Issue: How can a believer be incapable of sinning? If sin (*ἁμαρτία*) is defined broadly, as speaking of sin as a whole, then three solutions may be offered: a grammatical, a theological and a situational solution.
 - a. *Grammatically*, it can be argued that John intended to indicate a continuous act of sin, in keeping with the customary nuance of the present tense. However, as in 1 John 5:16, where believers are encouraged to pray for other believers who are sinning, this artificially stresses this aspect of the present and ignores the fact that the present tense *ἁμαρτάνειν* is used to denote a specific, not a continuous or habitual, act of sin.
 - b. *Theologically*, the author could be distinguishing between the “sin that leads to death” (i.e., mortal or serious sins) and the “sin that does not lead to death” (i.e., venial or less serious sins), as he does in 5:16–17. Yet there is no indication of a distinction in levels of sin here.
 - c. *Situationally*, some have argued that the author is making a statement in the heat of polemic, not a disinterested theological statement. Perhaps Smalley is right in seeing this as indicative of a tension in the author’s theology: although ideally the believer is able *not* to sin, the true consummation of this ability lies in the future. Thus, the believer lives in tension between statements such as these in 3:6 and 9 and the necessity for confession of sin noted in 1:8–9 (cf. 2:1). In addition, the indicative statement “we cannot sin” also implies the imperative “do not sin” (Smalley, 158–64; Brown, 412–16, 430–32).

If sin here is limited to the realm of love (see the above “Lexical Issue: What is the meaning of *ἁμαρτία*?”), then “Everyone who resides in God does not sin” by refusing to love other believers. It then follows that those who are begotten by God (i.e., genuine believers) cannot sin in this way (i.e., by refusing to love other believers). Thus the rhetorical question posed in 3:17 applies to the secessionists: “Whoever has the world’s possessions and sees his brother in need and shuts up his compassion against him, how does the love of God reside in such a person?” Naturally, God’s love does not reside in that person.

This is a difficult issue. You make the call. How are you going to define *ἁμαρτία*? Make sure you can defend your answer from Scripture.

4. Is ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται an independent or a dependent clause? (Circle one.)

- Underline the verb in the clause above and parse it below.

Identify how the KJV, NASB, and NIV differ from the NRSV and NET translations in their rendering of this verb. Which semantical classification do you think is best? Why?

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 107–8; **DM**, 200–205; **G**, 50; **W**, 572–82; **Wabr**, 246–50; **Y**, 126–29).

- What is the syntactical (functional) category for the conjunction ὅτι? Is it a logical conjunction, an adverbial conjunction, or a substantival conjunction? Now that you have mastered the *semantical* categories for ὅτι clauses, which *semantical* classification best fits this ὅτι clause? Why?

Translate ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται in a manner that reflects your decision.

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 129–33 [differs from **W**]; **DM**, 239–58; **G**, n/a; **W**, 666–78; **Wabr**, 293–302; **Y**, 179–92; or **Bl**, 143–44; **DM**, 252, 274, 293–99; **G**, 61, 65; **W**, 453–61; **Wabr**, 197–201; **Y**, 190–91).

- Lexical Issue: What does ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται mean (cf. ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ earlier in the verse)? We saw a similar phrase in 1 John 2:29 (ἐξ αὐτοῦ γεγέννηται). Furthermore this phrase (ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται) occurs in 1 John 4:7 and 5:1. Taking into consideration 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7; and 5:1, state the characteristics of people “born (or “fathered”) by God.”

Summary Point for the Verse

There are four clauses in 1 John 3:9. Below is a single interpretive statement for each clause. Obviously your interpretive statements might differ. Feel free to adjust the ones below to fit your decisions made above for this exercise.

1. People who are part of God's family do not make it a practice to sin, that is, to ignore loving other believers (3:9a).
2. The basis for saying that people who are part of God's family do not sin, namely by not loving other believers, is because God's genetic makeup is in them (3:9b).
3. People who are part of God's family cannot not love other believers (3:9c).
4. The basis for saying that people who are part of God's family do not sin, namely by not loving other believers, is because God fathered them (3:9d).

How might you combine these four statements into a single statement?

Subject: _____

Complement: _____

■ 1 John 3:10

1. Is ἐν τούτῳ φανερά ἐστιν τὰ τέκνα τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ τὰ τέκνα τοῦ διαβόλου an independent or a dependent clause? (Circle one.)

- Underline the verb in the clause above and parse it below.

Grammatical Issue: Why is ἐστιν in the singular for the plural noun τὰ τέκνα? A neuter plural noun acting as the subject of a verb may take a singular verb rather than an expected plural verb. In fact, it has been said, "Perhaps no syntactical peculiarity of Greek is more striking to us than the use of the singular verb with a neuter plural subject" (BDF § 133). Thus in this case, τὰ τέκνα, the neuter plural is the subject, and ἐστιν in its singular form is its verb. This sort of construction will appear two more times in 1 John. What is the plural noun and singular verb in 1 John 3:12?

- The presence of ἐστιν demands a subject, and sometimes a predicate nominative exists. The challenge of this clause resides in the fact that there is a compound subject. What is the compound subject? Is there a predicate nominative in the clause above? How do you know?

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (Bl, 46; DM, 148–49; G, n/a; W, 40–46; Wabr, 31–33; Y, 11–12).

- Syntactical Issue: Does ἐν τούτῳ refer to the preceding statement or to the statement that follows? This is the fifth of fourteen occurrences of the prepositional phrase, “in this” (ἐν τούτῳ) in 1 John (2:3, 4, 5 [twice]; 3:10, 16, 19, 24; 4:2, 9, 10, 13, 17; 5:2). The general rule we have used is this: If there is no subordinate clause introduced by ὅτι, ἵνα, εἰάν, ὅταν, or ἐκ, then ἐν τούτῳ refers to the preceding statement. Yet there are always exceptions. Read the note in the NET for this phrase. What is its conclusion? Then you decide. Does ἐν τούτῳ refer to the preceding statement or to the statement that follows? Explain how your answer affects how 3:10 is viewed. Is it a conclusion or a summary statement?

If necessary, see the Syntactical Issues in SG 12 on 1 John 2:3, 4, and 5.

2. The independent clause πᾶς ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ is tricky.

- Underline the verb in the clause above and parse it below.

- As it was the case in the preceding clause, the presence of ἔστιν demands a subject, but is there a predicate nominative? The challenge of this clause is twofold because not only is there a compound subject, but the compound subject also involves a πᾶς ὁ + two participles. With this in mind, what is the compound subject? Is there a predicate nominative in the clause above?

If necessary, reread your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 46; **DM**, 148–49; **G**, n/a; **W**, 40–46; **Wabr**, 31–33; **Y**, 11–12).

Parse ποιῶν _____

Now that you have mastered the semantical classifications for the tense of this verb, which semantical classification best fits the verb? Why?

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 107; **DM**, 181–86; **G**, 48–49; **W**, 513–39; **Wabr**, 219–31; **Y**, 107–13).

Parse ἀγαπῶν _____

Which semantical classification best fits the tense of this verb? Why?

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 107; **DM**, 181–86; **G**, 48–49; **W**, 513–39; **Wabr**, 219–31; **Y**, 107–13).

How are δικαιοσύνην and τὸν ἀδελφόν functioning grammatically in this clause?

Syntactical Issue: Why does μή appear here? Before addressing this question, let me point out a construction that frequently occurs in Greek.

Notice how the negative μή is “sandwiched” between the two parts of the participle: ὁ **μὴ** ποιῶν and ὁ **μὴ** ἀγαπῶν. This is a common technique in Johannine literature (1 John 3:10, 14; 4:8; 5:10, 12). In fact, it would not be uncommon to have an entire phrase that modifies the participle placed between the article and the participle itself, for example: ὁ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τῷ ἁγίῳ εἶπων τὸν αἰώνιον λόγον μακάριος ἔστιν (lit. “The one *through the Holy Spirit* who speaks the eternal word is blessed”).

Why, then, does μή appear here?

If necessary, see the “Grammatical Issue: How is μή functioning in this clause?” in SG 3 on 3 John 10.

- Grammatical Issue: How is καί to be interpreted? There are numerous renderings for καί in this clause.

First, if καί is a logical conjunction, then three options exist. Thus far this SG has suggested that the two participial phrases are a compound subject of the εἰμί verb joined by καί: “Everyone who practices unrighteousness *and* the one who does not love his brother is not of God” (Culy, 79). Yet καί could be a correlative conjunction: “*neither/nor* is the one who does not love his brother” (KJV, NASB, RSV, NRSV, NIV; Brown, 417). Or it might even be ascensive: “*even* the one who does not love his brother” (Painter, 225).

Second, if καί is an adverbial conjunction, then a comparative is possible: “Everyone who practices unrighteousness, *likewise* the one who does not love his brother is not of God.”

Finally, if καί is a substantival conjunction, then the phrases may be translated one of two ways. “Everyone who practices unrighteousness—the one who does not love his fellow Christians—is not of God” (NET). Thus, καί introduces an exegetical clause in that ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν clarifies what ὁ μὴ ποιῶν δικαιοσύνην means (BDF § 394; Baugh, 50). Or perhaps καί may be translated appositionally, “Everyone who does not practice righteousness, *that is*, the one who does not love his brother, is not from God” (Smalley, 177, 181; Strecker, 105). Thus several translational options

exist for *καί*. The question for you is simply this: How will you interpret and translate *καί* in this clause? As you read my summary statements below, what is my final decision?

Summary Point for the Verse

According to the above analysis, there are two clauses in 1 John 3:10. Below is a single interpretive statement for each clause. Obviously your interpretive statements might differ, especially if you interpret *καί* differently than I did. Feel free to adjust the ones below to fit your decisions made above for this exercise.

1. A person's paternity is evident (3:10a).
2. People who do not practice righteousness (i.e., love) are not of God (3:10b).

How might you combine these two statements into a single statement?

Subject: _____

Complement: _____

■ 1 John 3:11

1. Is ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἀγγελία an independent or a dependent clause? (Circle one.)

- Underline the verb in the clause above and parse it below.

- Syntactical Issue: How is ὅτι functioning in this clause? The conjunction ὅτι could be adverbial and translated “because,” and therefore subordinate to the clause at the end of 3:10 (Culy, 80).

However, in this context, ὅτι is very much like διότι and thus a logical conjunction that functions inferentially, providing a deduction, conclusion, or summary to all that preceded it (BDF § 456 [1]; BDAG, 732c 4b). Thus it is translated “for” (KJV, NASB, NRSV, NET) or not at all (NIV).

Brown takes this understanding of ὅτι a step further. He points out that the clause itself is “virtually a copy” of 1:5. Whereas 1:5 began a new section with “Now (*καί*) this is the gospel that we have heard from Christ” (1:5–3:10), here in 3:11 we read “For (*ὅτι*) this is the gospel that you heard from the beginning”, which also begins a new section in 1 John (3:11–5:12; see Brown, 440; NET). Thus Brown views this ὅτι as the start of a brand-new section in 1 John. Where, then, according to Brown and these SGs, do the two main sections begin and end, and what are the respective structural markers?

If necessary, see the “Contextual Orientation” for SG 9 or Brown (p. 124).

- Αὕτη is the feminine form of what demonstrative pronoun and why is it a feminine form?

If necessary, see an introductory grammar (**B**, 87–89; **C**, 41–44; **M**, 101–4; **S**, 45–47; **Wen**, 58).

What are the grammatical functions of αὕτη and ἡ ἀγγελία? Support your answer.

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 46; **DM**, 148–49; **G**, n/a; **W**, 40–46; **Wabr**, 31–33; **Y**, 11–12).

- Lexical Issue: What does ἀγγελία mean? Using your BibleWorks, Logos, Gramcord, or Accordance program, highlight ἀγγελία, search for and then list the numerous occurrences of the term in the NT. How do Brown (p. 440), Smalley (p. 182), and Painter (p. 232) render ἀγγελία? How do their renderings compare to KJV, NASB, NRSV, and NET?

2. Is ἦν ἠκούσατε ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς an independent or a dependent clause? (Circle one.)

- Underline the verb in the clause above and parse it below.

Which semantical classification best fits the tense of this verb? Why?

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 104–5; **DM**, 193–200; **G**, 49–50; **W**, 554–65; **Wabr**, 239–43; **Y**, 121–26).

- Decline ἦν _____

How is ἦν functioning grammatically in the clause?

Does ἦν have an antecedent? If so, what is it? _____

Can you answer the above questions without rereading your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 70–71; **DM**, 270–73; **G**, 45–46; **W**, 335–45; **Wabr**, 149–53; **Y**, 231–33)?

- Lexical Issue: What is the meaning of ἀπ' ἀρχῆς? As you know, ἀπ' ἀρχῆς is a very common phrase in 1 John. Using your BibleWorks, Logos, Gramcord, or Accordance program, highlight ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, search 1 John's usage of the phrase, and then list the occurrences that pertain to Jesus only. Can you recall and state the meaning of the phrase as it pertains to Jesus in 1 John?

If necessary, see my previous discussion of this phrase in SG 20 on 1 John 3:8, or SG 14 on 1 John 2:13.

3. Is ἵνα ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους an independent or a dependent clause? (Circle one.)

- Underline the verb in the clause above and parse it below.

- Syntactical (functional) Issue: How is this clause to be interpreted? Is the conjunction ἵνα a logical, adverbial, or substantival conjunction? In this context, ἵνα is functioning as a substantive.

On the one hand, ἵνα could be a substantive in that it is an exegetical conjunction (**W**, 678) and thereby exegetical (**W**, 459) to either αὕτη (Baugh, 54; Culy, 80) or ἡ ἀγγελία (Painter, 233; Smalley, 183). In this case, ἵνα explains or clarifies either αὕτη or ἡ ἀγγελία. Thus, ἵνα explains, clarifies, or completes the author's statement.

On the other hand, ἵνα could be a substantive in that it is a content conjunction (**W**, 678) and thereby in apposition (**W**, 475) to either αὕτη or ἡ ἀγγελία. In this case, ἵνα names or clarifies either αὕτη or ἡ ἀγγελία. Thus, ἵνα indicates or introduces the content of the message, namely that (appositional) believers are to love one another. Wallace argues for αὕτη and contends that it is “almost idiomatic of Johannine literature” (**W**, 475).

These are finely nuanced arguments. Commentators are not always clear in how they categorize connectives like ἵνα. Nevertheless such nuances are part of the exegetical discussion. How do the NASB, NIV, NRSV, and NET translate this clause? How will you render this ἵνα? What will your rendering imply?

Summary Point for the Verse

Obviously there are three clauses in 1 John 3:11, yet one clause modifies ἡ ἀγγελία and the other either explains or introduces the content of ἡ ἀγγελία. Thus the following two statements serve as summaries that highlight two elements the author stresses about ἡ ἀγγελία.

1. The message is one that has been listened to from the beginning of Jesus' ministry (3:11a).
2. The *content* of the message is simply this: "We are to love one another" (3:11b).

As you read this second statement, how have I interpreted the ἵνα?
How might you combine these two statements into a single statement?

Subject: _____

Complement: _____

■ 1 John 3:12

1. The clause οὐ καθὼς Κάϊν ἐκ του ποιηροῦ ἦν καὶ ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ is challenging. As you work with this clause, be mindful of the fact that it is a continuation of the ἵνα clause above. Notice the comma in your Greek NT text.

- Underline the two verbs in the clause above and parse them below.

Which semantical classification best fits the tense of this verb? Why?

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 104–5; **DM**, 193–200; **G**, 49–50; **W**, 554–65; **Wabr**, 239–43; **Y**, 121–26).

- What is the syntactical (functional) category for the conjunction καί? Is it a logical conjunction, an adverbial conjunction, or a substantival conjunction?

How might you further define or categorize your answer?

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 129–33 [differs from **W**]; **DM**, 239–58; **G**, n/a; **W**, 666–78; **Wabr**, 293–302; **Y**, 179–92).

- Put parentheses around ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν and ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, and provide a translation for each clause as though they were both independent clauses.

Translational Issue: How are we to render these clauses? The KJV, NASB, NRSV, NIV, and NET render ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν and ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ as though they were relative clauses. Thus, they assume an omission (ellipsis) of a relative pronoun: “*who* was from the evil one” and “(*who*) slew his brother.”

But we also may render ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ ἦν and ἔσφαξεν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ as independent clauses. The omission would not be a relative pronoun but rather the preceding verb and direct object: “not as Cain *loved his brother*. He was from the evil one and he slew his brother” (HJS, 87; Culy, 81). How does the NLT’s rendering differ from the NASB and NET? How are you going to render these clauses?

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- What is the syntactical (functional) category for the conjunction καθὼς? Is it a logical conjunction, an adverbial conjunction, or a substantival conjunction? What semantical rendering would you provide for καθὼς? Why?

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 129–33 [differs from **W**]; **DM**, 239–58; **G**, n/a; **W**, 666–78; **Wabr**, 293–302; **Y**, 179–92).

- OT Usage in the NT: Who was Cain? Take a moment and read Genesis 4:1–16. Briefly summarize the account in your own words.

Moving beyond the fact that this is the only explicit reference to the OT in 1 John, the statement in 1 John 3:12 seems to exceed the strict letter of the OT narrative by saying that Cain committed his crime because he belonged to the “evil one.” Yet in an earlier Jewish work from around the time of the Maccabean revolt (ca. 164 BC), Cain is a type for those who deliberately disbelieve. “Until eternity those who are like Cain in their moral corruption and hatred of brother shall be punished with a similar judgment” (*T. Benj.* 7:5).

Likewise, in another early Jewish work written around AD 70, Cain is presented in heaven with “the crafty adversary” and as having acted under the influence of “the lawless one”: “And I saw, as it were, Adam, and Eve who was with him, and with them the crafty adversary and Cain, who had been led by the adversary to break the law, and (I saw) the murdered Abel (and) the perdition brought on him and given through the lawless one” (*Apoc. Ab.* 24:5).

Finally, Josephus, the Jewish historian who wrote around AD 100, in his retelling of the Cain and Abel event says this about Cain: “But Cain was not only very wicked in other respects, but was wholly intent upon getting; and he first contrived to plough the ground.” He goes to say, “[God] was more honored with what grew naturally of its own accord (i.e., Abel’s sacrifice), than he was with what was the invention of a covetous man, and gotten by forcing the ground.” Finally, Josephus muses, “He augmented his household substance with much wealth, by rapine and violence; he excited his acquaintance to procure pleasures and spoils by robbery, and became a great leader of men into wicked courses” (*Ant.* 1.52–62).

Similar sentiments about Cain are echoed in Jude 10–11, which does not picture Cain as a murderer but uses him as one of three examples of unbelief (see also Heb. 11:4). Association with the Evil One would naturally explain the murder Cain committed, since the John 8:44 already has branded the Devil a murderer. Despite the fact that 1 John 3:12 exceeds the strict letter of the OT narrative, would you say that it agrees with Second Temple theological thinking about Cain? How does the author agree or perhaps even expand that thinking?

- Lexical Issue: Why does the author use σφάζω (“slaughter”; BDAG, 979d) instead of ἀποκτείνω (“kill”; BDAG, 114b 1)? This verb occurs eighty-four times in the Septuagint, and only ten times in the NT. In fact, σφάζω occurs only here outside of the book of Revelation.

In the Septuagint, the verb is used, with few exceptions, of sacrificial offerings (Gen. 22:10; 37:31; 43:16; Exod. 12:6; 21:37 [22:1]; 29:11, 16, 20, etc.). The few exceptions are Elijah’s brutal slaying of the prophets of Baal (3 Kingdoms [1 Kings] 18:40) and of the butcher-like slaying of Ahab’s sons (4 Kingdoms [2 Kings] 10:7) and the sons of Zedekiah (4 Kingdoms [2 Kings] 25:7). However, the term used in Genesis 4:8, where Cain’s murder of Abel is recorded, is the aorist form of ἀποκτείνω.

In Revelation, σφάζω is used of Christ, the Lamb, and other witnesses to the truth who have yielded their lives in testimony (Rev. 5:6, 9, 12; 6:9; 18:24), but it is also used of the beast that seems to be resurrected after receiving a fatal wound (Rev. 13:3, 8). So why does the author of 1 John choose to use σφάζω (“slaughter”) rather than ἀποκτείνω (“kill”)? It seems σφάζω conveys violence and perhaps even implies that Abel’s murder was a brutal murder or one that expressed extreme violence. Compare KJV, NASB, NRSV, NIV, NET, and NLT renderings for the term σφάζω. How will you render it? Why?

2. Is καὶ χάρις τίνος ἔσφαξεν αὐτόν an independent or a dependent clause? (Circle one.)

- Underline the verb in the clause above and parse it below.

• Lexical Issue: How should καὶ χάρις τίνος be translated? Not only is χάρις used infrequently in the NT (9 times), but it also is considered an improper or irregular preposition (BDF § 216 [2]). The preposition χάρις may be rendered “for the sake of,” “on behalf of,” or “on account of” (BAGD, 877a; BDAG, 1078d).

Furthermore, the word order here in 1 John 3:12 is unique. In other situations, when χάρις is used to introduce a question, it comes *after* its object (i.e., τοῦτου χάρις; cf. Eph. 3:1, 14). In 1 John 3:12 χάρις comes before its object (χάρις τίνος; cf. Strecker, 109).

Finally, the reason τί (“why”) is in the genitive (τίνος, “what”) is because χάρις’s object always is in the genitive case (remember some prepositions take modifiers in certain cases). Thus the phrase may be translated literally as “for the sake of what” (cf. NASB) or “because of what.” How do the NRSV, NIV, and NET render καὶ χάρις τίνος?

3. The dependent clause ὅτι τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια is a difficult one.

- Underline the verb in the clause above and parse it below.

-
- What is the syntactical (functional) category for the conjunction ὅτι? Is it a logical, adverbial, or substantival conjunction? Which *semantical* classification best fits this ὅτι clause? Why?

If necessary, see your syntax grammar (**Bl**, 129–33 [differs from **W**]; **DM**, 239–58; **G**, n/a; **W**, 666–78; **Wabr**, 293–302; **Y**, 179–92; or **Bl**, 143–44; **DM**, 252, 274, 293–99; **G**, 61, 65; **W**, 453–61, 471–77; **Wabr**, 197–201; **Y**, 190–91).

- Put parentheses around τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ πονηρὰ ἦν and τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια.

Why is the neuter plural noun, τὰ ἔργα, the subject of this clause, governed by the singular verb ἦν?

If necessary, reread the entry for 1 John 3:10 (“Grammatical Issue: Why is ἐστιν in the singular for the plural noun τὰ τέκνα?”)

Grammatical Issue: Why are there no verbs in the second clause (τὰ δὲ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ αὐτοῦ δίκαια)? Actually there are two omissions (ellipses) in this clause. First, the verbal ellipsis warrants a second ἦν. Thus, δίκαια is a predicate nominative of an omitted verb, ἦν.

There is also a second omission. What is the best semantical classification for the second article τὰ? Based upon your answer, what noun might you supply for an omitted subject?

Can you answer this question without rereading your syntax grammar (**BI**, 75–79; **DM**, 141–49; **W**, 207–11; **G**, 21–24; **Wabr**, 95–108; **Y**, 55–62)?

Summary Point for the Verse

There are several clauses in 1 John 3:12. Below is a single interpretive statement for each clause. Obviously your interpretive statements might differ. Notice that 3:12a, b, and c are under number 1 above. Feel free to adjust the ones below to fit your decisions made above for this exercise.

1. Cain did not love his brother, Abel (3:12a).
2. Cain's lack of love for his brother united him with the Devil and was acted out in the violent murder of his brother (3:12b).
3. Cain's lack of love for his brother evidences itself in his violent act of murder (3:12c).
4. The reason Cain murdered Abel is because Cain's deeds were evil (3:12d).
5. The reason Cain murdered Abel is because Abel's deeds were good (3:12e).

How might you combine these five statements into a single statement?

Subject: _____

Complement: _____

Pulling It All Together

Step 10

Convert your initial translation (“Step 2”) into an interpretive one.

Step 11

Convert your list of clauses (“Step 4”) into a structural outline.

Step 12

Apply the Text

A major theme in this section is loving one's fellow follower of Jesus. The author seems to be giving his readers a litmus test regarding the salvation of individual persons. Yet was this the author's intent? Can/should Christians declare other people in or out of the kingdom of God based on their actions (i.e., their love or lack thereof)? If it is true that Christians remain sinners (1:8, 10) and that "no one born of God commits sin" (refuses to love) as 3:9 declares, how can we judge whether or not other people are Christians if John never settles the issue of how Christians can be redeemed yet sinful? Is the author merely acknowledging the reality and not trying to harmonize this complex phenomenon? What do you think?