

1st John Introduction
1st John Chapter 1

John 1:1-17

Genesis 1:1-13

Responsive: Proverbs 2:1-9

Today we are starting our journey through the First Epistle written by the Apostle John. On just a surface reading of this book there were a few things that I found interesting. 1st off, is the fact that there is no greeting, or closing to this letter. Also it doesn't follow the typical structure of Paul's writing style, or even that of James that we just finished where it builds upon itself setting forth arguments and counter points. John's writing here is not as structured, and instead of going through point by point building upon each other, John has chosen to have a few points of discussion and he keeps coming back to them and reiterating upon them. When I first read through this I thought that It almost feels as if something was missing, my initial thought was that it felt more like something that John probably preached, and someone wrote it down. Then I started to study it out and found that nope, that wasn't the case.

Most scholars believed that the reason it is structured this way, and seems to start and end so abruptly is because it is written more in the structure of a form letter that was sent to a multitude of churches. This letter was more then likely accompanied with a cover letter individualized to the churches he sent it to, which is where John would have put his more personal greeting and closing.

So, first thing first, before we can dive into this book we need to look at the background, and set the ground work. When and where it was written, and by whom. So really there is not much controversy or debate over this book as there is over others when it comes to authorship, or location, or time it was written. Almost everyone agrees that this was written by the Apostle John, the same John that wrote the gospel of John. While this seems like a no brainer I think it is still important to make note of because one area that always seems to be debated is over the authorship of the books of the bible.

There are a lot of parallels that can be made from this book and Johns gospel writing. Many of the same themes, and vocabulary are so similar that there is no doubt that this is the same same John. Both the gospel of John, and this book contains the same type of parallelism, the contrast between light and darkness, life and death, truth and lie, love and hate.

It is believed that this book was written some where between AD 80 and AD 85. There is evidence that shows that John probably moved to Ephesus during the time of the Jewish War in AD 66-70 and it was there that he wrote more then likely wrote this letter, and the gospel. There is debate as to which came first, and ultimately I think it is of little importance, but one thing that I found of note is those who believe that the epistle of 1st John was written after the Gospel of John, believe so for the reason that they see it as John refuting some arguments here that may have arisen from an improper understanding and use of his Gospel letter.

As was mentioned earlier the writing style of this book is different then what we see from other apostles, this book is less of an argument over doctrine, and theology and takes a more pastoral approach and tone. He isn't debating a group of Judaizers like Paul was in the book written to the Galatians. John actually tell us his purpose for writing this letter a few times throughout this book.

In chapter 5:13 he 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. This pretty much said the same thing in his Gospel writing, Recounting when Jesus appeared to them after the Resurrection he says in verse 31, “ These things are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.

One of John's reason for writing this book, lines up exactly with his reason for his writing of the gospel book. This is just one example showing the similarities between the 2 books. But there is more than one reason that John wrote this epistle. And he goes on to tell us in Chapter 2. Starting in verse 1, he says. “My little Children, these things I wrote to you, so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous..

Then if we follow it further down at verse 12-14. he says, “ 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.

Then again further down in verse 21 he says, “ I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. And lastly the reason he states for writing this letter is found in verse 26, of the same chapter. He says, These things I have written to you concerning those who try to deceive you.

So we see that the reasons John gave for writing this book was to give assurance to faithful believers and to expose false believers. He actually has 5 main themes that he keeps coming back to that we will see as we go through this book. I want to do a bit of an overview and take a look at those 5 themes that we will be looking at in more depth over the coming weeks.

1st, is The Authority, and Truthfulness God. John starts out right away in verse 1 he says “ That which was from the beginning, which we heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of Life.

If we look at John's gospel account, he opens it by saying. “ In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. And further down in verse 14 he says. And the word became Flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John is pointing back to the Authority, and truth of the Word, of Christ whom he said that he heard, has seen with his own eyes, looked upon, and touched.

Verse 24 of chapter 2, he says. “Let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father. Once again pointing to the Authority, and truth of Christ, that which was from the beginning, the word that was with God, and the word that was God.

2nd John Talks about Jesus' Humanity. Looking now at verse 2 and 3 of chapter 1 he is talking of the Word of Life, or Christ he says, “ the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and manifested to us- that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

John wants to be very clear, and to make certain that us who are reading this letter know that he personally witnessed Jesus' life, ministry, and death, and resurrection. That Jesus was real, and he was with him.

3rd is the relationship between those who Believe, and Sin. We see down at verse 8-10 “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and his word is not in us.

Just as James did in his letter, there is a warning, a test of true faith. We must be wary that we are not deceiving ourselves believing that we are what we are not. IF there is no confession of our sins, then there is no real faith. The bible says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, if we think we are sinless, we make God a liar and we are not truly his children.

4th, theme that John writes here is the Significance of Jesus' death. If we look over at Chapter 2, verse 2 he says that Jesus himself is the propitiation, or the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the whole world. Also over in chapter 4:9 and 10 he says. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent his only begotten son into the world that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son, to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

John is pointing to the purpose, and the reason and necessity for Jesus' death on the Cross. God's demand for righteousness must be fulfilled, and since we can not we need someone who was able to stand for us, to be a propitiation, an atoning sacrifice so that our sin's may be forgiven. As Paul put it in Galatians, it is the adoption fee that Christ paid so that we may become children of God.

And lastly John writes that Love is the proof of a relationship with God. Over in Chapter 3:1 he says “Behold what manner of love the father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know him.

John points to the adopting love of God toward his Children. Those who God loved while they were sinners Who God so loved that he gave his only Son to die. His love given to us, while we were enemies, so that we may be called Children of God.

So Those are the 5 reoccurring themes that we will see as we study through the book of John, The Authority and Truthfulness of God, Jesus' Humanity, the Christians relationship with Sin, The Significance of Jesus' death, and that Love is proof of our relationship with God.

Also another overarching theme throughout this book is that John puts forth 3 tests for the reader, with the intent and purpose of bringing assurance to the faithful, and exposing those who have deceived themselves, and to expose and bring to the open those who are false teachers leading the children of God astray.

These 3 tests that John puts forth is the Test of Doctrine, the Test of Obedience and the Test of Love. The doctrine of who Jesus is, is very important to John and we can see it in his writing here in the beginning of this book when he is talking about being an eye witness to the ministry of Christ.

Later in chapter 2:22 we see the importance of this and the emphasis he puts on the right belief of who Christ is. when he says. Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is Antichrist who denies the Father and the Son.

This is Johns Doctrinal test, Do you believe that Christ is the Son of God, the promised messiah? If not, if you deny who Jesus is, then you are a liar, a deceiver, and unbeliever and the truth is not in you.

The 2nd test he puts forth is Obedience. If you passed the first test, then the 2nd will naturally follow. The reading of Johns word's on obedience hearkens back to our study in James. 1:6 he says, IF we say we have fellowship with him, and we walk in darkness we lie and do not practice the truth. James said that we are to Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourself. If anyone is a hearer and not a doer he is like a man who looks at his reflection, then goes away and forgets what he looks like.

John 2:4 “ Whoever says, “I know him” and does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

In much of the same way James says that if you really fulfill the law according to Scripture you will love you neighbor as yourself. Whoever keeps the whole law, but stumbles in one bit is guilty of it all. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

The test of obedience that john puts forth in his letter is more then just our words, it is more the ascent, or belief that God exists, it is a life lead by God through scripture. John goes on to give further examples of a life who is obedient to God. Chapter 3:6 No one who abides in him keeps on sinning; no one who keeps on sinning has either seen him, or known him Verse 8, Who ever makes a practice of sin is of the Devil, verse 9. No one born of God makes a practice of sinning for God abides in him and he cannot keep on sinning because he has been born of God. And finally, verse 10. By this it is evident who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil; who ever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.

So we can see here this test that John puts forth of the importance of how we act, and how we live as Christians. Our relationship to sin and the world is evident, proving out our faith,

And the 3rd and final test that John puts forth for his readers to test to be sure their faith is true is Love. Chapter 2:9 he says, Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. You can not have God's love if you hate those who also love God. An unaccredited quote in the Commentary I got, by Blake White he says “ One scholar writes, Spurious faith does not have the right to assurance before God; genuine faith can be authenticated not only by the validity of its object (in this case, the belief that Jesus is Christ come in the flesh) but also by the transformation it effects in the individual: genuine Christians learn to love one another and obey the truth. Christian assurance is not for John and abstract good; it is intimately tied to a continuing and transforming relationship with the covenant God who revealed himself through Jesus Christ.

John also says 3:15 Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding him him. And also verse 17, But if anyone has the world's goods and see his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?

R.E.O White writes, that Christian love is a reflex of divine love in human hearts- they who have been so loved cannot help loving. Christian love is not just an emotion, but the bible is consistent in tying it to it being our humble service toward others, it is our Christian duty, God's command that we are to love as we have been loved.

This sounds very much like the book of James. It is amazing to me after we have gone through it how people can take it and want to separate it out as some different gospel. Here it is again in 1st John, the very same theme, and warning about those who have the love of God abiding in them and those who do not.

And lastly, wrapping up our introduction summary here, we see that John is dealing with false teachers just as Paul did in his letter to the Galatians, and James did in his letter to the Jewish Christians. John says that these false teachers are anti-christ, they denied the incarnation, that Jesus was God in the flesh. These false teachers also were teaching sinless perfection, they denied being subject to sin for they thought their belief in God put them outside of sin. This explains why John so heavily focus's on the humanity of Jesus, and sin in relation to the children of God. He ties together true christian behavior with the life of Christ.

So that is the overview, the meta narrative of this book written by John. Starting next week, Lord willing we will be dive in and start digging deeper into the chapters of this book.