

Introduction / History:

Who wrote the Epistles of John?:

Some debate, generally **assumed to be Apostle John**

All we know from the Epistles is “Elder”. (II John 1:1, III John 1:1)

- Not “Elder” like today’s church administration – rather “one of the originals”
(Likely date is 60s-90sAD) Therefor John would have been old (Elder)
Date also important for generation of false teaching to evolve to respond to.

Who was He writing to?:

- Most assume it was to a church in **Asia Minor**
- We don’t know exactly what they were teaching, but we can loosely infer or reconstruct from John’s letters that they:
 - Denied incarnation of Jesus as God
 - Denied & ability of Jesus’ death to atone for sin
 - They disregarded commands to love each other
 - They claimed to be operating according to Holy Spirit’s direction
- Larger Broader Issues: **Antinomianism / Perfectionism**
 - Anti (against) Nominanism (law). Under grace we cannot be held to moral law.
 - Perfectionism God supernaturally removes our ability to sin.

What was he writing about?:

- Correct, Set Straight, & Refute False Doctrine & Theology
- Theological Truths He Will Reinforce About God:
 - God is Father & He is Known By the Son 1:3, 2:1, 2:22, 23, 24
 - God is the author of human salvation & sent His Son to deliver men from sin. 1:9
 - Jesus is the Son of God, he is the incarnation of the Word of God. 1:1
 - Jesus’ death atones for sins. Through Jesus we obtain eternal life. 1:3, 2:25, 3:2
 - Holy Spirit is the source of truth by which the Word is implanted in believers. 2:27, 4:2, 5:20
 - Experiencing the Holy Spirit’s presence gives assurance that we belong to God. 4:13

I Order to Understand Fabric of I John, Necessary to Review II John & III John

Many Scholars & Commentators Believe These Latter Letters Were Authored Prior to I John

I. Why A Cursory Reading of II John Is Appropriate

Vs. 7-9 Important Verses from this letter

Introduction Helps Us Identify the Author Of All 3 Epistles

- Vs. 1 *“the elder to the chosen lady”*
 - John symbolically referring to church & its constituents as a “lady & children”
 - Not uncommon to personify. We call boats, cars, aircraft ladies.
 - Throughout the NT the church is referred to as “the Bride of Christ.”
- So John is clearly writing to a specific church or congregation

John Is Concerned About False Teachers Traveling to Churches & Teaching

- Vs. 5 *“Now I ask of you..... that you obey a commandment that we have had from the beginning”*
“ This command I am giving to you again is to love one another”

John 13:34 *“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.”*

- Vs. 6 *“This is love, that we walk according to His commandments.”*

What Is the Message of False Teachers that John Is Concerned About?

Vs. 7 *“Many deceivers have gone out into the world do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.”*

- Think about what this means:
 - Jesus was not miraculously conceived
 - Jesus performed no Earthly miracles
 - Jesus could not have died a substitutionary death
 - Jesus certainly could not have raised himself if no death.

Vs. 9 *“Anyone who goes too far & does not abide in Christ’s teaching does not have God”*

- “Goes too far” = Literally translated “goes on ahead”
- General reference to adding to the Gospel & also seeing their own teaching as “advanced”

Vs. 10-11 *“When someone comes denying Christ, don’t entertain their company otherwise you become a party & an accomplice to what they are doing.”*

This Is What We Learn From II John That We Can Consider As We Read I John

1. Many deceivers are traveling around denying Jesus Christ came in the Flesh
2. Their Denial of Jesus Prohibits Them From Walking in His Commandments
3. When we entertain similar teachings & people it implies endorsement.

II. Why A cursory Review of III John Is Appropriate

Vs. 11 Important Verse from this letter

Introduction Helps Us Identify the Author Of All 3 Epistles

- Vs. 1 ***“The elder to the beloved Gaius.....”***
 - Though this is a personal letter, John identifies himself as “The Elder”
 - Reinforces his role in the church.
 - Presumably this letter would be read to the church & get to Diotrophes.

Vs. 5-8 John Begins to Setup a Contrast of Activities. He’s Going to Praise Gaius First

- Vs. 5-8** John Praises Gaius for Living Faithfully & According to Truth That Has Been Taught
- John praises men who stand for the truth.

Then It Appears John Wrote Something of Praise for These Men But It Was Not Received

- Vs 9-11 Here is contrast of activities completely unlike Gaius and faithful teachers
- Vs. 9 ***“I wrote something to the church, but Diotrophes didn’t accept it.”***
 - Generally assumed John was writing to commend traveling preachers he is praising.
 - However, Diotrophes (who loves to be first among them) didn’t like taking a back seat.
- Vs. 10 Apparently Diotrophes ***“was slandering John & fellow workers of the faith”***
 - Diotrophes goes a step further by refusing to receive John’s friends
 - Diotrophes even forbids others from doing same -kicks them out of church if they do.

This is What We Learn From III John That We Can Consider As We Read I John

The Activity of Loving One Another As Seen in II John & Eventually in I John IS NOT:

1. Trying to be first in the church
(Today is a huge pyramid of top-down leadership in the church)
2. Maliciously slandering others in the church
(Part of loving others is approaching disagreements in the ways the Bible outlines for us)
3. Refusing to show hospitality / reject those who are fellow workers of the truth.
(We often let small denomination differences get in the way of unity)
(There are plenty of big ones, when there are some bridges to be made we should do so)

We Also Get Practical Example of An “Evil Doer” From III John Description of Diotrophes

John’s description of an evil-doer is one who habitually sins & without remorse or regard for the Gospel.

III I John 1:1-4 Prologue

- Vs. 1 John's introduction doesn't embody typical characteristics of a letter
 - This gives a subtle understanding that he was writing to a known audience.
 - Audience knew who was writing, John addresses specific issues they were dealing with.
 - 2:19 reveals a specific event John & church would have been aware of.

Vs. 1-3 One Big Long Sentence

- Vs. 3 *"we proclaim to you also"* This is the main action.
- Everything preceding is descriptor of the message.
- The result is emphasis on the message, not the action of proclaiming it.

John Tells Us 3 Things About This Message

1. Vs. 1 a. *"What was from the beginning....."*
 - I John 2:13 *"You know Him who has been from the beginning."*
 - Gospel of John *"In the beginning was the Word, & the Word was with God and the Word was God."*
 - Was = Imperfect tense. This is a statement of fact that reveals a truth that wasn't necessarily completed at a point in time but rather has always been true.
 - Jesus has always been God, and has never ceased being God.
2. Vs.1b. *"what we have heard....."*
 - John reveals that this thing which is from the beginning eventually became **audible**.
 - This thing has now become **accessible** to humanity
 - Romans 10:14 *"How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? How shall they believe in him whom they have not heard? How shall they hear without a preacher?"*
 - Romans 10:17 *"Faith comes by hearing, & hearing by the Word of God."*
3. Vs. 1c. *"What we have seen with our eyes, & what our hands handled....."*
 - This message that is proclaimed has **physical qualities**.
 - Jesus said **Thomas believed because he saw** firsthand and touched.
 - John is refuting false teaching that Jesus was never a real person.
 - Reminding audience that he & others saw the Word of Life firsthand.
 - Peter & John said in Acts 4:20 *"for we cannot stop speaking what we have seen & heard".*

2 Things That Are Beautiful About John's Identification of Jesus as the Word of Life

1. The message of eternal life, & fellowship w/ the Father was what Jesus preached.
2. Jesus IS the message himself. The Message & Jesus are one in the same.

Jesus is simultaneously the preacher of the message and the message itself.

Paul says of himself that he preached Christ, & Christ crucified.

Vs. 2 John Seems to Introduce Almost a Side-Note To Clarify What He Means by Word of Life

- Vs 2a NIV *"the life appeared, we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father & appeared to us."*
 - Its almost as though John just feels the need to reiterate the historicity of the incarnation.
 - He's not referring to the eternal life Jesus gives, or the manifestation in a believer.
 - He's specifically referring to the fact that Jesus was a real man.

Vs. 3 John Reveals Punchline About What Incarnation of Word of Life Means for Us

- Vs. 3 *“...we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”*

There Seems to Be An Intentional Building of Priority Within Vs. 3 By Itself

- Proclaims the Word of Life grants fellowship with other believers.
- Then highlights Word of Life that it is ultimately fellowship w/ Father & Jesus Christ.
- Parable of Good Shepherd? Jesus spoke about believers knowing him as he knows the Father
 - **John 17:21** *“that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”*

Illustration: Transitive Property

Vs. 4 John Reveals His Heart Longs For Others to Share IN the Same Understanding of Truth

Vs. 4 *“These things we write so that our joy may be made complete.”*

Conclusion – “Fellowship”

- Fellowship means to have something in common or to participate with another
 - John specifically uses twice in Vs.3
 - John inextricably links fellowship to:
 1. Other believers
 2. God the Father
 3. God the Son- Jesus Christ
- He Doesn't leave any room for error or confusion.
- It is impossible to know God or God's will outside of the person of Christ
- John is directly refuting teachings that endorse fellowship w/ God without Christ.
- If John 7 said some refused to acknowledge that Jesus was real flesh.

1. Do We Embrace Our Fellowship w/ the Triune God of the Universe As John Did?

- 3:1 *“See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God.”..... “when we see him we shall be like him.”*
- We should be eagerly looking forward to that day when we will be glorified like him
- How many of us would readily leave the things of this life to be with Jesus now?

2. Do We Embrace Our Fellowship w/ Other Believers in Christ As John Did?

- John's *“joy was complete as others came into fellowship & grasped the truth of Christ”*
- What are we doing to help promote fellowship beyond just making it in