

The Epistles of John

The goal of this Bible Class is to give the students a working knowledge of all three of the Epistles of John. It is based on an expository approach to teaching the Bible, with an emphasis in preparing the students for the worship of our Savior. The various lessons are to be viewed by the teacher as thematic suggestions to help with preparation. While the lessons are not intended to be read to the class word for word, the main ideas should be the substance of what is taught. The teacher, in preparation for the class, should consider reading through the whole curriculum before beginning the class, as well as the books of 1, 2, 3 John several times. This will provide the instructor with a broad and comprehensive understanding of these Epistles as it is being taught. At the end of the course, the class will be concluded with a Bible Knowledge Evaluation. The instructor should be sure to review the material sufficiently that the students are able to correctly answer the questions on the evaluation at the end of the course.

It is important that the instructor be not only knowledgeable about the material, but also able to teach it with enthusiasm and conviction. Students best learn from teachers that are themselves excited about the scriptures. The use of maps, diagrams, white boards etc. is extremely helpful. Some of these have been provided in the curriculum. It is suggested that the class be conducted in an interactive manner. This can be accomplished by having them read short portions of the scripture texts, asking them questions, and wholeheartedly encouraging them to ask questions. All students should be encouraged to bring a Bible to class.

It will become evident to the teacher that this course curriculum, while not dealing with every verse and concept in the books of 1, 2, 3 John, is comprehensive and deeply theological. It is designed to help the students understand the Epistles of John in their wider biblical context, with emphasis on its place in the redemptive history of God's covenant people. The students will be confronted with and asked to understand and remember fairly difficult concepts. It should be remembered that children are able to comprehend much more than we often give them credit for. While this class will be a challenge for both the teacher and the students, the rewards for the efforts of those in the class will be surprising and exciting.

The Epistles of John

Lesson One: Introduction & 1 John 1:1-4

“The Manifestation of the Word of Life”

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

Today we begin to study the Epistles (“letters”) of John. Although the author of these letters did not sign them, it has long been accepted that he is the same apostle John who wrote the gospel and received the book of Revelation. The similarities between the gospel and the epistles show that they were written by the same man. John begins both the gospel and the first epistle with the phrase “in the beginning” (John 1:1; 1 John 1:1), and in both works he explains the gospel in the same terms: The “only-begotten” (John 1:14, 18; 3:16; 1 John 4:9) Word that was in the beginning came in flesh (John 1:14; 1 John 4:2), and “laid down his life” for us (John 10:11-18; 1 John 3:16) so that we might “have life” (John 3:15; 1 John 5:11).

We do not know exactly when these letters were written (or the Gospel of John or the book of Revelation), but it is likely that they were all written sometime in the 60’s AD (because these books were written in light of the coming judgment of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and it is likely some mention of it would have been made if it had already happened). John and the other Apostles were forced to leave Jerusalem before 66 AD because of the war that ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. We know historically, from the Church Fathers, that John made Ephesus the center of his ministry until he died in old age at about 100 AD. Tradition says that he was buried at Ephesus. At some point we know that he was exiled to the Island of Patmos, where he received revelation from Jesus about what was *shortly to take place*, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 70 AD. There he wrote the book of Revelation, which is addressed to the seven churches in Asia Minor (rev. 1:4; 2:1-3:22), of which Ephesus is one. The Epistles were probably written to these same churches (maybe others) that had been under John’s ministry. In 2 & 3 John, the author calls himself “The Elder,” indicating his familiarity to and authority over the people in the churches, repeatedly called his “little children” (1 Jn. 2:1, 12, 13, 19, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). These are letters from their spiritual father in the faith.

John informs his readers that they are living in “the last hour” (1 John 2:18). The proof that it is the last hour is the fact that “many antichrists have arisen” (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn. 7). Like the rest of the New Testament writers, John was expecting the end of the Old Testament era. He knows that antichrists will come before the “end” because Jesus told him on the Mount of Olives (Mat. 24:22-24), and he knows that it will happen soon because Jesus showed him (Rev. 1:3; 3:11; 22:7, 10, 12). The Old Covenant order came to a final end in AD 70, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its temple. John is writing shortly before that event, to warn the church about the dangers they will face in the “last hour” and to encourage them to keep walking in the commandments and love of God.

Clearly, John was writing to Christian believers who were being threatened by divisions among them in the churches. Because of the teachings of the “antichrists,” some believers had already left the church; they are no longer “with us,” and that is a sign that they were not “of us” (1 John 2:19). Deceivers had gone out and many believers were leaving the teaching of Christ (2 John 7–11), and John names Diotrephes in particular as a proud man (“who loves to be first”) who has turned against the apostles (3 John 9–10). Under the stress of persecution many are leaving Christ and His church. With this kind of turmoil in the church, John wants to assure his readers that they can know they have eternal life. This is one of his stated purposes (1 John 5:13). He also says that he writes to ensure that his readers can have joy in the midst of trials (1 John 1:4).

The Epistles of John are difficult to summarize and outline. 1 John is made up of four main sections. John opens with an introduction summarizing the message that the apostles preached—the incarnation (Latin word for “flesh”) of the Word of **Life** (1:1–4). 1:5 announces the beginning of a section with the phrase “This is the message.” The message is that “God is **light** and in Him there is no darkness,” and the following two chapters focus on the conflict between light and darkness. After 2:10, John does not mention “light” again. He announces a new section, though, in 3:11, saying again “This is the message.” The message is that “we should **love** one another,” and the theme of brotherly love continues through the early verses of chapter 5. The outline emphasizes the three L’s of 1 John: Life, Light and Love. From 5:13 to the end, John summarizes his letter and explains the reasons for writing. Memorize the key verse: 1 John 5:13

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

2–3 John echo the same themes as 1 John. John describes himself as an “elder” in both letters (as Peter does in 1 Peter 5:1). 2 John is addressed to a “chosen lady,” which probably is not an individual but a congregation(s), the “bride” of Christ. This letter reemphasizes the command to love one another, as well as the confession that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (2 John 5–12). As in 1 John, John again warns against antichrists. In his third letter, John names names, warning about Diotrephes who refuses

to listen to the apostles and commending Demetrius for his good testimony (3 John 9–10). Imitating the good rather than the evil (3 John 11) means following the example of Demetrius rather than Diotrephes.

According to historical accounts of John's life, there was a heretic named Cerinthus who actively taught in Ephesus during the time John was there. Cerinthus taught that Jesus was the physical son of Joseph; and that the "Christ spirit" was united to Jesus at His baptism, but left Jesus before His Passion and crucifixion. In other words, Jesus was not the Son of God in human flesh. Cerinthus rejected most of the New Testament writings. He was a former Jew from Egypt, and combined Jewish ideas with what became known as Gnosticism (a heresy that taught that there was a special knowledge of the spiritual world that was separated from the physical world. Physical matter was thought to be evil; good was thought to be associated with non-physical/spiritual ideas). He tried to produce a spiritualized Jewish religion, and retained circumcision and the Sabbath. According to Eusebius, Irenaeus quoted Polycarp (who was one of John's students) as saying: "That John, the disciple of the Lord, having gone to take a bath in Ephesus and having seen Cerinthus inside, left the baths, refusing to bathe, and said: 'Let us flee, lest also the baths fall in, since Cerinthus is inside, the enemy of truth.'" Cerinthus or teachers like him are those whom John is warning his "little children" in the faith about.

The Gospel of John and the book of Acts show us that the primary opponents of Jesus and the disciples were the Jews. They did not want to believe in Jesus because His teachings meant an end to the Old Covenant/Old Creation world. They wanted to remain in the darkness of the Old Creation, and refused to receive Jesus. The disciples were brutally persecuted because they taught that Jesus was the Son of God in human flesh, and that He was raised from the dead for their justification and salvation. In the book of Revelation, John wrote words of warning from Jesus to the churches John ministered to. They were warned to remain faithful to Jesus, and to overcome the false teachers ("antichrists") that tried to deceive them by turning them from Jesus. The primary enemies of the faith were the Jews in the Roman empire who were, like Cerinthus, seeking to combine Judaism with Christianity and other pagan religions, resulting in immorality, lack of love among the brethren, and leaving the faith preached by the Apostles.

During the early centuries of the church, a heretic named Arius began to teach that Jesus was not God in human flesh. John's letters and gospel were very important for church fathers like Athanasius who refuted Arius and his followers. John's letters have also been important for telling how Christians can be assured of their salvation (1 John 5:13).

The Incarnation of the Word of Life (1 Jn. 1:1-4)

As with his John’s Gospel, 1 John begins with a reference to Genesis 1:1 [see chart on handout].

| Genesis 1:1-3 | John 1:1-9 | 1 John 1:1-3 |
|---|---|---|
| <p>1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.</p> <p>2 The earth was without form, and void;</p> <p>and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.</p> <p>3 Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.</p> | <p>1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.</p> <p>2 He was in the beginning with God.</p> <p>3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.</p> <p>4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.</p> <p>5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.</p> <p>6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.</p> <p>7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe.</p> <p>8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.</p> <p>9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.</p> | <p>1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—</p> <p>2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—</p> <p>3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship <i>is</i> with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.</p> |

John’s gospel and letters are very clear in teaching about the incarnation of the Son of God. The word “incarnation” comes from the Latin word for “flesh,” and describes the fact that the eternal Son of God took on human nature as Jesus. John says that the “Word of Life” has come into the world in a way that can be seen, heard, and touched (1 John 1:1–3), and he says that anyone who denies that the Son of God has come in the flesh is an antichrist (1 John 4:1–3; 2 John 7).

Because John and the other Apostles heard, saw and touched the resurrected Jesus (Jn. 20:20, 25-29), their testimony about Him is true. It can be relied upon by Christians so that they have assurance that their belief in Jesus is true. Because Jesus Himself is the “Word of Life” (1 Jn. 1:1; cf. Jn. 1:1-4), those who believe in Him have eternal life. The life of Jesus is described as “eternal life which was with the Father,” which we who believe in Jesus have had manifested to us through the teachings of the Apostles. Moreover, the eternal life given to us is manifested so that we can have fellowship with God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ – and one another. John specifically says in v. 3 that the readers were taught about Jesus so that they may have fellowship with John and other Christians that have believed in Jesus, the Word of Life. Thus, believing in Jesus, the Word of Life, means more than simply being saved from our sins. It means having fellowship with one another. Much of the rest of the book of 1 John teaches them

about the importance of living in fellowship and love with each other. In so doing, they will accomplish another of John's purposes in writing: "That your joy may be full" (1:4; cf. Jn. 15:11; 16:24).

Homework assignment: Read all of 1 John. Notice how the two central sections begin with "This is the message."

The Epistles of John

Lesson One: Introduction & 1 John 1:1-4

“The Manifestation of the Word of Life”

| |
|--|
| <p>Outline of The Epistles of John</p> <p>1 John</p> <p>I. Incarnation of the Word of <u>Life</u> (1:1-4)</p> <p>II. This is the Message: God is <u>Light</u> (1:5-3:10)</p> <p>III. This is the Message: <u>Love</u> One another (3:11-5:12)</p> <p>IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)</p> <p>2 John</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Love of the Chosen Lady</p> <p>3 John</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Imitate What is Good</p> |
|--|

Today we begin to study the Epistles of John. The author is generally understood to be the Apostle John = “Yahweh is Gracious” (also the author of the Gospel of John & Revelation, all probably written in the 60’s AD).

Memorize the key verse: 1 John 5:13

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

| Genesis 1:1-3 | John 1:1-9 | 1 John 1:1-3 |
|---|--|---|
| <p>1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.</p> <p>2 The earth was without form, and void;</p> <p>and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.</p> <p>3 Then God said, “Let there be light”; and there was light.</p> | <p>1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. 4 In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.</p> <p>5 And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.</p> <p>6 There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. 7 This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. 8 He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. 9 That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world.</p> | <p>1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—</p> <p>2 the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us— 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship <i>is</i> with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.</p> |

John’s gospel and letters are very clear in teaching about the incarnation (Latin word for “flesh”) of the Son of God.

Homework assignment: Read all of 1 John. Notice how the two central sections begin with “This is the message.”

The Epistles of John

Lesson Two: Fellowship with God In The Light (1 John 1:5-2:11)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

❖ Review

Who wrote the Epistles of John? [The Apostle John, the same who wrote John & Revelation]. When? [In the 60's]. Last week we saw that John opened his first letter in much the same way he did with his Gospel, with an allusion to opening words of Genesis. What were the three problems with the first creation that God dealt with in the first creation? [the earth was without form (shape or purpose), it was void (empty), and darkness was over all the earth.] In the next six days of creation, God was active in forming/dividing/defining with purpose various parts of the creation, filling with life, and providing light for the earth. In his Gospel, John told us that Jesus was the Word of the Father that made the creation; and that He became flesh to reveal the Father by forming a new creation by bringing life and light to the old creation, establishing a new humanity in the world. What does the word “incarnation” mean? [Latin = “flesh”].

In 1 John, John wrote to his “little children” in the faith that they could know that they have fellowship with God because he and the other Apostles were true witnesses that the Word, Jesus, the Son of God, became flesh and dwelt among them, and they beheld His glory with their eyes, in what they heard and the fact that they touched Him with their hands. And just as Adam had fellowship with God in the Garden of Eden, so too, we are able to have fellowship with God and one another. Because of this fellowship, we are able to have joy in this life (cf. outline: I. Incarnation of the Word of Life – 1:1-4).

In his Epistles, John was writing to Christian believers who were being threatened by divisions among them in the churches. Because of the teachings of the “antichrists,” some believers had already left the church because they had begun to doubt the teachings of the Apostles. Under the stress of persecution many are leaving Christ and His church. With this kind of turmoil in the church, John wants to assure his readers that they can know they have eternal life. This is one of his stated purposes (1 John 5:13).

He also says that he writes to ensure that his readers can have joy in the midst of trials (1 John 1:4).

1:5 announces the beginning of a new section with the phrase “This is the message.” The message is that “God is light and in Him there is no darkness,” and the following two chapters focus on the conflict between light and darkness. After 2:10, John does not mention “light” again. He announces a new section in 3:11, saying again “This is the message.” The message is that “we should love one another,” and the theme of brotherly love continues through the early verses of chapter 5. The outline emphasizes the three L’s of 1 John: **Life**, **Light** and **Love**. From 5:13 to the end, John summarizes his letter and explains the reasons for writing. Memorize the key verse: 1 John 5:13

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

I. God is Light & In Him is no darkness at all (1 Jn. 1:5-2:2)

Genesis 1 tells us that God divided the light from the darkness, and John said in his Gospel that the light of Jesus divided the world between those who receive the Son of God by faith from those rejected and sought to overcome Him. In 1 Jn. 1:5-2:11 we see this same theme of the division of light (1:5, 7; 2:8, 9, 10) and darkness (1:5, 6; 2:8, 9, 11). At the first creation light and darkness were not associated with good and evil, but both were called “good” by God when He evaluated the creation. When John uses light and darkness to distinguish men and their ways of living, he is primarily speaking of the light being the life lived in Jesus, while those in darkness refuse to believe in Jesus and live for Him. They refuse to come into the light of the new creation through Jesus, and live in the darkness of the old creation. The emphasis in this section is on a series of contrasts between the way we live our lives in the light of Jesus in the new creation, as opposed to those who live in the darkness of the old creation. Notice too that what John speaks about is not just what we believe as the expression of being in light or darkness, but on how we live our lives. What we believe is demonstrated by how we live.

1 Jn. 1:5 begins with God: “This is the message which we have heard from Him [Jesus, who was manifested by the witness of the Apostles] and declare to you, that **God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.**” If we are to have fellowship with God and one another (v. 3), we need to be in the light as God is in the light. We cannot love the darkness of the old creation way of relating to God since Jesus, the light of the world has come to bring us into a new relationship with the Father. Men demonstrate their rejection of Jesus by saying and doing things that are the opposite of who God is. Thus, in vv. 6-10, John reveals the contrast between those in the light and those in the darkness by confronting three false claims/ideas held by those in the darkness, yet want to claim that they are in fellowship with God. The chart on the handout shows these false claims (of those in darkness) in the left column, and the characteristics of those who walk in the light in the right column.

1 John 1:6-2:2

| 3 False Claims of those in Darkness | 3 Characteristics of Waking in the Light |
|---|---|
| 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. | |
| | 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. |
| 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. | 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us <i>our</i> sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. |
| 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. | 2:1 ...if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous |

Because John and the other Apostles proclaimed the truth about Jesus, anyone that claims to be in fellowship with Him and the Father but do not live in the light are self-deceived liars. Just as sin separated Adam from fellowship with God in the Garden, so too, sin is what separates people in the new creation from God. Those who say that they have fellowship with Jesus (and the Father and us) but do not practice the truth that Jesus came to save us from sin remain in darkness. These people in darkness claim to be without sin, and do not have the word of truth in them. But those who walk in the light know that they sin, and confess their sins, knowing that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. Again, sinfulness is not what characterizes darkness, because those in the light know that they are sinners in need of the blood of Jesus. Those in darkness claim that they do not need to be cleansed by Jesus, demonstrating that they are in darkness. This probably refers to those Jews (Jewish converts to Christianity) who believe that they are righteous apart from Jesus.

Because sin separates men from God, and because God instituted animal sacrifices for His people in the Old Covenant to provide atonement for their sins, the Jews should have known that they needed a sacrifice for their sins. The Apostles declared that Jesus Christ the Righteous is the “Advocate” or helper for men in their sinfulness (2:1). 2:2 says that He is the “propitiation” for our sins. The word propitiation is used only here in 1 Jn. 4:10, and refers to a sacrifice that turns away the righteous anger of God. Jesus is our Advocate/Helper (cf. Jn. 14:16) before the Father by sacrificing His life for us. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (1:7-9), satisfying the anger of God the Father against our sin, and bringing us into fellowship with Him. Those who reject Jesus as our advocate before the Father remain in darkness because their sins are not cleansed by the blood of Jesus. They have no fellowship with God or His people because they have rejected the only way for them to come into the light.

II. Knowing Him & Keeping His commandments (1 Jn. 2:3-11)

John goes on to make clear that this truth is not just something to be believed – it is to be lived. Again, in 1 Jn. 2:3-11, we see a series of contrasts between those in the light and those in the darkness. We can know that we are in the light and have fellowship with God and one another, unlike those who think they know Him and are in reality

walking in darkness. 1 Jn. 2:3 says: “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments.” Living in the light means keeping the commandments of Jesus. The chart on the handout shows the false claims of those in the darkness in the right column, and those who know Him in the left column.

1 John 2:4-11

| Knowing we are In Him – In the Light | False Claims of Knowing Him – In the Dark |
|--|---|
| | 4 He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. |
| 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. | |
| | 6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. |
| 7 Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. 8 Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. | |
| | 9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. |
| 10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. | |
| | 11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. |

Again, we see that those in the darkness are self-deceived liars. They claim to “know Him” and be in fellowship with Him, but demonstrate they do not know Him because they do not walk as Jesus walked. How did Jesus walk? Jesus walked in love. The commandment that we are to keep is to love our brothers in the Lord (Jn. 13:34 15:12-15). By loving one another, we demonstrate that we are walking in the light of Jesus. But those who hate their brothers demonstrate that they remain in the darkness. Those who hate their brothers walk in the darkness of rejecting Jesus, and are blind in this world. What John is telling the readers is that they should not follow those who are “antichrists” because they are blinded by their rejection of Jesus. Those in the light can know who these blind antichrists are because they do not keep the commandment of Jesus to love one another.

Being a Christian is much more than believing that Jesus died to save us from our sins. It means being brought into fellowship with and continuing in that fellowship by confessing our sins, knowing that He will forgive us all our sins. It means that we know that the sacrifice of Jesus is the propitiation of our sins, and for any in the world that believe in Jesus. It means knowing that we are in Him, and in fellowship with one another, loving one another as Christ as loved us. It means rejecting the teachings of those who remain in darkness. It means walking in the light as Jesus is in the light.

Homework assignment: Read all of 1 John. Notice how John's "Little children" are contrasted with the world and the antichrists, and how we are supposed to live.

The Epistles of John

Lesson Two: Fellowship with God In The Light (1 John 1:5-2:11)

| |
|--|
| <p>Outline of The Epistles of John</p> <p>1 John</p> <p>I. Incarnation of the Word of <u>Life</u> (1:1-4)</p> <p>II. This is the Message: God is <u>Light</u> (1:5-3:10)</p> <p>III. This is the Message: <u>Love</u> One another (3:11-5:12)</p> <p>IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)</p> <p>2 John</p> <p>Love of the Chosen Lady</p> <p>3 John</p> <p>Imitate What is Good</p> |
|--|

I. God is Light & In Him is no darkness at all (1 Jn. 1:5-2:2)

| 3 False Claims of those in Darkness | 3 Characteristics of Waking in the Light |
|---|---|
| 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. | |
| | 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. |
| 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. | 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us <i>our</i> sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. |
| 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. | 2:1 ...if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous |

II. Knowing Him & Keeping His commandments (1 Jn. 2:3-11)

| Knowing we are In Him – In the Light | False Claims of Knowing Him – In the Dark |
|--|---|
| | 4 He who says, “I know Him,” and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. |
| 5 But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him. | |
| | 6 He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked. |
| 7 Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word which you heard from the beginning. 8 Again, a new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. | |
| | 9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. |
| 10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him. | |
| | 11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. |

Homework assignment: Read all of 1 John. Notice how John’s “Little children” are contrasted with the world and the antichrists, and how we are supposed to live.

The Epistles of John

Lesson Three: Children of God in the World (1 John 2:12-3:10)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

❖ Review

Who wrote the Epistles of John? [The Apostle John, the same who wrote John & Revelation]. When? [In the 60's]. The Epistles were possibly written to the same churches he addressed in the book of Revelation (the seven churches of Asia) that had been under John's ministry (possibly others). In 1 John, John wrote to his "little children" in the faith that they could know that they have fellowship with God because he and the other Apostles were true witnesses that the Word of life, Jesus, became flesh and dwelt among them, and they beheld His glory with their eyes, in what they heard and the fact that they touched Him with their hands. Because Jesus came in human flesh, we can have fellowship with Him and one another. What does the word "incarnation" mean? [Latin = "flesh"]. Having a relationship to Jesus, who is the Word of Life, we have life in Him; and have fellowship with one another. Because of this fellowship, we are able to have joy in this life (cf. outline: I. Incarnation of the Word of **Life** – 1:1-4). The outline emphasizes the three L's of 1 John: **Life**, **Light** and **Love**.

I. Children, Fathers & Young Men (1 Jn. 2:12-14)

1 Jn. 2:12-14 are somewhat difficult to understand. It is not clear what groups John has in mind. Is he talking about literal age, or maturity in faith, or is he using various terms to describe all believers (cf. 2:1)? And why does John repeat himself? It seems best to see these verses as applying: 1) broadly to all believers in the church (referred to as "little children," cf. 2:1, 12-13, 18, 28; 3:1, 2, 7, 10, 18; 4:4; 5:2, 21), and 2) to people in various stages of maturity and their various usefulness in the church (referred to as "fathers" and "young men"). All of the "little children" under John's fatherly care are those in the church who have been forgiven and known God the Father. The ones that are older and more mature in the faith are those who have known the One (i.e. Jesus) who was from the beginning with the Father (cf. Jn. 1:1; 1 Jn. 1:1). These older believers are those who are more knowledgeable and mature in their faith. The "young

men” are those believers that are zealous for the faith, and actively fight the good fight of faith against the wicked one (i.e. the Devil and his children, cf. 3:8-10). They have overcome the Devil through the word of God and the strength they have from Jesus.

1 John 2:12-14

| | |
|---|---|
| I write to you, little children , <u>Because</u> your sins are forgiven you for His name’s sake. | I write to you, little children , <u>Because</u> you have known the Father. |
| I write to you, fathers , <u>Because</u> you have known Him <i>who is</i> from the beginning. | I have written to you, fathers , <u>Because</u> you have known Him <i>who is</i> from the beginning. |
| I write to you, young men , <u>Because</u> you have overcome the wicked one. | I have written to you, young men , <u>Because</u> you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one. |

From this we see: 1) the church is a family. 2) Like a family, the church is made of people of diverse levels of maturity, each of which has its particular strengths and gifts. 3) A healthy church requires the contributions of all. A church of young men would be vigorous, but potentially unwise; fathers in the faith benefit from the zeal of the young.

II. Do Not Love the World (1 Jn. 2:15-17)

In 1 Jn. 2:15-17, John moves from addressing children, fathers, and young men to warning them not to love the world. This is connected to the previous section with the idea of "overcoming" in 2:14 to not loving the "world" in 2:15. Every other time the verb "overcome" is used in John, it is closely linked with the Christian's relationship with the "world" (cf. 4:4; 5:4-5). 1 Jn. 4:4: "You are from God, little children, and have **overcome** them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the **world**." 5:4-5: "For whatever is born of God **overcomes the world**; and this is the victory that overcomes the world - our faith. And who is the one who **overcomes the world**, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?"

Opposed to the family of the church is "the world." Both in his letter and his gospel, John talks a lot about "the world" (John 15-16; 1 John 2:15-17; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 3-5, 9, 14, 17; 5:1, 4-5; 19). In some places, this word refers to humanity or creation that is the object of God's love (John 3:16), but in other places it refers specifically to humanity in its hostility to God (John 12:31; 14:30) and specifically to Judaism in its rejection of Jesus (cf. John 15:18-16:4). Here, John has the latter senses in mind: "The world" is not the creation itself, which God pronounced good, but a world-system organized in opposition to God and perhaps specifically Judaism in its opposition to Jesus (this is the specific world that is "passing away," v. 17). Applying this today, our surrounding culture is "the world," a cultural, social, and political system organized in hostility, or perhaps indifference, to God. [Most of this section is taken from Peter Leithart’s insights.]

John commands us not to love this world-system, and plainly states that if we love this world the love of God is not in us (v. 15; cf. James 1:27; 4:4). Specifically, John says in v. 16 that there are three aspects of the world that we are not to love: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. [These may be an illusion to the temptation of Eve in Genesis 3:6: “woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise”). The “world” desires things that we are not to desire in the way the ungodly do. 1) The “lust of the flesh” might include physical desires (e.g. food & drink, sexuality, things that are generally enjoyed) that can be good in themselves, but are perverted by sinful desire. Desire turned to ungodly lust. 2) The “lust of the eyes” refers to the world’s desire to be appealing to the eyes, so that people will respect the judgments and actions of the unbelieving world. The eyes are organs of discernment and judgment (see the difference between good and evil). It may refer to the desire for, knowledge, power and authoritative judgment over others. 3) The “pride of life” probably refers to wealth (cf. 3:17, uses the same word), and includes the status that often accompanies wealth. Loving the world means idolizing money, and craving people’s respect and honor.

It is important to see in this text that John is emphasizing not merely the actions of the world, but the desires that motivates the world in it’s hostility to God and His people. John is saying that we should not just evaluate the world in terms of what it does, but also in terms of what motivates it to do what it does. Sinful human culture – its institutions, practices, products – are all embodiments of evil desire or boastfulness. John encourages us to ask what desires are revealed in roads, buildings, automobiles, iPods, coffee, customs, schools, and so on. John encourages us to seek to penetrate below the surface of cultural life to the desires that manifest the sinfulness the world. Both the “world” and the Church are motivated by “desires.” But the two are different in terms of what they desire and how they manifest that desire. The Church is motivated by the desire to love God and one another; the world is motivated by desires that are not expressions of love for God or one another.

John concludes the section in v. 17 by saying that the world is passing away with its lusts, but those who do the will of God will abide/remain forever. Being in fellowship with God and one another is the way of life that endures forever.

III. The Last Hour & The Antichrist (1 Jn. 2:18-27)

In 2:18-27, John demonstrated to his little children in the faith that “love of the world” results in being against Christ (i.e. antichrist; anti=against Christ). Those who love the world with its lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life will ultimately reject Christ Himself. 1 Jn. 2:18-29 is chiastically arranged:

- A. Children, antichrists coming, they went out, 2:18-19
- B. You have an anointing, knowledge, 2:20
- C. I have written, truth/lie, 2:21

- D. Antichrist is liar, denies Son and Father, 2:22
- E. Deny Son, deny Father, 2:23
- D'. Abide in what you have, abide in Father and Son, 2:24-25
- C'. I have written, those who deceive, 2:26
- B'. You have an anointing, knowledge, 2:27
- A'. Little children, Christ coming, remain, 2:28-29

John informed his readers that they are living in “the last hour” (1 John 2:18). The proof that it is the last hour is the fact that “many antichrists have arisen” (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 Jn. 7). Like the rest of the New Testament writers, John was expecting the end of the Old Testament era. He knows that antichrists will come before the “end” because Jesus told him so on the Mount of Olives (Mat. 24:22-24), and he knows that it will happen soon because Jesus showed him (Rev. 1:3; 3:11; 22:7, 10, 12). The Old Covenant order came to a final end in AD 70, when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and its temple. John is writing shortly before that event, to warn the church about the dangers they will face in the “last hour” and to encourage them to keep walking in the commandments and love of God.

These antichrists manifested their love for the world and opposition to Jesus by leaving the Church (v. 19, “they went out from us”). Those who remain faithful to Christ and His word will remain with us because we have the Holy Spirit to know the truth. Those who leave the truth of God in the Church are liars (cf. 1:10; 2:4; 4:20; 5:10) and false teachers that deny both the Father and the Son. As we will see in 4:1-5, those who deny that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh are false prophets and should not be followed.

John’s concern is for believers not to be deceived by the false prophets and leave the Church where the truth is. We need to remain faithful to (abide in) what John and the other Apostles had taught from the beginning. Those who abide in the Son and the Father are promised eternal life; but those who are revealed to be lovers of the world and against Christ (i.e. antichrists) as deceivers will pass away. John wants his readers to be assured that they have eternal life. [Teacher: remind students to memorize 1 John 5:13 “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”]

IV. Children of God & Children of the Devil (1 Jn. 2:28-3:10)

At the beginning of the second section on the outline [II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)] we saw that John contrasted light and darkness. Throughout this section we have seen many contrasts between those who walk in the light as God is light, and those who walk in the darkness. At the end of this second section, John contrasts the children of God with the children of the devil. He begins in 2:28-3:3 by saying that the Father has bestowed upon us His love, so that we should be called “children of God.” In his Gospel, John said in 1:11-12: He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name.” If we abiding Jesus, we know that we will not be

ashamed when He returns because we will have acted in righteousness. When Jesus comes again, we do not know what we shall be, but we do know that we will be made more like Him because we will see Him as He is (3:2). Therefore, because we have this hope in us (“we shall be like Him”), we need to purify ourselves by living righteously, just as He is pure (2:29; 3:3).

Whoever commits sin as a way of life is lawless. Jesus came to take away our sins, just as He is without sin. Whoever remains faithful (abides in) to Him does not continue to sin as a way of life. True believers confess their sins, knowing that He is faithful and just to forgive them of their sins and cleans them for all unrighteousness (cf. 1:9). True believers, children of God, are those who practice righteousness as a way of life (3:4-7).

John goes on in 3:8-10 to say that those who continue to sin as a way of life are children of the Devil, who has sinned from the beginning (Gen. 3). Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil, and all of those in the world who are children of the Devil. This is why the world is passing away (2:17). We can know who the children of God are by contrast to the children of the Devil: By the way they live their lives. Children of the Devil do not live righteously, nor do they love their brothers in the Lord. They are children of darkness, as explained in 1:5-2:11. They have neither the **life** of God, nor the **light** of God. Next week we will begin to look at the third section of the book [III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)], dealing with the **love** of God and one another.

Homework assignment: Read all of 1 John. Notice the importance of “knowing” in 1 Jn. 3-4.

The Epistles of John

Lesson Three: Children of God in the World (1 John 2:12-3:10)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

I. Children, Fathers & Young Men (1 Jn. 2:12-14)

I write to you, **little children**, Because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.

I write to you, **fathers**, Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning.

I write to you, **young men**, Because you have overcome the wicked one.

I write to you, **little children**, Because you have known the Father.

I have written to you, **fathers**, Because you have known Him *who is* from the beginning.

I have written to you, **young men**, Because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, And you have overcome the wicked one.

II. Do Not Love the World (1 Jn. 2:15-17)

John 3:16; 12: 31; 14:40;15-16; 1 John 2:15-17; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 3-5, 9, 14, 17; 5:1, 4-5; 19

III. The Last Hour & The Antichrist (1 Jn. 2:18-27)

A. Children, antichrists coming, they went out, 2:18-19

B. You have an anointing, knowledge, 2:20

C. I have written, truth/lie, 2:21

D. Antichrist is liar, denies Son and Father, 2:22

E. Deny Son, deny Father, 2:23

D'. Abide in what you have, abide in Father and Son, 2:24-25

C'. I have written, those who deceive, 2:26

B'. You have an anointing, knowledge, 2:27

A'. Little children, Christ coming, remain, 2:28-29

IV. Children of God & Children of the Devil (1 Jn. 2:28-3:10)

Homework assignment: Read all of 1 John. Notice the importance of "knowing" in 1 Jn. 3-4.

The Epistles of John

Lesson Four: God is Love – Love One Another (1 John 3:11-4:21)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

❖ Review

What are the three L's of 1 John? [Life, Light and Love as given on the outline.] The first section of the book of 1 John [I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)] began with a discussion of the incarnation of Jesus, the Word of Life. By using the language of creation (in Genesis 1, cf. Jn. 1:1 & 1 Jn. 1:1), John taught his readers that through Jesus, God was establishing a new humanity out of the old creation. In 1 John 5:13 (the key verse to be memorized) the Apostle said:

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

The readers could know (as can we) that they have eternal life because they have believed in Jesus, whom the Apostles saw, heard and touched. The incarnation [Latin = “flesh”] of Jesus is the key event of history that separates the new humanity from the old humanity that rejects Jesus. Throughout 1 John there are marked contrasts between those who walk in the light of God and those who walk in darkness; between those who confess their sins and those who say they have no sin; between those who love the brethren and those who hate their brothers; between those who love God and those who love the world; between those who remain faithful to the teachings of the Apostles and the antichrists who departed from the true Church; between the children of God and the children of the Devil.

The central sections of the outline begin with the phrase “This is the message,” marking out a new section. The second section [II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)] repeatedly refers to light (1:5, 7; 2:8, 9, 10) and darkness (1:5, 6; 2:8, 9, 11). Today we will begin to study the third section [III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)]. Here is the message is that “we should love one another,” and the theme of brotherly love continues through the early verses of chapter 5.

1 John 1:1-2:2 makes clear that fellowship with God requires that our sins are forgiven because of the death of Jesus. He is the righteous One Who satisfied the wrath of God against us so that we can be in fellowship with God. Those who believe the testimony and preaching of the Apostles are those who “abide” in Christ and in God. The Greek word to “Abide in” means to “remain in a place.” To “remain in place” according to John means: to walk as Jesus walked (2:6), love his brother (2:10), having the word of God remain in us (2:14), doing the will of God (2:17), continuing in the truth heard from the Apostle (2:24, 27), being faithful to Jesus in righteousness and not continuing to sin (2:28; 3:6). Thus, this mutual “abiding” has reference both to our relationship to God and to one another. It refers to a way of life that is visible and experienced by people in their relationships to God and one another. Abiding in God is not merely some internal remaining in place that takes place in the heart. Rather, it takes the form of relating to other people in love (cf. 3:14, 15, 17, 24; 4:12, 13, 15, 16).

I. Love and Hate (1 Jn. 3:11-15)

Continuing with the theme of abiding as children of God, the third section begins again with the phrase: “For this is the message that you heard from the beginning.” The message is: “That we should love one another.” John then gives a counter example of what loving one another is. Do not allow your brotherly love to look like Cain, who was the wicked one and murdered his brother because of envy. Abel’s works were more righteous than Cain’s and he received respect from God (Gen. 4:4-14, 25; Heb. 11:4). Cain hated Abel because God did not respect his works. John says that it should not surprise us if the world hates us (cf. Jn. 7:7; 15:18-19; 16:2, 33; 17:14) because those who do righteously have been hated from the beginning. In 1 Jn. 3:7-10 John contrasted the children of God with the children of the Devil. Those who continue in a life of sin are of the Devil, for the Devil has sinned from the beginning. But Jesus came to destroy the works of the Devil. Thus, as the Word of Christ goes forth into the world, and the new humanity is manifested to the world, it should not surprise us that the world hates us because they are of their father the Devil.

But we are not like them of the world. True believers in Jesus are those who love one another. That we have passed from death to life is evident from the fact that we love one another. Consistent with the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:21-26), John said that whoever hates his brother is a murderer (like Cain) and does not have eternal life abiding in him.

II. Sacrificial Love (1 Jn. 3:16-23)

The question may arise from this discussion: Who do we know what love is? How do we know what hatred John is talking about? Is it love and hatred that are merely inside of my heart and mind, so that no one can see it? In 1 Jn. 3:16-23 John explained that love for ones brother is something that manifests itself in the way we live with one another. True love imitates the love of Jesus. Just as Jesus sacrificed Himself for us by laying down His life for us – we should lay down our lives for one another.

In vv. 17-18 teaches that true love from the heart flows out into the way we live and how we treat each other. If our hearts are not loving and shut up toward the needs of others, we will refuse to meet their needs. But if we have hearts of true love, we will use our resources (e.g. time, money, possessions, energy) to meet the needs of our brothers. He goes on to say that our love should not be merely something we talk about (v. 18, “in word or in tongue”), but should be something we do (v. 18, “deed and truth”). Our relationship with God is tied to how we love one another. If we love people in deed and truth from the heart, we have confidence in our hearts toward God. It is confidence that we are assured that we will receive whatever we ask of Him in prayer (cf. Jn. 9:31; 14:13; 15:7; 16:23-24). We have this confidence because we keep His commandments and do the things that please Him. His commandment is that we should believe in Jesus and love one another.

III. Test the Spirits (1 Jn. 3:24-4:6)

In 3:24-4:6, John returns to contrasting those who abide (i.e. remain in place) in Him and He in them with those who do not remain in place. Those who abide in Jesus are those who have been given the Holy Spirit (cf. 1 Jn. 4:6, 13; 5:6, 7, 8; Jn. 14:15-17; 26; 15:26; 16:13). For John, believers are able to know the truth of God and live for Him because we have been given the Holy Spirit. We do not have to worry that we are missing something important because we have His Word in the Bible and the Holy Spirit to lead us into all truth.

In 1 Jn. 4:1-6, John returns to a subject of those the antichrists that had come and were deceiving believers with false teaching (cf. 2:18-23). John warns that false prophets are going to tempt believers, and tells them to test spirits. True prophets, those inspired by the Spirit, confess that “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh,” while prophets who deny that Jesus has come in the flesh are false prophets (1 John 4:1–2). The idea of testing the spirits comes from the Old Testament law of Deuteronomy 13:1-5, where someone that claims to be a prophet from God must be tested to know for sure that they really speak for God. If a prophet was found to be a false prophet, he was to be disregarded and put to death. In like manner, we are not to believe everything that is said by people in the church, even those who seem to speak authoritatively for God. If they speak anything that is contrary to the word of God, they are not to be followed. John’s specific test is that they must confess that “Jesus has come in the flesh.” Those who refuse to do so are called “antichrist.” A close look at John’s letter shows that John was not talking about a single Antichrist nor about the end of history. John acknowledges that the devil is behind the deceptions and sins that the church must resist (1 John 3:7–8), and he knows that there are “spirits” other than the spirit of God who inspire prophets. But he is not talking about events of the distant future. He is talking about things that were happening in his own lifetime or would happen soon after. He wrote this so that believers would continue to abide (remain in place) in the truth of Jesus, and overcome those antichrists that would challenge the truth. He wanted to encourage them to remain strong in faith,

because He (the Holy Spirit) who is in us is greater than he who is in the world (the Devil and his children). As the key verse (1 Jn. 5:13) we are to memorize for this class says:

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may **know that you have eternal life**, and that you **may continue to believe** in the name of the Son of God.”

Christians have an anointing from God (1 John 2:20, 27) which is the Spirit of God. Because of that, we know and can discern true from false spirits. We are not left to our own wisdom or insight, but depend on wisdom that comes from God. Nor do we have to be discouraged and doubtful when false teachers leave or are cast out of the Church.

IV. Knowing and Seeing God through Love (1 Jn. 4:7-21)

In 3:16-18 we learned how we can know what love looks like (i.e. sacrificial love in action from the heart). It was most certainly the case that the false prophets (antichrists) were those who did not love the brethren. By their actions and their teachings they demonstrated that they hated their brothers. Now, in 1 Jn. 4:7-21 John returns to the subject of love. In vv. 7-11 John says that loving one another is a manifestation of being a child of God (“born of God”). Failure to love ones brother is evidence someone does not know God – because God is love (cf. 4:20). In 4:9 John basically repeats what he said in 3:16: Because God the Father sent His Son into the world, and Jesus sacrificially laid down His life for us, we can know what love is. Loving one another is living and loving like God does. Love is self-sacrifice for others. Because God loved us in that way, we should love one another. We can know that we love God because we love one another.

In 1 Jn. 4:12-16 John returns to the subject of the mutual abiding of God in us and we in Him. No one has seen God at any time. How then can we know that we have fellowship with Him and remain in place with Him? We know it because He has caused us to love one another. His love is perfected in us as we love one another. If you are a person that is not loving people in deed and truth, you have every reason to wonder about your relationship to God. But if you are demonstrating love to people, you can know for sure that you abide in Him and He in you. If you have known and believed the love that God has for you, and you are loving people sincerely and sacrificially, you do not have any reason to fear the day of judgment. We love Him because He first loved us (4:17-19). V. 20 provides a simple test by which we can know that either we ourselves or others truly love God: “If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?” Hatred is understood by John to mean, not walking according to the commandments (2:3-11); being murdering and hurting (physically & spiritually) brothers like Cain (3:10-15) and shutting up ones heart to the needs of others (3:16-23). Loving God whom we have not seen is manifested by sacrificially loving others whom we have contact with. Let us love God and one another in deed and truth.

Homework assignment: Read all of 1 John. Memorize the key verse in 1 Jn. 5:13

The Epistles of John

Lesson Four: God is Love – Love One Another (1 John 3:11-4:21)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

I. Love and Hate (1 Jn. 3:11-15)

“Abiding” means to “remain in place” (2:6; 10, 14, 17, 24, 27, 28; 3:6, 14, 15, 17, 24; 4:12, 13, 15, 16)

The hatred of Cain (Gen. 4:4-14, 25; Heb. 11:4)

The hatred of the world (cf. Jn. 7:7; 15:18-19; 16:2, 33; 17:14)

II. Sacrificial Love (1 Jn. 3:16-23)

III. Test the spirits (1 Jn. 3:24-4:6)

The Holy Spirit (1 Jn. 4:6, 13; 5:6, 7, 8; Jn. 14:15-17; 26; 15:26; 16:13)

Test the spirits (Deut. 13:1-5; 1 Jn. 2:20, 27)

IV. Knowing and Seeing God through Love (1 Jn. 4:7-21)

Homework assignment: Read all of 1 John. Memorize the key verse in 1 Jn. 5:13

The Epistles of John

Lesson Five: Faith & Assurance Through Love (1 John 5:1-12)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

❖ Review

Who wrote the Epistles of John? [The Apostle John, the same who wrote John & Revelation]. When? [In the 60's]. In letters/epistles of 2 & 3 John, how does the author identify himself to his readers? [As "The Elder"] The outline emphasizes the three L's of 1 John. What are these? [**Life**, **Light** and **Love**] [Review the outline through the first three sections] The first section of the book of 1 John [I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)] began with a discussion of the incarnation [from the Latin for "flesh"] of Jesus, the Word of Life. In 1 John 5:13 (the key verse to be memorized) the Apostle said:

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."

The readers could know (as can we) that they have eternal life because they have believed in Jesus, whom the Apostles saw, heard and touched. The central sections of the outline begin with the phrase "This is the message," marking out each new section. The second section [II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)] repeatedly refers to light (1:5, 7; 2:8, 9, 10) and darkness (1:5, 6; 2:8, 9, 11). Throughout 1 John there are marked contrasts between those who walk in the light of God and those who walk in darkness; between those who confess their sins and those who say they have no sin; between those who love the brethren and those who hate their brothers; between those who love God and those who love the world; between those who remain faithful to the teachings of the Apostles and the antichrists who departed from the true Church; between the children of God and the children of the Devil. Last week we began to study the third section [III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)]. The message is that "we should love one another," and the theme of brotherly love continues through the early verses of chapter 5. John teaches us that God is love (it is of His nature to love). His love takes the form of sacrificing Himself for us (the Father gave the Son, the Son laid down His life). He first loved us. Therefore, we must love one another. Anyone who claims to know and love God (whom we have not seen) but does not love his brother is a liar.

In 1 John 5:13 (the key verse to be memorized) the Apostle said:

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

He has written this epistle/letter – to us who already believe in Jesus – so that – we will continue to believe in Him and know with certainty that we have eternal life. Through most of the book of 1 John the emphasis is on how we live (e.g. walking in the light-1:5-7, confessing sins-1:8-10, keeping the commandments-2:3-8; 3:22-24; 4:21, loving brothers-2:5-10; 3:10-23; 4:7-21, practicing righteousness-2:29; 3:7-12, testing the words of those who are teachers-2:18-23; 4:1-6). Correct doctrine/teaching/theology is important, but only insofar as it is lived out in one's life. How we live will manifest the doctrine that we believe in.

In 1 Jn. 5:1-12 we see more of an emphasis on what we are to believe.

I. Believing that Jesus is the Son of God (1 Jn. 5:1-5)

As we have seen, John's readers had encountered teachers that denied that Jesus was the Son of God who came in human flesh. By denying the incarnation, these false teachers were rejecting the message that was preached to them by the Apostles (1:1-3). Many of these false teachers (called antichrists) went out from the true church of Christ, demonstrating that they were not among those who believed the truth. But these antichrists were respected by many in the church, and their departure from the church caused people to become concerned that they did not know the truth of God. John wrote his epistles to help them know for sure that they were true believers in God; that they are indeed children of God (cf. 3:10).

1 Jn. 5:1 says: “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him.” The substance of what we are to believe as Christians is that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God (cf. 5:5). It is the sacrificial death and blood of Christ that cleanses us from all sin (1:7; 2:1-2). Those who deny that Jesus is the Christ is a liar (2:22-23; 4:3). We know that we have the Spirit of God if we confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (4:2). Those who believe this truth can know that they are born again as children of God. If we say that we love the Father (who begot Jesus) will also love Jesus (who was begotten by the Father).

3:10 says that we know who the children of God are by the fact that they practice righteousness and loves his brother. Here in 5:2 John says that we know that we love the children of God because we love God (the Father and Jesus, 5:1) and keep His commandments to love one another. 5:3-4 says that the commandments are an expression of our love for God. It is no real burden to keep His commandments, because whoever is born of God is able to overcome the world and all that would seek to make living for God a burden. The victory that overcomes the world is our faith. 5:5 tells us

that the one that overcomes the world is the one that believes that Jesus is the Son of God.

Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God? What are some of the things in this world that makes it hard to believe that Jesus is the Son of God? How is our faith able to give us the victory that overcomes the world?

II. God's Witness To Us (1 Jn. 5:6-12)

In 5:6-12 we have some of the most difficult verses to understand in John's letters. Clearly, the antichrists not only denied that Jesus was the Son of God in human flesh, but also that the blood of Jesus was necessary for salvation. This is why they deny that they have sinned, but John says that they are liars and need the blood of Jesus to cleanse them from their sin.

5:6 tells us that Jesus came by water and blood – not only by water, but by water and blood. The reference to water probably is to the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist. [Read Jn. 1:29-34] John the Baptist referred to Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,” speaking of Jesus as the bloody sacrifice that would be made to take atone for sin. When John baptized Jesus, the Spirit descended on Him like a dove, and the Father said from heaven, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:13-17; Lk. 3:21-22). By the Holy Spirit at the waters of Jesus' baptism, He was declared to be the Son of God. The antichrists were those that denied that Jesus was the Christ in human flesh, but may have believed that at His baptism the spirit of the Christ came upon the human Jesus at the time of His baptism. They were happy to affirm that Jesus received revelation from the Spirit; not that He was God in human flesh that died a bloody death to cleanse us from sin. They denied that Jesus was the Son of God from His birth, of which the later baptism was only an affirmation by the Father.

But John says that Jesus came to be known as the Christ not only by water, but also by blood. He was declared to be the Son of God at the Jordan with His baptism, and He obtained even more power and authority through His glorification at His crucifixion, where His blood was shed. The life-giving work of Christ is found at the cross – not just His incarnation and life. It is Jesus' sacrificial death – not His incarnation alone – that gives life: “Not by water only, but by water and blood.” John here writes that the testimony of the “water and the blood” teaches a full incarnation theology: Not only is Jesus said to be the Son of God, but God died a bloody sacrificial death for us.

5:6b says that it is the Spirit who bears witness to this truth about Jesus. The Spirit's witness is an inner witness that continues in us. We believe that Jesus is the Son of God because the Spirit tells us the truth about Jesus and enables us to believe. The work of the Spirit is evident as the Church testifies for Christ. John, in John 19:35 (immediately following 19:34 which says that Jesus was pierced in His side and “water and blood

came out”), says that he testified about the death of Jesus, which he saw, and his testimony is true. Thus, the testimony of the Church (by the Apostles) is inspired by the Holy Spirit, and give inspiration to Christians to believe in Jesus as the Son of God.

5:7-8 goes on to say that there are three who give witness to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God: the Father (who spoke from heaven at Jesus’ baptism), the Word (Jesus who testified about Himself being the Son of God) and the Holy Spirit (who continues to testify in the Church and in the hearts of believers). These three witness are unified as one to declare the truth that Jesus is the Son of God.

Since we generally accept the testimony of other men about the truth of something, 5:9-10 tells us that we should accept the testimony of God all the more, because He is greater. It is God’s divine authority that is behind the testimony of the water and the blood. Among the believers to whom John was writing, the testimony of men was divided between those who believed that Jesus is the Son of God and those who denied it. But John tells them that God Himself has testified about the truth that Jesus is the Christ. Those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God know it because they have the witness within themselves. But those who deny that Jesus is the Son of God are calling God a liar because they refuse to believe the testimony that God has given.

What is the testimony that God has given? 5:11-12 says that it is that we know that God has given us eternal life through His Son. Those who believe that Jesus is the Son of God have life from the Son. Those who do not have the Son do not have life.

What we believe about Jesus is key to everything else in the Christian life. If someone does not believe what He has said about Himself, nor what Father and the Spirit have said about Him – he is not a child of God. But if we do believe that Jesus is the Son of God in human flesh, and that He died for us as the Lamb of God, we have life – life that is characterized by the love of God for us. As believers, we have confidence that we are children of God because we love God and keep his commandments to love one another.

Next week we will conclude our study of 1 John.

Homework assignment: Read all of 1 John. Memorize the key verse in 1 Jn. 5:13

The Epistles of John

Lesson Five: Faith & Assurance Through Love (1 John 5:1-12)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

I. Believing that Jesus is the Son of God (1 Jn. 5:1-5)

II. God's Witness To Us (1 Jn. 5:6-12)

Homework assignment: Read all of 1 John. Memorize the key verse in 1 Jn. 5:13

The Epistles of John

Lesson Six: Believing, Praying and Knowing (1 John 5:13-21)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

❖ Review

What are the three L's of 1 John? [Life, Light and Love as given on the outline.] The first section of the book of 1 John [I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)] began with a discussion of the incarnation of Jesus, the Word of Life. By using the language of creation (in Genesis 1, cf. Jn. 1:1 & 1 Jn. 1:1), John taught his readers that through Jesus, God was establishing a new humanity out of the old creation. The incarnation [Latin = "flesh"] of Jesus is the key event of history that separates the new humanity from the old humanity that rejects Jesus. Throughout 1 John there are marked contrasts between those who walk in the light of God and those who walk in darkness; between those who confess their sins and those who say they have no sin; between those who love the brethren and those who hate their brothers; between those who love God and those who love the world; between those who remain faithful to the teachings of the Apostles and the antichrists who departed from the true Church; between the children of God and the children of the Devil.

The central sections of the outline begin with the phrase "This is the message," marking out each new section. The second section [II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)] repeatedly refers to light (1:5, 7; 2:8, 9, 10) and darkness (1:5, 6; 2:8, 9, 11). In the third section [III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)] the message is that "we should love one another" because God loved us. Today we will study the last section of the first epistle of John [IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)].

9 times John told his readers why he has written to them:

1:4: "...that your joy may be full"

2:1 "Little children...so that you may not sin"

2:7 "no new commandment..."

2:8 "a new commandment..."

2:12 "Little children ...because your sins are forgiven"

2:13 "Fathers...because you have known Him..."

2:14 "Fathers... because you have known Him..."

2:21 "...because you know the truth"

2:26 "...concerning those who try to deceive you."

5:13 "...that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue..."

His readers had been experiencing difficulties that were causing them to doubt that they could know that they knew God and had eternal life. False teachers, called antichrists, had been among them but had left the true church. What did they teach? [That they had fellowship with God and did not sin, that Jesus Christ did not come in the flesh.] Since John and the other Apostles had taught differently, John's readers were no longer assured that they have fellowship with God and that their faith in Jesus was mistaken. John wrote to help them have joy in knowing that they have eternal life. He wanted them to be assured that their faith in Jesus was not in vain, and to encourage them to continue to believe in Him. They could know that they are children of God if they love their brothers, and walk in the light of God's word. Knowing that they believe the truth comes by knowing that you are living righteously in this world.

I. The Confident Prayer of Faith (5:13-15)

Unlike the Gospel of John, whose purpose was given in 20:31 to bring people to faith ("I have written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ"), 1 John is written to those who are already believers. Having believed, they now need to know with certainty that they possess eternal life. The key verse that we are using for the book of 1 John is in 5:13, which should be memorized:

"These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God."

John wants his readers to be certain in their minds that they have believed correctly about Jesus, the Son of God – and – that they would know certainly that they have eternal life. Although they were confused by the false teachers that tried to deceive them (2:26), they needed to continue to believe in the name of Jesus, who is the Son of God in human flesh. By being convinced in their minds and hearts, and by the way they live their lives, believers can pray to God with confidence that He will hear their prayers and will answer them.

Eternal life, for John, not only refers to having life forever, but a kind life that is characterized by the kind of life we will live in eternity (i.e. knowing we are forgiven by the blood of Jesus, loving our brothers, living righteously, knowing with certainty the truth, etc.). Because we are children of God, living righteously before Him, we can have confidence at the coming of Jesus. Thus, we can have confidence before God now, especially when we pray. We know that we have fellowship with Him. In 3:21-23 John wrote:

“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. 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.”

There he taught them that confident prayer is the result of living a life that keeps the commandments of God, especially loving one another. Here in 5:14 John adds that our confidence comes by praying according to God’s will. This means that we pray what we know God wants us to pray for. If we pray according to His will, we have confidence that he will give us what we ask for (cf. Jn. 14:12-4; 15:7; 16:22-26).

II. Prayer and Sin (5:16-17)

In addition to being assured that God hears and answers our prayers for our own desires, we can be certain that our prayers for other people will be heard and answered – particularly with regard to those who have sinned. Because we love our fellow believers, we want them to have life (life in Christ now forever). John uses language that is difficult for us to understand in vv. 16-17, referring to “a sin which does/not lead to death.” Throughout the epistle, John has referred to life and death as spiritual life and death (i.e. life lived in relationship with God, or remaining in spiritual death apart from God in Christ). As we have seen, every one sins. Those who confess their sins will be forgiven because of the blood of Jesus. John said that sin is lawlessness or willfully and consistently refusing to live righteously (1 Jn. 3:4-14). Those who keep the law/commandments by loving the brethren have passed from death to life (3:14).

Thus, those who say that they do not sin and do not need to be forgiven by the bloody sacrifice of Jesus, and those who do not love the brethren remain in death. John is saying in 5:16-18 that we can pray with confidence for our brothers that they will have life if they have not sinned by rejecting Jesus and the life that comes by living for Him (i.e. those who are sinning a sin that leads to death). We will have no confidence that those who have committed the sin leading to death will be given life in Christ. This was important for John’s readers because they had brothers who left the church because of the false teachings of those who had rejected Christ. Those who left with these false teachers may not have also rejected Christ. We can pray confidently to God for people that may be deceived but have not rejected Jesus. This is important for us to understand, because we should be praying for our brothers in the faith that they would believe the word of truth preached to them and find life in Christ.

III. Three Things We Can Know (5:18-20)

John goes on in 5:19-20 to say that we can have confidence that we know God and are His children. Vv. 18, 19 and 20 each begin with the same statement, “we know.”

1. Know we are born of God because we do not sin (5:18)

The first thing we can know is that we have an ongoing righteousness as a child of God. Throughout the epistle it is clear (and by our own experience) that Christians do sin. What John is saying is consistent with what he said in 3:4-14, that the kind of sin that characterizes the children of the Devil is ongoing lawlessness that doesn't care about righteous living. But those who are children of God do not sin in this continual and lawless way, but confess their sins, knowing that God is faithful to forgive us our sins. The simple fact that we care about sin and being forgiven on an ongoing basis is evidence that we are born of God. We can know that we are children of God because we do not sin willfully and lawlessly.

2. Know we are of God – the world is of the wicked one (5:19)

The second thing we can know for sure is that we are of God, as opposed to the world which is under the influence of the wicked one. The Devil is lawless, as are those in the world would follow him (cf. 3:8-10). Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (3:8). The world loves the things of this world that have been influenced by the wicked one (cf. 2:15-17). Because we do not love the things of this world, we can know that we are born of God.

3. Know the Son of God has come and given us understanding (5:20)

The third thing we can know is that Jesus, the Son of God, is come in the flesh, and that He has given us understanding to know Him and that His Word is true. Our hope for eternal life is based on what we know to be true. We do not have to doubt that we have life and truth, because we know Him who is true. To be in the truth is not just about being right, but about living the truth, living for Jesus.

IV. Faithfulness to Christ – No Idols (5:21)

The book ends abruptly with a command to “keep yourselves from idols.” This is John's first reference to idolatry as something that the Christian community needs to be concerned about. The church throughout the New Testament was surrounded by pagan idolatry in the Roman Empire (1 Cor. 8:1-10; 10:14-28; 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:16; Gal. 5:20; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5; 1 Thes. 1:9; 1 Pet. 4:3; 5:21; Rev. 2:14, 20; 9:20; 21:8; 22:15). John said that we should guard against idolatry, or anything that would take the place of Jesus. Anything that can become a substitute is to be guarded against. Let us, as the Bride of Christ, be faithful to our Lord and turn away from every worthless thing.

Homework assignment: Read all of 2 John. Who is the “Chosen Lady”?

The Epistles of John

Lesson Six: Believing, Praying and Knowing (1 John 5:13-21)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

9 times John told his readers why he has written to them:

- 1:4: "...that your joy may be full"
- 2:1 "Little children...so that you may not sin"
- 2:7 "no new commandment..."
- 2:8 "a new commandment..."
- 2:12 "Little children ...because your sins are forgiven"
- 2:13 "Fathers...because you have known Him..."
- 2:14 "Fathers... because you have known Him..."
- 2:21 "...because you know the truth"
- 2:26 "...concerning those who try to deceive you."
- 5:13 "...that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue..."

I. The Confident Prayer of Faith (5:13-15)

II. Prayer and Sin (5:16-17)

III. Three Things We Can Know (5:18-20)

1. **Know we are born of God because we do not sin (5:18)**
2. **Know we are of God – the world is of the wicked one (5:19)**
3. **Know the Son of God has come and given us understanding (5:20)**

IV. Faithfulness to Christ – No Idols (5:21)

1 Cor. 8:1-10; 10:14-28; 12:2; 2 Cor. 6:16; Gal. 5:20; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:5; 1 Thes. 1:9; 1 Pet. 4:3; 5:21; Rev. 2:14, 20; 9:20; 21:8; 22:15

Homework assignment: Read all of 2 John. Who is the "Chosen Lady"?

The Epistles of John

Lesson Seven: Love of the Chosen Lady (2 John)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

❖ Review of 1 John

Who wrote the Epistles of John? [The Apostle John, the same who wrote the Gospel of John & Revelation]. In the letters/epistles of 2 & 3 John, how does the author identify himself to his readers? [As “The Elder”]. This indicated his familiarity to and authority over the people in the churches, and repeatedly called the readers his “little children” (1 Jn. 2:1, 12, 13, 19, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). These are letters from their spiritual father in the faith. When did he write? [In the 60’s].

The outline of 1 John emphasizes the three L’s of 1 John. What are these? [**Life**, **Light** and **Love**] [Review the outline of 1 John] The first section of 1 John [I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)] began with a discussion of the incarnation [from the Latin for “flesh”] of Jesus, the Word of **Life**. Beginning in the second section [II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)] John demonstrates that there are two kinds of people: those who walk in the **light** as God is light, and those who walk in the darkness of the old creation. In the Third section, John helps his readers to understand the **love** of God, and the love we are to have for one another because we have been loved by God. Finally, in the last section John summarized his purpose for writing, and in 1 John 5:13 (the key verse to be memorized) the Apostle said:

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

He wanted them to be fully assured that they not only believed the truth correctly, but if they were to walk according to the light and love of God, they would be assured that they could continue to in their faith in Jesus, the Son of God.

In his Epistles, John was writing to Christian believers who were being threatened by divisions among them in the churches. Because of the teachings of the “antichrists,” some had already left the church because they had begun to doubt the teachings of the Apostles. Under the stress of persecution many were leaving Christ and His church.

With this kind of turmoil in the church, John wanted to assure his readers that they can know they have eternal life. Clearly, John was concerned that those that remained in the churches were tempted to leave the truth and follow those who had left; he was concerned that they would stop walking in the life, light and love of God as found in the Son of God, and return to the darkness of the Old Covenant. It was a crucial time for these believers.

What are some of the characteristics of those whom John warned his readers about? [They did not believe that that they had sinned (1 Jn. 1:6-10), and did not believe that they needed the bloody sacrifice of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins (2:1-2). They claimed to be in the light and know Jesus, but did not walk as Jesus did. They did not keep the commandments and love their brothers; instead they hated their brothers in the Lord (2:3-11). They loved the world and the things in the world (2:15-17; 4:3). They departed from the church (2:18-23). They are identified as children of the Devil because they do not practice righteousness and love one another (3:4-18). They are called “antichrists” (2:18, 22; 4:3). The primary thing that they denied was that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and came in the flesh (2:22; 4:1-6).]

I. To the chosen/elect lady (2 Jn. 1-3)

2–3 John echo the same themes as 1 John, but the general concerns raised in the first letter about the antichrists who had departed from his readers are increased to a more desperate level in the second and third letters. He deals with the same issues in a more personal way, making the tone of the second & third letters all the more powerful and authoritative.

The author identified himself as “the elder” (2 Jn. 1; 3 Jn. 1), as Peter does (1 Pet. 5:1). He seems to know the church(es) well, and is known by them, making 2 & 3 John very personal letters. But what is emphasized is his position as one in authority over them. He was an overseer, someone with pastoral oversight over them, even though he was not with them directly.

2 John is addressed to a “chosen lady.” Who was the chosen lady spoken of in v. 1? The letter was probably addressed not to an individual but a church congregation, a “bride” of Christ. This language is commonly used in both the Old and New Testaments. Paul in Eph. 5:22-32, likens the relationship of husbands and wives to the relationship that Christ has with His bride, the Church. John, in Revelation 21:2, 9; 22:17, also refers to the Church as the bride of Christ. Thus, John calls the church he is writing to the chosen lady, because it is made up of people who were chosen by God. These elect/chosen ones are “her children” (v. 1), individual members. John said that he, and all those who have known the truth, love these elect children (believers) of the chosen lady (the Church he is writing to) because together they abide in the truth forever. Loving one another comes from agreeing together with the truth of Christ. This letter (unlike 1 or 3 John) has a greeting similar to other apostolic greetings found in other New Testament letters (cf.

Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; 6:23-24; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:2; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Philemon 3; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:2; Jude 2). Interestingly, 2 Jn. 3 is a promise to them that they *will* have grace, mercy and peace in truth and love (unlike the other apostolic greetings that seem to be more of a prayer). John is writing to assure them that they will experience God's favor in their lives, although they were struggling with antichrists, controversies, believers departing from them and the truth, and a lack of love by some.

II. Walking in His commandments (2 Jn. 4-6)

John begins the section in vv. 4-6 with something he wrote in 1 John, that he has a fullness of joy that comes from knowing that some of the believers (the "children" of the "chosen lady" in v. 1) are walking in the truth. He says that "some of your children" are faithfully walking in the truth, implying that some are not, which is the reason he is writing to them. It may be possible that so many have left the truth that only some of those remained were walking according to the truth.

The truth they are walking in is the commandment we all have received from the Father: the commandment that we have had from the beginning: "that we love one another" (vv. 4-5; cf. 1 Jn. 2:7, 8; 3:11). In v. 6, John says that love is walking in the commandments. Jesus said that if you love Him and the Father, you will keep His commandments (Jn. 14:15, 21; 15:10, 14). Obeying God's law is the means by which we love one another. The summary of the law is to love the Lord our God and to love our neighbors as ourselves (Matt. 22:37-40; Mk. 12:30-34; Lk. 10:27; Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18). This command to love is not new; it is as old as the law itself. John is writing to remind the chosen lady (the church) and her children (the believers in the church) that they are to walk in love, which is the lifestyle of those who walk in obedience to God and His commandments. Unlike those who have left the truth and hate their brothers (cf. 1 Jn. 2:3-11), John's readers needed to remain steadfast in their love for one another. Walking in the truth (v. 4) and walking in love (vv. 5-6) are what it takes to remain faithful to God the Father and Jesus Christ, His Son.

III. Beware of deceivers (2 Jn. 7-11)

As in 1 John, John again warns against antichrists. This was not a minor problem for them. There were many deceivers that had gone out into the world. There were many people that were deceiving the believers into denying that Jesus Christ came in the flesh (v. 7). This is the same concern that John wrote about in 1 John 2:17-27 and 4:1-6. Those who have departed from the chosen lady and her children have become allies with evil.

V. 8 says that they need to watch out that they do not lose what John and the other apostles have worked for. Because John had labored to build up the church (the chosen lady), he is justified in being a critic of what is going on among his children in the faith. The problem among them is given in v. 9. Whoever transgresses and does not abide in

the teaching that Jesus came in the flesh is not of God. The word transgresses literally means to “run/go ahead.” The deceivers have run ahead and beyond the truth taught by John and the apostles. They have failed to confine themselves to what was taught to them, but have run ahead to teach other things that are not true. The antichrists were not teaching in a way that was consistent with the teachings of the apostles, but were moving beyond the truth into error. This is why John repeatedly urges his readers to remain faithful to what was taught in the beginning (1 Jn. 1:1; 2:7, 13-24, 24; 3:8, 11; 2 Jn. 5-6). Believers are called to remain steadfast in the apostolic tradition, and not to run ahead of it, or transgress it through creative teachings.

In vv. 9-11 John says that whoever does not remain faithful to the doctrine/teaching of Christ (having come in the flesh) – that person does not have God. But those who remain faithful to the truth that Jesus came in the flesh has both the Father and the Son. If anyone were to come to the church and does not bring with him the true teachings as given in the beginning by the apostles, they should not even bring him into their homes or greet him as a brother in the Lord. Whoever has fellowship with him as a true believer, shares in his evil deeds. There is no fellowship that we are to have with falsehood, or those who proclaim it. Denying who Jesus is and what He has done for us is a sin that we cannot tolerate among us. While we are commanded to love one another, we are also commanded to remain faithful to the truth. We cannot love one another if we are embracing false teachings. Walking in truth and love is very personal. Next we will see that in his third letter, John names names, warning about Diotrephes who refuses to listen to the apostles and commending Demetrius for his good testimony (3 John 9–10). Imitating the good rather than the evil (3 John 11) means following the example of Demetrius rather than Diotrephes. Our love for God takes the form of not only loving each other, but also rejecting people that speak falsely about Jesus Christ. True love for God and one another means being intolerant of those who deny the truth.

Church tradition says that John made Ephesus the center of his ministry, and was buried there when he died. In the book of Revelation John wrote to the church at Ephesus, commending them for their steadfastness in the truth and their intolerance for false teaching. But he also condemned them for their lack of love, the love they had at first (“you have left your first love,” 2:1-7). Both faithfulness to the truth and loving one another are required for us to be the kind of people we should be as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. We cannot choose between being faithful to the truth or loving one another. We need to do both in order to abide in Christ.

IV. Joyful fellowship (2 Jn. 12-13)

2 John is concluded with his desire to speak to them in person, face to face. This is the best means of communication so that both he and they can have a fullness of joy. While it is good to have written communication between people, face to face is the best means of producing joyful relationships.

V. 13 says that the children (believers) from a sister church greeted the children (believers) of the chosen lady (the church) he is writing to. The connection between believers and various churches is so close that, even though separated by distance, it can be described as being of one family. We are brothers and sisters together in the Church of Jesus Christ throughout the world.

Homework assignment: Read all of 3 John. What are the bad deeds that we are not to imitate? What are the good deeds that we are supposed to imitate?

The Epistles of John

Lesson Seven: Love of the Chosen Lady (2 John)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

❖ Review of 1 John

Author, date, the three L's, the key verse, and antichrists.

The antichrists did not believe that they had sinned (1 Jn. 1:6-10), and did not believe that they needed the bloody sacrifice of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins (2:1-2). They claimed to be in the light and know Jesus, but did not walk as Jesus did. They did not keep the commandments and love their brothers; instead they hated their brothers in the Lord (2:3-11). They loved the world and the things in the world (2:15-17; 4:3). They departed from the church (2:18-23). They are identified as children of the Devil because they do not practice righteousness and love one another (3:4-18). They are called "antichrists" (2:18, 22; 4:3). The primary thing that they denied was that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and came in the flesh (2:22; 4:1-6).

2 John

I. To the chosen/elect lady (2 Jn. 1-3)

Bride of Christ: Eph. 5:22-32; Rev. 21:2, 9; 22:17

Apostolic Greetings: Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; 6:23-24; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:2; 1 Thes. 1:1; 2 Thes. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Philemon 3; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:2; Jude 2

II. Walking in His commandments (2 Jn. 4-6)

The commandment to "love one another": 1 Jn. 2:7, 8; 3:11; Jn. 14:15, 21; 15:10, 14

Matt. 22:37-40; Mk. 12:30-34; Lk. 10:27; Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18

III. Beware of deceivers (2 Jn. 7-11)

Deceivers/antichrists: 1 John 2:17-27 & 4:1-6

Hold to the Apostolic Tradition: 1 Jn. 1:1; 2:7, 13-24, 24; 3:8, 11; 2 Jn. 5-6

IV. Joyful fellowship (2 Jn. 12-13)

Homework assignment: Read all of 3 John. What are the bad deeds that we are not to imitate? What are the good deeds that we are supposed to imitate?

The Epistles of John

Lesson Eight: Imitate what is Good (3 John)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

❖ Review of 1 & 2 John

Who wrote the Epistles of John? [The Apostle John, the same who wrote the Gospel of John & Revelation]. In the letters/epistles of 2 & 3 John, how does the author identify himself to his readers? [As “The Elder”]. This indicated his familiarity to and authority over the people in the churches, and repeatedly called the readers his “little children” (1 Jn. 2:1, 12, 13, 19, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). These are letters from their spiritual father in the faith. When did he write? [In the 60’s].

The outline of 1 John emphasizes the three L’s of 1 John. What are these? [**Life**, **Light** and **Love**] [Review the outline of 1 John] The first section of 1 John [I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)] began with a discussion of the incarnation [from the Latin for “flesh”] of Jesus, the Word of **Life**. Beginning in the second section [II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)] John demonstrates that there are two kinds of people: those who walk in the **light** as God is light, and those who walk in the darkness of the old creation. In the Third section, John helps his readers to understand the **love** of God, and the love we are to have for one another because we have been loved by God. Finally, in the last section John summarized his purpose for writing, and in 1 John 5:13 (the key verse to be memorized) the Apostle said:

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.”

In his Epistles, John was writing to Christian believers who were being threatened by divisions among them in the churches. Because of the teachings of the “antichrists,” some had already left the church because they had begun to doubt the teachings of the Apostles. Under the stress of persecution many were leaving Christ and His church. With this kind of turmoil in the church, John wanted to assure his readers that they can know they have eternal life. Clearly, John was concerned that those that remained in the churches were tempted to leave the truth and follow those who had left; he was concerned that they would stop walking in the life, light and love of God as found in the

Son of God, and return to the darkness of the Old Covenant. It was a crucial time for these believers.

What are some of the characteristics of those whom John warned his readers about? [They did not believe that they had sinned (1 Jn. 1:6-10), and did not believe that they needed the bloody sacrifice of Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins (2:1-2). They claimed to be in the light and know Jesus, but did not walk as Jesus did. They did not keep the commandments and love their brothers; instead they hated their brothers in the Lord (2:3-11). They loved the world and the things in the world (2:15-17; 4:3). They departed from the church (2:18-23). They are identified as children of the Devil because they do not practice righteousness and love one another (3:4-18). They are called “antichrists” (2:18, 22; 4:3). The primary thing that they denied was that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and came in the flesh (2:22; 4:1-6).]

2 John was written to a church(es) that was called “the chosen lady.” Like 1 John, she was encouraged to love one another, and to beware of false teachers/antichrists. The believers were encouraged to hold fast to the traditions/theological standards of truth passed on to them by the apostles.

I. Introduction (vv. 1-4)

3 John is the smallest book in the Bible. It is one of the least theological books of the New Testament, not even mentioning “Jesus” or “Christ” (only v. 7 says “His name’s sake” referring to Jesus). Written by “The Elder” (cf. 2 Jn 1), to “the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.” We do not know who Gaius was, but it is likely that he was a pastor of one of the churches that John had responsibility to oversee. John said that he prays for Gaius that he would prosper in both body and soul. Apparently, some brothers had spent some time with Gaius, and returned to John and testified that Gaius held fast to the truth, both in terms of his faith and his walk (cf. 1 Jn. 1:7; 2:6; 2 Jn. 4, 6). Just as John said in 2 Jn. 4, Gaius is one of his children that walk in the truth.

3 John is a very personal book, not only commending Gaius (and later Demetrius who probably carried this letter the Gaius), but also condemned Diotrephes for his unloving behavior. It helps us to understand how the principles of life, light and love are to lived out in the lives of real people in the church. It helps us to carefully consider how we live our lives in the context of the church, and our need to be faithful to the truth and to love one another.

It is difficult to know exactly what the situation was that caused John to write this letter. Some think that the mention of an earlier letter (v. 9) may have been 2 John, in which case the evil man, Diotrephes, may have read John’s earlier condemnations of false teachers/leaders, but did not like it and rejected John and those associated with him. After the letter John sent, he probably sent men to the church, but Diotrephes spoke against John and the other apostles, and refused to receive the men John sent. In fact, Diotrephes threatened to put out of the church (excommunicate) anyone that wished to

receive the men John sent (v. 10). John was writing to encourage Gaius, and to let him know that John intended to come and set things right (vv. 10, 13-14).

I. Loving Hospitality (vv. 5-8)

When the John sent some brothers to the church previously (probably as missionaries), Gaius faithfully ministered to them. He showed a true love for the brethren and strangers. He not only received them and showed them hospitality. When Jesus sent out His disciples on a short missionary journey, He told them not to take with them money for their journey. They were to trust that God would meet their needs through those to whom they preached the kingdom to. When they went to a city to preach, they were to inquire as to who was worthy and stay with them. If they found someone who was worthy of the gospel by their response to the disciples, they were to declare the peace of God to them. But if the people of the city was not worthy (by rejecting the good news of Jesus), they were to shake the dust from their feet (Matt. 10:5-15). Gaius was a worthy host, and John says that he loved them “before the church” (v. 6). Gaius sent the missionaries away in a way that was worthy of God, “because they went forth in His name’s sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles” (v. 7). Any men who are missionaries for Jesus (“fellow workers for the truth” v.8) should be received as such, and financial support should be given to them, as Jesus taught.

John was writing to Gaius to say that he was planning to come and set things right in the church, but in the mean time, Gaius should know that he did well, and that he should encourage the other members of the church to love the brethren as well.

II. The Misdeeds of Diotrephes & Good Deeds of Demetrius (vv. 9-12)

We do not know if Diotrephes was part of Gaius’ church or not (he may have been a leader in another congregation), but clearly he is very influential in the church. In v. 9, we learn that Diotrephes loves to have the preeminence among those in the church. He thinks he is an important person and should be respected and obeyed (v. 10). Clearly, John identified Diotrephes as one who did not hold to the truth, or the teachings of John. V. 10 says that he spoke falsely about John, making empty charges against and speaking maliciously against him. If that wasn’t bad enough, Diotrephes also refused to receive the brethren sent by John, and threatened church discipline against anyone who did so (v. 10).

John commanded his beloved Gaius and those under his influence not to be like Diotrephes, who is said in v. 11 to be evil. Those who do evil have not seen God. But those who do good are of God. [Read 1 Jn. 2:29; 3:6-23]

3 John was probably delivered by a man named Demetrius, who is said to have a good testimony by John and all other faithful believers (v. 12). He is the example of the good that we are to imitate. Those who have a reputation for faithfulness to the truth and love for the brethren are to be imitated by us.

IV. Conclusion (vv. 13-14; cf. 2 Jn. 12)

The epistle concludes in a way that is almost identical to the closing sentences with 2 John (peace in the place of fullness of joy; our friends greet you in the place of children of your elect sister greet; greet the friends by name instead of amen). John wrote that it was his plan to deal with the problem of Diotrephes face to face. When there are problems that need to be addressed, it is best to try to do so in person. Human relationships are so complex and personal that trying to solve difficult problems by mail/email or over the telephone are almost never effective. It is best to try to deal with difficulties in person so that we can have meaningful conversations in an immediate so of way. Sometimes it is necessary to use other means (e.g. mail & telephone), as John did in his letters. But John gives us the example to imitate that we should try to follow up with speaking face to face.

Our fellowship with other believers that are far away from us is real and meaningful. John said that those who were with him wanted Gaius to know that they greeted him (and prayed for him, v. 2). Not only so, Gaius was to greet those in his church by name for John. Our love for one another is not limited to those who are close to us, but includes those who are far away. Although letters are a difficult means of communication, they can express true love and fellowship.

Homework assignment: Prepare for the Student Evaluation.

The Epistles of John

Lesson Eight: Imitate what is Good (3 John)

Outline of The Epistles of John

1 John

- I. Incarnation of the Word of Life (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: God is Light (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: Love One another (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (5:13-21)

2 John

Love of the Chosen Lady

3 John

Imitate What is Good

❖ Review of 1 & 2 John

I. Introduction (vv. 1-4)

I. Loving Hospitality (vv. 5-8)

Matt. 10:5-15

II. The Misdeeds of Diotrephes & Good Deeds of Demetrius (vv. 9-12)

IV. Conclusion (vv. 13-14; cf. 2 Jn. 12)

Homework assignment: Prepare for the Student Evaluation.

The Epistles of John: Student Evaluation

Name _____ Date _____ [_____ out of 28 Points]

What is an epistle? _____ (1 Pt)

- A) An electronic weapon B) A letter C) A friend of the Apostles

Who wrote the Epistles of John? _____ (1 Pt)

- A) John the Baptist B) John the Apostle

What other books of the Bible did he write? (2 Pt)

When did John write these books of the Bible? _____ (1 Pt)

What are the three “L’s” of 1 John? (3 Pt)

Outline of The Epistles of John (14 Pt)

1 John

I. _____ of the Word of _____ (1:1-4)

II. This is the Message: _____ is _____ (1:5-3:10)

III. This is the Message: _____ (3:11-5:12)

IV. Summary & Purpose: (____ : ____)

2 John

_____ of the _____

3 John

_____ What is _____

What does the word "Incarnation" mean? (1 Pt) _____

What is the primary thing that the antichrists denied? (1 Pt)

What does 1 John 3 say sin is? (1 Pt) _____

Write the key verses used in this class for the book of 1 John and the reference. (1 Pt)

Who was the chosen lady in 2 John? _____ (1 Pt)

- A) The pastor's wife
- B) A prominent woman in the Church
- C) The Church
- D) John's wife

In 3 John, the message of John was to: _____ (1 Pt)

- A) Imitate the good by showing love and hospitality
- B) Excommunicate Diotrephes for being bad
- C) Have joy

The Epistles of John: Student Evaluation Answer Key

28 Points total

What is an epistle? **B** (1 Pt)

- A) An electronic weapon B) A letter C) A friend of the Apostles

Who wrote the Epistles of John? **B** (1 Pt)

- A) John the Baptist B) John the Apostle

What other books of the Bible did he write? (2 Pt)

The Gospel of John & The book of Revelation

When did John write these books of the Bible? **60's** (1 Pt)

What are the three "L's" of 1 John? (3 Pt)

Life **Light** **Love**

Outline of The Epistles of John (14 Pt)

1 John

- I. **Incarnation** of the Word of **Life** (1:1-4)
- II. This is the Message: **God** is **Light** (1:5-3:10)
- III. This is the Message: **Love One Another** (3:11-5:12)
- IV. Summary & Purpose: (**5: 13-21**)

2 John

Love of the **Chosen** **Lady**

3 John

Imitate What is **Good**

What does the word “Incarnation” mean? (1 Pt) **It is the Latin word for “flesh”**

What is the primary thing that the antichrists denied? (1 Pt)
Jesus Christ was the Son of God, and came in the flesh

What does 1 John 3 say sin is? (1 Pt) **Lawlessness**

Write the key verses used in this class for the book of 1 John and the reference. (1 Pt)

These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.

Who was the chosen lady in 2 John? **C** (1 Pt)

- A) The pastor’s wife
- B) A prominent woman in the Church
- C) The Church
- D) John’s wife

In 3 John, the message of John was to: **A** (1 Pt)

- A) Imitate the good by showing love and hospitality
- B) Excommunicate Diotrephes for being bad
- C) Have joy