

1 John 2:7

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning.

Analysis

Brethren, I write no new commandment unto you, but an old commandment which ye had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning. John addresses believers affectionately as "brethren" (adelphoi, ἀδελφοί), emphasizing family relationship in Christ. He clarifies that his teaching isn't innovation but apostolic tradition: "I write no new commandment" (ouk entolēn kainēn graphō). In a context where false teachers introduced "new" revelations and secret knowledge, John anchors authority in original apostolic witness.

"But an old commandment which ye had from the beginning" (all' entolēn palaian hēn eichete ap' archēs)—"old" (palaian) doesn't mean outdated but original, authoritative, foundational. "From the beginning" (ap' archēs) refers to the beginning of their Christian experience when they first heard the gospel. This commandment isn't a recent innovation but was present from the church's foundation.

"The old commandment is the word which ye have heard from the beginning" (hē entolē hē palaia estin ho logos hon ēkousate)—the "commandment" and "word" are equated. This likely refers to the comprehensive message of the gospel, particularly the command to love (which verse 8 will develop). John emphasizes continuity between original apostolic teaching and his current instruction. Against

those who claimed new revelations superseding apostolic witness, John declares: the truth you first heard remains the authoritative standard. Nothing need be added; everything essential has been revealed.

Historical Context

The appeal to ancient authority was crucial in the ancient world. Unlike modern culture which prizes innovation, antiquity valued old, established tradition. False teachers often claimed new revelations—secret knowledge hidden from ordinary believers. The Gnostics particularly emphasized progressive revelation accessible only to the enlightened elite.

John's appeal to "from the beginning" (ap' archēs) anchors truth in the apostolic witness to the historical Jesus. The gospel isn't evolving truth or mystical insight but historical revelation completed in Christ and delivered by eyewitness apostles. This "old" commandment carries authority precisely because of its origin—not human innovation but divine revelation through Christ and His apostles.

The early church developed the concept of apostolic succession and tradition—not new revelations but faithful transmission of original apostolic teaching. Irenaeus (late 2nd century) combated Gnosticism by appealing to the regula fidei (rule of faith)—the apostolic deposit preserved in churches founded by apostles. The creeds emerged to safeguard this "old commandment" against innovative heresies. Reformation sola scriptura similarly insisted: Scripture alone is the final authority—the "old" apostolic witness against human traditions and new revelations.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does anchoring Christian truth in apostolic origins ("from the beginning") protect against false teaching and innovative doctrines?
2. In what ways are contemporary Christians tempted to seek "new" revelations or insights rather than deepening understanding of the "old" gospel?
3. How can churches maintain fidelity to apostolic tradition while applying biblical truth to new cultural contexts?

Interlinear Text

Ἀδελφοί,	οὐκ	ἐντολὴ	καὶ νῦν	γράφω	ὑμῖν	ἀλλ'	
Brethren	no	commandment	new	I write	unto you	but	
G80	G3756	G1785	G2537	G1125	G5213	G235	
ἐντολὴ	παλαιά	ὃν	εἶχετε	ἀπ'	ἀρχῆς·	ἡ	
commandment	The old	which	ye had	from	the beginning	G3588	
G1785	G3820	G3739	G2192	G575	G746		
ἐντολὴ	ἡ	παλαιά	ἐστίν	ὁ	λόγος	ὃν	ἠκούσατε
commandment	G3588	The old	is	G3588	the word	which	ye have heard
G1785		G3820	G2076		G3056	G3739	G191
ἀπ'	ἀρχῆς·						
from	the beginning						
G575	G746						

Additional Cross-References

Leviticus 19:18 (Parallel theme): Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.

1 John 3:11 (Parallel theme): For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another.

1 John 3:23 (Word): And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.

Deuteronomy 6:5 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

Leviticus 19:34 (Parallel theme): But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

1 John 2:24 (Parallel theme): Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.

Matthew 5:43 (Parallel theme): Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.

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