

Johannine Epistles  
Bible Study at Day's  
Dr. Robert C. Newman

## **FIRST JOHN**

(outline modified from Burdick, *NIVSB*)

### I. Introduction: The Reality of the Incarnation (1:1-4)

He (Word of Life) existed from the beginning, with the Father

He (the Eternal Life) was manifested to us

We experienced Him

We proclaim Him to you

May your joy be complete

### II. The Christian Life as Fellowship with the Father and Son (1:5-2:28)

#### A. Ethical Tests of Fellowship (1:5-2:11)

##### 1. Moral Likeness (1:5-7)

Our message from Him

God is light, no darkness at all

We cannot walk in darkness & have fellowship with Him

With fellowship we have cleansing by His blood

##### 2. Confession of Sin (1:8-2:2)

We are not sinless yet

He will forgive if we confess

Denial of sin is denial of Him

Purpose of letter is to avoid sin

But all need Christ's advocacy, payment

3. Obedience (2:3-6)

How we know we have come to know Him

Claim without obedience marks liar

Obedience completes love

We must follow Jesus' example

4. Love for Fellow Believers (2:7-11)

Not a new command (goes back to OT)

Yet new as manifested in Him and believers

Hatred for brothers belies claims

Love motivates lifestyle, avoids causing sin

Hatred is blindness

B. Two Digressions (2:12-17)

1. Writing to Family (2:12-14)

children, fathers, young men

forgiveness, knowledge, victory

2. Don't Love the World (2:15-17)

Inconsistent with love for Father

Does not find its source in Father:

Lust of flesh (sensuality)

Lust of eyes (covetousness)

Pride of life (boasting)

World will not last

C. Christological Test of Fellowship (2:18-28)

1. Contrast: Apostates vs Believers (2:18-21)

Already the last hour

Many antichrists on scene  
show they are not Xns by their departure

True believers have Holy Spirit  
(show they are Xns) by knowing truth

2. Person of Christ: Crux of the Test (2:22-23)

Antichrist is liar  
denies Jesus is the Christ  
  
denies both Father and Son

Confession of Son is key to having Father

3. Persistent Belief: Key to Continuing Fellowship (2:24-28)

Abiding (remaining) in original Gospel message

linked to abiding in Father & Son

this is eternal life

don't be deceived

Anointing remains in you

teaches the truth

keeps the believer

Abide in Him

in view of judgment

III. The Christian Life as Divine Sonship (2:29-4:6)

A. Ethical Tests of Sonship (2:29-3:24)

1. Righteousness (2:29-3:10a)

An attribute of God and all His children

God's love demonstrated:

calls us His children

is making us so

So world misunderstands us as it does Him

Our likeness to God will be perfected when we see Him

Meanwhile we seek to be pure just as He is

Sin, by contrast, is law-breaking

Christ came to rescue us from this

He Himself is sinless

Those who are His don't keep on sinning

Contrast with children of Satan

Sin an attribute of Satan & all his children

Christ came to destroy Satan's work

God's seed in us keeps us from sinning

This is how we distinguish God's children from Satan's

2. Love (3:10b-24)

Also a test for God's children vs Satan's

Original message

Contrast Cain (Genesis 4)

belonged to (child of) Satan

murdered brother Abel

hated Abel's righteous lifestyle

don't be surprised if world hates you

Test of eternal life

love for brothers

Example of true love: Jesus died for us

so we ought to die for brothers

love linked to compassion

love results in action

Active love is test of truth

provides assurance

God knows more than we

gives us confidence

support of God

But this confidence linked to obedience:

trust in who Jesus is

love for one another

And obedience linked to abiding

B. Christological Tests of Sonship (4:1-6)

Not all spirits from God

Test the spirits

Confession:

Jesus is the Christ

Christ has come in the flesh

Spirit of antichrist already in world

Contrast children of God and of Satan

Children of God overcome world

Children of Satan heard by world

Children of God not heard by world,  
but by other children of God

IV. The Christian Life as an Integration of Ethical & Christological (4:7-5:12)

A. The Ethical Test: Love (4:7-5:5)

1. The Source of Love (4:7-16)

comes from God

characterizes all & only regenerate

manifested in Son's redemptive work

God's love, not ours, was first

His love should motivate us to love

no one has seen God, but he can be seen in us

if we love one another

if we confess Jesus as Son

abiding in love = abiding in God

2. The Fruit of Love (4:17-19)

by abiding in God's love, love is perfected in us

this gives us confidence in day of judgment

this casts out fear

3. The Relation between Godward and Manward Love (4:20-5:1)

cannot love God and hate brother

those who love God commanded to love brother

if you love God then you must love His children

4. Obedience: Evidence of Love for God's Children (5:2-5)

test for love of believers is love of God and obedience

test for love of God is obedience

child of God is victorious over world thru faith

victor over world is one who trusts Jesus as Son

B. The Christological Test (5:6-12)

Jesus Christ came by water and blood

water app incarnation (birth water; see Jn 3:5)

blood app atonement

Spirit bears witness to Christ

Three witnesses:

Spirit: regeneration

Water: incarnation

Blood: atonement

These are divine witnesses, not merely human

believer has witness in himself

this witness is eternal life

only one who has Son has this life

V. Conclusion: Great Christian Certainties (5:13-21)

Written to believers to give assurance of life

Believers also have assurance of answered prayer

Assurance of answers to prayers of intercession

God's children kept from sin and Satan

Given understanding to know God and live in Him

Guard yourselves from idols

## SECOND JOHN

### I. Introduction (1-3): lengthened form of standard letter introduction

Author: "the Elder"

some have denied this is apostle John, as term elder seems like too low a designation

these hypothesize another "John the elder"

but "elder" may here mean:

--church officer: Peter uses of self (1 Pet 5:1)

--old man: similar to Paul's use (Phm 9)

--one of 1st Xn generation: Papias' use

style of letter and earliest tradition favor apostolic authorship

Recipients: "elect lady and her children"

see also "lady" (5) and "children of your elect sister" (13)

two proposals:

--literal: a Xn woman with grown children  
(who has a sister w/ grown children)

--figurative: a Xn church and individual members  
(sister is another church)

if literal, name of woman?

--unnamed

--"Kyria" - rare but not unknown name

--"Eklekte" - app ruled out by (13)

Greeting: similar to Paul's greeting style

Grace, mercy and peace

Will be with us: note of confidence

II. Occasion for Letter (4)

contact with some of lady's children

glad to see them walking in the truth

III. God's Commandment (5-6)

love one another

not new commandment

love = obedience to God's commands

IV. Warning against Deceivers (7-11)

many out in world, like the deceiver, Antichrist

don't acknowledge Jesus as Christ come in flesh

danger to believers to lose reward

they "go beyond" the teaching of Christ

don't have God

not to be aided in their work

lest we share their 'reward'

V. Conclusion (12-13)

further matters postponed for personal visit

greetings from sister's children

## THIRD JOHN

### Background

#### People Involved

Elder (1): apostle John, prob in neighborhood of Ephesus, overseeing a number of churches

Gaius (1): recipient of letter; mature Xn; prob wealthy; member (perhaps an elder) of church in view

Demetrius (12): app carrier of letter, a travelling Xn worker, poss in charge of a group of such, seeking hospitality from church in view

Diotrephes (9-10): app elder in same church, with considerable influence which he has misused to build himself up and to put down all signs of independence

#### Circumstances of Early Church

##### Itinerant Prophets:

cp 2 John 10, Didache 11-13 and Paul's practice of sending associates

Responsibility of local churches to help Xns who have gone out as travelling workers

Danger of misuse of hospitality by charlatans and heretics

##### Monarchical Bishops: cp Ignatius of Antioch, Rev 2-3?

Bishop becomes an office distinct from elder, above elders, one per church, with considerable powers

Clearest examples in Ignatius: Eph 2:1; Mag 6:1; Trall 3:1; Smyr 8:1-9:1

##### Letters of Recommendation:

A common practice, see 2 Cor 3:1-2

##### Samples from NT:

Jerus ch for Judas & Silas (Acts 15:24-27)

Paul for Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2)

Paul for Timothy et al (2 Cor 8:16-24)

Paul for Tychichus (Eph 6:21-22) and Onesimus (Col 4:7-9)

Outline:

I. Introduction (1)

II. Gaius' Hospitality (2-8)

Evidence of his spiritual maturity (2-3)

Source of joy for his spiritual father (4)

Encouragement to continue hospitality (5-8)

III. Diotrephes' Inhospitability (9-11)

Ignored John's request (9)

Wants preeminence (9)

Wicked actions (10)

unjust accusations

refusal to receive travelling brethren

forbids others to receive them

excommunicates those who don't obey him

A bad example (11)

IV. John's Request (12)

His recommendation of Demetrius

Request for showing hospitality implied in verses 3, 5, 6, 8, 10b

V. Conclusion (13-14)

Very much like that of 2 John

John prefers personal contact to letter writing

Greetings from others