

## **NT Survey I, II and III John**

### **I John**

Author: John, the Son of Thunder (hear him preach!)

Date: A.D. 90-95

Purpose: **1:3,4**; 2:1, 2:12-14, 2:21, 2:26, **5:13**

Instruction that gave assurance of eternal life and fellowship with God and His children as a way to also detect and reject false teachers/teaching. If you know the truth of Christ and the Christian life, you will know counterfeits.

Outline – many options; difficult to outline, impossible to discover a recognizable structure

McGee and Open Bible:

- I. God is Light (1:1 – 2:2)
- II. God is Love (2:3 – 4:21)
- III. God is Life (5)

NT in Antiquity

- I. Prologue (1:1-4)
- II. God is Light (walk accordingly) (1:5 – 3:10)
- III. God is Love (walk accordingly) (3:11 – 5:12)
- IV. Conclusion (5:13-21)

TMS Prof. Essex

- I. The Introduction (1:1-4)
- II. Assurance through the Test of Fellowship (1:5 – 2:17)
- III. Assurance through the Conflict of Faith (2:18 – 4:6)
- IV. Assurance from the Evidence of Love (4:7 – 5:5)
- V. Assurance from the Witness of the Spirit (5:6-12)
- VI. The Conclusion (5:13-21)

Historical Background from The Open Bible:

“The Gnostic heresy taught that matter is inherently evil, and a divine being therefore could not take on human flesh. This resulted in the distinction between the man Jesus and the spiritual Christ who came upon Jesus at His baptism but departed prior to His crucifixion. Another variation was Docetism, the doctrine that Christ only seemed to have a human body. The result in both cases was the same – a flat denial of the incarnation.

The Gnostics also believed that their understanding of the hidden knowledge (gnosis) made them a kind of spiritual elite, who were above the normal distinctions of right and wrong. This led in most cases to deplorable conduct and complete disregard for Christian ethics.”

John likely writes from Ephesus to Christians/churches in Asia Minor to deal with ...

1. Schismatic false teachers, who had left the fellowship by the time of writing.
2. The Doctrine of these false teachers
  - a. Denial of Jesus as the Messiah; that the man Jesus and the divine Messiah are one and the same; they believe in a spiritual Messiah, a redemptive ruler named Christ, but that He was not made truly and fully human in the man Jesus.
  - b. Denial that Christ came in the flesh (denial of the humanity of Christ)

Polycarp was a disciple of John. Irenaeus was a disciple of Polycarp and tells this story he heard from Polycarp about John’s meeting the heretic Cerinthus in the bath house at Ephesus. John cried out, “Let us save ourselves; the bath house may fall down, for inside is Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth.” Cerinthus distinguished between Jesus and Christ.

- c. Denial of their own sinfulness; above Christian ethics
- d. Denial of salvation thru Christ; no sin, no need for the Sin Bearer
- e. Denial of righteous conduct – we can live however we want
- f. Denial of brotherly love – filled w/ pride, not love
- g. Opposed John’s apostolic authority, b/c of desire for preeminence

Major Themes:

1. God – 67x; Father 16x; references to God at a higher % than any other book.
  - a. God’s relationship with Jesus
  - b. God’s relationship with His children
2. Jesus is the Christ
3. Love (62x)

4. Commands (18x) higher % than all of NT – Paul only uses the word 14x in total. Point? Real Christians respond to God’s commands for righteous living and love for one another.
5. Abiding (27x)

You can see how each theme would shore them up and expose false teachers.

Literary style: The form is least like a 1<sup>st</sup> century letter, no name of author, no address, no greeting or conclusion and no personal comments, all in complete contrast to II and III John.

Conclusion: Not a personal letter at all, but more like a tract, general treatise or even a sermon designed for wide distribution.

Hear him preach! He uses the second person plural “you” 22x.

Difficult passages:

- The water and the blood – refers to human existence or His incarnate life among men; He was fully human.
- Sinning unto death – to fully and finally cut yourself off by following false teachers and their deception

## **II John**

Background: Traveling teachers and evangelists were customarily taken into the homes of Christians and given provisions when they moved on. Heretical teachers of Gnosticism relied on the same practice. John urges discernment as a way to protect “the chosen lady and her children” (either literal woman and her kids OR Figurative, of a local church).

A postcard before arrival with central purpose of watch out for deceivers. This local fellowship or individual Christian lady was not to receive or greet those bringing false teaching to their church or house. Must be interpreted in light of I John.

Key verse: v.10. We must separate from those who teach error.

The Open Bible: “... love must be discerning. It is not a naïve, unthinking, open to anything and anyone kind of love ... it is dangerous and foolish to float through life with undiscerning love. False teachers abound who do not acknowledge Christ as having come in the flesh. It is a false charity to open the door to false teaching.”

### **III John**

Again, very personal and short; displays a great familiarity to be so brief; like a postcard before arrival. He's used to speaking face to face with Gaius. Interpret in light of I John.

John writes to encourage Gaius to continue serving the truth by sending out strangers who were true evangelists and teachers in a "manner worthy of God." Gaius is to keep up the good work and is greatly commended here. He did not fear Diotrephes, acting in contrast to his evil.

He also writes to expose and rebuke Diotrephes, who rejected John's authority, slandered him with lies, had not properly received the true brethren and had forbidden church members from receiving them, kicking them out of the church for doing so!

He also writes to commend and uphold the example of Demetrius in contrast to Diotrephes. He may have been the carrier of the letter; he may have been one of those kicked out by Diotrephes. In any event, John anticipates that Diortrephes will slander Demetrius as well and so he commends him.

Key verse: 11