

Introduction to I John

EMC Wednesday Night Bible Study - 6-5-19

Preliminary Material

Resources

- New American Standard Bible
- *The Letters of John*, from The Pillar New Testament Commentary - Colin Kruse, Melbourne School of Theology, Australia
- *The Letters of John*, from Tyndale New Testament Commentaries - John R. W. Stott

What is the goal of Bible study?

- To _____, to _____, and to _____
 - "Hear the word of the Lord, O nations," – Jeremiah 31:10
 - "Speak, Lord, for your servant hears." – 1 Sam 3:9
 - Jesus said, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" – Luke 11:28.

Introductory Matters

The nature of a letter: requires a reconstruction of _____

The apparent scenario

- Following the completion/circulation of the 4th gospel among churches in/around Ephesus in the Roman province of Asia, a group of individuals (secessionists) began spreading teachings about person/work of Jesus in opposition to the 4th gospel
 - Had seceded from the author's community (2:18-19)
 - Held differing views concerning the person/work of Christ (4:1-3)
 - Held differing views concerning Christians' obligations to keep God's commands, namely to believe in his son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another (2:4; 3:23)
 - Continued to attempt to influence community to accept their heretical teachings (2:26)
 - Undermined churches' confidence in the gospel and assurance of salvation (5:13-14)
 - Claimed an anointing that caused believers to question whether they had an anointing, thus lacking spiritual insights the secessionists claimed (2:20, 27)
- Result: _____ and _____

Authorship

Internal evidence - what the _____ has to say

- Lacks typical A to B greeting formula (ex: Ephesians 1:1-2a)
- Only letter besides Hebrews that contains no indication of author's name or title
- Observations about the author
 - He writes _____ (2:1, 7, 8, 12-14, 21, 26; 5:13)
 - His subject matter and syntax bear striking resemblance to the 4th Gospel
 - Love of opposites in contrast: light/dark, life/death, love/hate, truth/falsehood.
 - People belong to either one or the other, with no middle ground: either children of God/devil, belong to the world/don't, have life/don't have life, know God/don't know God
 - Recurrence of precise phrases in John's Gospel and first letter (see Appendix I)
 - John Stott: "If the 4th Gospel is the apostle John's, then the letters will be also."

- He writes as an _____ to Jesus himself (1:1-5a)

External evidence - what has been said _____ the text

- Early Christian tradition: 4th gospel & I John unanimously and unequivocally from apostle John
- Debate concerning the authorship of II & III John (and Revelation): “the elder”
 - Eusebius and Jerome quoting Papias
- Our position: All 3 letters were written by the _____ author
 - Scant evidence of an actual second John. (Most likely the same person.)
 - Internal evidence vastly outweighs a late tradition
- Why “elder”?
 - Not without precedent (I Peter 5:1)
 - “_____” elder, as opposed to “an apostle” (Rom. 1:1; I Pet. 1:1)
 - Preeminence in the region. Last surviving apostle.
- Additional notes concerning the title “elder” in II & III John
 - Title without name = identity and authority well _____
 - 2 different churches = known and acknowledged in a _____ area of Asian province
 - Intimately _____ of affairs and accepts responsibility of spiritual oversight

Purpose and Time of Writing

Primarily _____ (shepherding concern), but also _____ (refutation of opposition)

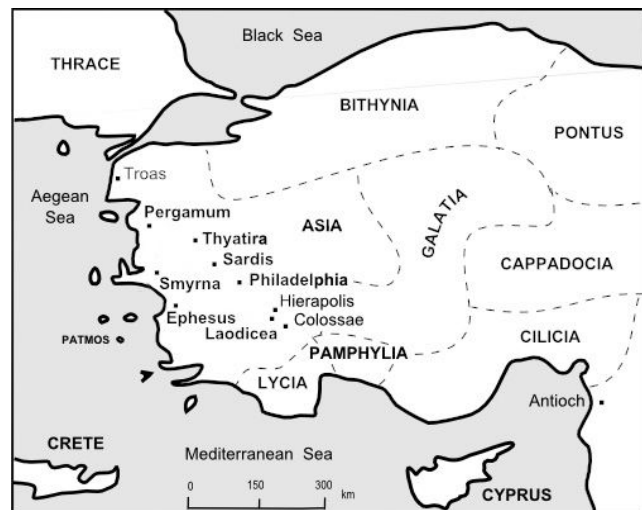
- Demonstrate with certain criteria who is wrong and right (5:13)
- Reassure his flock
- Emphasize the differences between genuine and false Christianity

Timing: ~90-95 AD

Addressees

Several churches in fellowship with John

- Concern for fellowship (1:3) under threat
- Affectionate regard: “Dear friends” (2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11); “brothers” (3:14); “children” (2:1, 12, 18, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21)



Major Theological Themes

- Nature of God as light, love, the Father of Jesus Christ, etc.
- The person and work of Christ
 - Real vs. “apparent” humanity of Jesus → Docetism - late 2nd-early 3rd C., from Gk. *δοκεῖν* (*dokein*) “to seem”. Jesus only appeared to be human.
 - His atoning sacrifice for our sins through his death on the cross → proto-Gnosticism
 - 2 main tenets: impurity of _____ and supremacy of _____
 - Cerinthus as primary culprit?
- The results of intimacy with God: Eternal life, atonement, ethics
- Christian assurance

Appendix I - Recurrence of Precise Phrases in John's Gospel and First Letter

When we compare the occurrence of precise phrases in both Gospel and first letter, we find that in fact the same divine purpose or scheme of salvation is set forth in almost identical terms. It might be summarized as follows, the reference in the letter being printed first in each parenthesis: In our natural and unredeemed state we are both 'of the devil', who has sinned and lied and murdered 'from the beginning' (3:8/8:44), and 'of the world' (2:16; 4:56/8:23; 15:19). We therefore 'sin' (3:4/8:34) and 'have it' (1:8/9:41), 'walk in the darkness' (1:6; 2:11/8:12, 12:35) and are spiritually 'blinded' (2:11/12:40) and 'dead' (3:14/5:25). But God loved us and sent his Son to be 'the Saviour of the world' (4:14/4:42) and that 'we might live' (4:9/3:16). This was his 'one and only' (*monogenes*, 4:9/1:14, 18, 3:16, 18), who, though in or from 'the beginning' (1:1/1:1), yet became, or came in, 'flesh' (4:2/1:14) and then 'laid down his life' for us (3:16/10:11-18), in order to 'take away' sin (3:5/1:29). To him 'testimony' has been borne, partly by those who have 'seen' and therefore 'proclaimed' (1:2-3; 4:14/1:34, 19:35), but especially by God himself (5:9/3:33; 5:32, 34, 36, 37) and by the Spirit (5:6/15:26). We should 'accept' this divine testimony (5:9/3:11, 32, 33; 5:34), 'believe' in the One thus adequately attested (5:10/5:37-40) and 'acknowledge' him (4:2, 3/9:22). Believing in him or his 'name' (5:13/1:12, etc.), we pass from death to life (3:14/5:24). We 'have life' (5:11, 12/3:15, 36; 20:31), for life is in the Son of God (5:11, 12/1:4; 14:6). This is to be 'born of God' (2:29; 3:9; 5:4, 18/1:13).

Those who have been born of God, God's 'children' (3:1, 2, 10; 5:2/1:12, 11:52), are variously described, in relation to God, to Christ, to the truth, to each other, and to the world. They are 'of God' (3:10/8:47) and have come to 'know' God, the true God, through Jesus Christ (5:20/17:3). It may even be said that they have 'seen' God (3:6; cf. III John 11/14:9), although in the literal sense no one has ever seen God (4:12, 20/1:18; 6:46). Christians are not only of God but of the truth as well (2:21; 3:19/18:37). The truth is also 'in' them (1:18; 2:4/8:44) and they 'do' it or 'live by' it (1:6/3:21), for the Spirit given to them is 'the Spirit of truth' (4:6 5:6/14:17; 15:26; 16:13). The relation of Christians to God and to the truth is through Jesus Christ, in whom and in whose love they 'abide', which the NIV a little unfortunately renders either 'live' or 'remain' (2:6, 27, 28; 3:6, 24; 4:13, 15, 16/15:4-10), and who himself lives in them (2:24; 3:24; 4:12-16/6:56; 15:4, 5). His word lives in them too (1:10; 2:14, 24/5:38; 15:7) and they in it (2:27/8:31). Thus they 'obey his word' (2:5/8:51-55; 14:23; 15:20; 17:6) or 'his commands' (2:3, 4; 3:22, 24; 5:2, 3/14:15, 21; 15:10), his 'new command' being that they love one another (2:8-10; 3:11, 23; cf. II John 5, 6/13:34). 'The World', however, will 'hate' them (3:13/15:18). They must not be surprised by this. The reason for it is that they no longer belong to the world (4:5, 6/15:19; 17:16), and while remaining in it must not love the things that are in it (2:15, 16/17:15). Christ has 'overcome the world', and so also through faith in him have they (5:4, 5/16:33). The end result of all that Christ has done for, and given to, his people is fullness of joy (1:4/15:11; 16:24; 7:13).

Stott, John. *The Letters of John*. Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2009. Pages 21-23.

Appendix II - I John Schedule (tentative)

Date	Text	Title	Notes
6-5		Introduction to I John	
6-12	1:1-4	Concerning the Word of Life	
6-19	1:5-2:2	Testing Our Attitudes	
6-26	2:3-11	Testing Our Obedience	Richard Meservey teaching
7-3	2:12-17	Affirmation and Exhortation	
7-10	2:18-27	Warnings Against Deception	
7-17	2:28-3:10	Distinguishing God's Children from Satan's	
7-24	3:11-24	The Gospel's Demand of Love	
7-31	4:1-6	Testing the Spirits	
8-7	4:7-5:4a	Testing Our Love	
8-14	5:5b-12	Accepting God's Testimony and Life	
8-21	5:13-21	Conclusion	
8-28	<i>Flex week</i>		