

OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE 1, 2, 3 JOHN AND JUDE

March 20, 2019

Answers to Lesson 43 – 1 and 2 Peter

Page 223 – The author of 1 Peter is commonly accepted as being Peter or one of his disciples. The primary argument against the real Peter being the author of 2 Peter is the rough, broken Greek in this letter as compared to the polished Greek of 1 Peter.

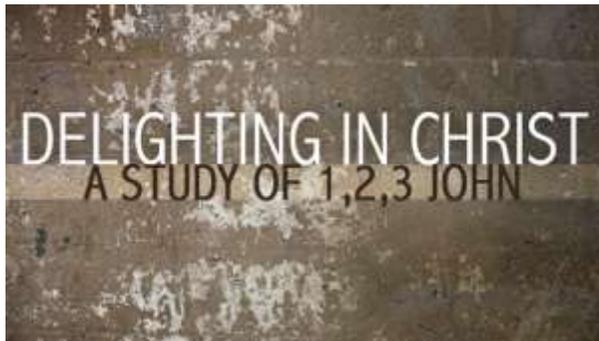
From the very beginning (when God called his people) they knew they were strangers in this world. They followed a different God and a different law. Consistently God reinforced this with requirements for the people to be clean, separate and holy. Their citizenship was in heaven.

Page 224 – Submission to human authority is always subordinate to submission to God. Jesus reframed many of the Jewish laws because they were filled with empty traditions. At the time of his death he accepted his punishment although he never compromised his convictions.

1 Peter 3:15 – When Christ is Lord of our lives, Christ enables us to be compassionate and humble and to resist repaying evil for evil or insult for insult. Even if we are suffering for doing what is right, we will be blessed. Christ is our example of one who suffered and died that we might be saved.

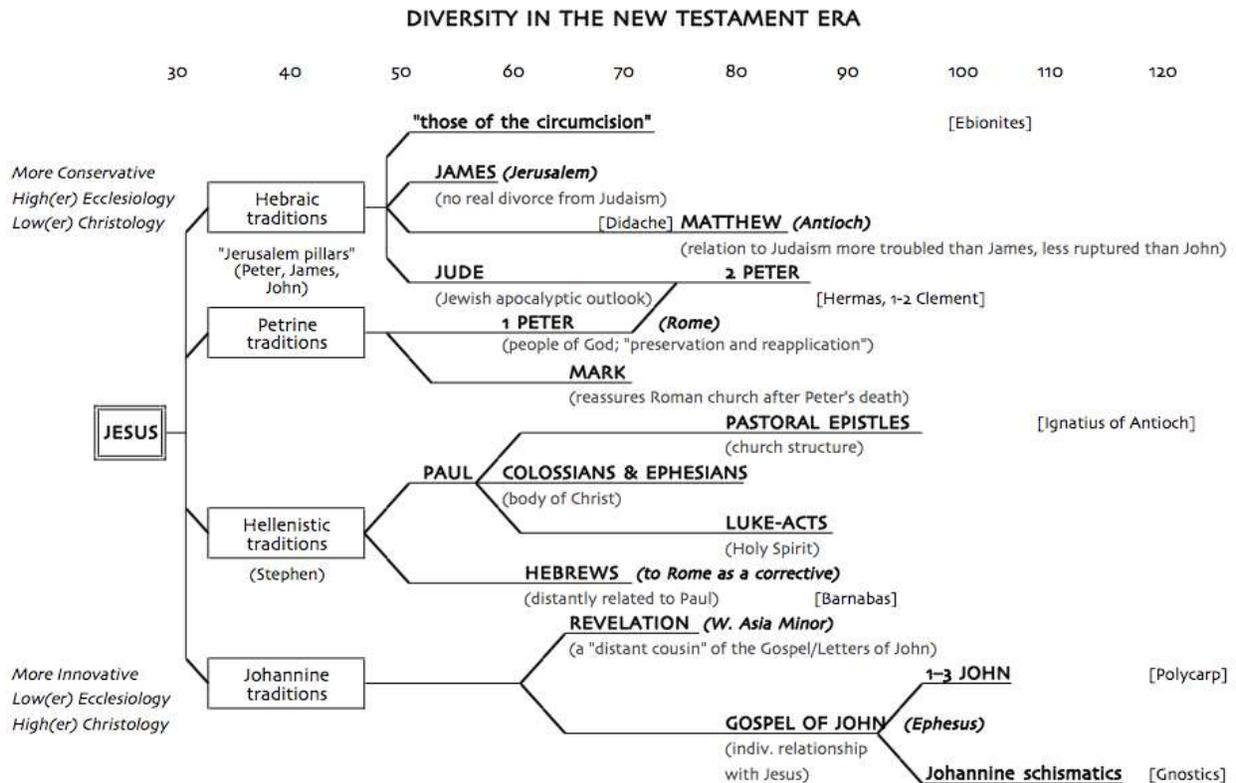
Page 225 – Peter advises us to add to our faith *goodness* which means excellence in what we do. We are also to add knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness and love. These are all to be cultivated simultaneously. It is our first response to our relationship with Christ, and it works as a protection against false teachers.

Page 226 – The author points out that God does not view time in the same way we do. In the light of eternity, one thousand years is no longer than a day. God is not slow in keeping his promises. His delay is an act of mercy so that more may have time to come to repentance.



Very little can be said (with confidence) about the author of 1, 2, and 3 John. Like the *Gospel of John*, the *First Epistle of John* is anonymous. The sender of the letters in 2 John and 3 John identifies himself as *the elder*. These last two epistles are sufficiently like 1 John to suggest *the elder* authored all three letters.

1 John is the earliest and consistently best attested of the three.
 Its wording is repeated as early as 135 CE.
 From the third century onward, acceptance of 1 John was secure and widespread.
 By the late fourth century the three epistles were regarded as one unit.



Based on Raymond E. Brown, *The Churches the Apostles Left Behind* (Paulist, 1984), expanded and modified by Darrell J. Pursiful.

Major Themes

- 1) Nature of God: God is light and in Him there is no darkness at all. For the elder, God is the standard of all righteousness and of all goodness. God is the agent of forgiveness whose essential character is light, purity, truth, and love. It is through the Son that all believers know God. The image of God as Father is to convey God's personal and caring nature.
- 2) Traditional Context: What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you. The believing community is repeatedly driven back to that which was heard from the beginning – a declaration of faith that still affects the present experiences of the church. The faith of the church is expressed through the remembered commandments of Christ, the example of Jesus, and the creeds that later developed.

- 3) Eschatological Context: It is the last hour! These epistles express an apocalyptic expectation. History is heading toward its divinely appointed end. For the elder, confirmation of this belief lies in the coming of the *antichrist*. This term is used only in the Johannine letters. It personifies a cataclysmic evil (that some expected to flare up) before the final victory by Christ.
- 4) Who Jesus Is: Jesus is the Christ (the Anointed One) and has an intimate relationship with God the Father. The Incarnation of Christ had become a disputed point at the time of the writing of these letters so the elder equated Jesus with God.
- 5) What Jesus Does: Jesus deals with sin and its consequences. By his blood believers are cleansed from all unrighteousness. Jesus removes the sins of the whole world. For any believer who sins Jesus Christ is an advocate before the Father where intercessions are performed by the Holy Spirit.
- 6) The Shape of Christian Existence: God's activity in Christ establishes the context for Christian life and discernment. 1 John insists on the inseparability of religious experience from moral conduct. Knowing God is concretely demonstrated by doing what is right. In contrast, the children of the devil are recognizable by their unrighteousness and disobedience. More than any other concept it is love that expresses the abiding nature of the unseen God. The fact that God sent his Son reveals that love. God's love for us and our love for God are perfected in our love for one another.

1 John 1 – 2:6

It opens with no clear salutation to a designated addressee.

We immediately read of our salvation, arranged and orchestrated by God.

We are to scan the expanse of the church's proclamation from the very beginning of time.

Then (just as quickly) we are placed in the present moment.

We are to consider the moral implications of what the church has heard and proclaimed.

The church is to live what it preaches and preaches what it has heard.

The gospel needs creative presentation and imaginative interpretation to be relevant.

The elder's introductory claims are matched by his down-to-earth recognition of sin.

The church is not an assembly of spiritually healthy people.

The church is where the sick gather to be healed from the disease of sin.

In our creed the *communion of saints* stands beside *the forgiveness of sin*.

The community set apart in Christ lives continually by the gospel of God's forgiveness.

Unchecked, a plunge into darkness sets the moral compass spinning out of control.

1 John and other New Testament documents articulate the belief that Jesus' death atones for sin.

The cultic practice of sacrifice is assumed but not explained.

Jesus' merciful giving of his life (for our own) heals our estrangement from God.

1 John 2:7-14

This section reads more like an introductory piece.

No new commandment is being written but an old one.

The elder bore witness again to the very aspects of salvation that was just proclaimed.

Here love is discussed eschatologically.

Those who abide in God's love are touched by the power of light which struggles against evil.

In 1 John love is a form of conduct that expresses our faith.

1 John does not talk about love of neighbor or love for our enemies.

Love is for those in the Johannine community.

1 John offers an analysis of Christian love that is incomplete but nonetheless vital.

1 John invites us to view the church as the place where family is redefined and extended.

1 John 2:15-3:10

This portion of 1 John is eschatological in tone.

The world is to be rebuffed because it is passing away.

The church should be confident at the coming of Christ.

Firm lines of demarcation must be drawn between sin and righteousness.

For the elder, the *last things* are not to be talked about last of all.

They have already commenced and already shape the reality in which the church now lives.

In this section the elder insists that sin be regarded seriously.

By playing down or denying our culpability for unrighteousness we renounce God.



ELCA Teaching on the Second Coming of Christ (From Living Lutheran)

The New Testament describes Jesus' coming in a variety of ways.

Some texts focus on heaven while others focus on judgment and the means of salvation.

What is important is that God has a sense of future for the world.

We believe that future has already begun in the present moment.

Built into the promise that Christ will come again is that our relationship with God never ends.

Rapture theology leads people to think God plans to destroy the earth.
Scripture promises judgment and a *new heaven and a new earth*.
Not all scholars are convinced this means God will destroy this earth and give us a replacement.
God created this world, God loves this world, and we believe God will not leave it behind.

Jesus warned us against trying to figure out the details of an end-time chronology.
Jesus did not intend for us to piece together Bible verses to construct a specific timeline.
We are to be urgent in mission, urgent in our waiting, and urgent in our care for our neighbor.

We learn from the early Christians how to live while we wait.
Love of neighbor and hospitality to strangers were the early Christian responses.
They gathered and worshiped God and they ministered to the poor.
To look for the coming of Christ meant to share God's love with the world.

In the Lord's Prayer we say – thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as in heaven.
It is not a prayer to take us away from earth but a prayer that the reign of God will come to us.

1 John 3:11-5:12

The train of thought in this section is difficult to follow.
The elder makes broad conceptual swings.
His thoughts do not advance in a straight line as he interweaves different topics.

Some of those themes include:

God alone has made love a reality for us.
Without the assurance of that gospel we remain trapped in hate and paralyzed by fear.
Without such responsible love the distance between greed and murder is short.

The norm has been set by Christ who made the atoning sacrifice for our sins.
He loved us so much that he laid down his life for us.
Obedience is the environment from which our prayers flow.
It pleases God that we commit ourselves in faith to Jesus Christ and we love one another.

When the church gathers for worship it is to test the spirits (to see if from God).
The church is where one ought to find hard questioning and reasoned deliberation.
All within God's family are equal participants in the crucial matters of Christian faith.

We love God by keeping his commandments.
It includes entrusting ourselves to Christ and loving God's children.
Dwelling in God's love is why human beings were created.

1 John 5:13-21

1 John ends as abruptly as it began.
It is a testimony of hope from one who is convinced of the power of prayer.
For the elder, prayer is a force that promotes restorative life bestowed on us by a merciful God.
Prayer molds the one who prays and is a genuine conversation between God and humans.
And out of that conversation God gives shape to the future.

2 John

2 John is not listed in our common lectionary.

It is short and reiterates themes more extensively considered in 1 John.

Crisis in 2 John was started by those whose claims about Christ did not align with his teachings.

Fact that we are susceptible to such claims reminds us of our need for repentance and wisdom.

In the elder's estimation the thing that has been put at risk is the identity of Jesus Christ.

Apart from Christ we cannot know the truth about God.

The risk of losing God is magnified for those who do not remain rooted in the teaching of Christ.

The church must balance theology with doctrine.

We need tradition to remind us of who we are, whose we are, and where we have been.

3 John

This epistle is the shortest document in the New Testament.

2 John appears to be a letter of petition.

3 John exemplifies a letter of introduction and recommendation.

Scholars cannot establish the identity of the recipient since Gaius was a very common name.

Gaius appears to be affiliated with another Christian community within the Johannine circle.

Matters of concern are addressed to Gaius and to the church.

In this respect it resembles the letter sent to Philemon.

The letter addresses familiar tensions among ordinary Christians.

We see traces of ourselves in their affections for each other and their cantankerousness.

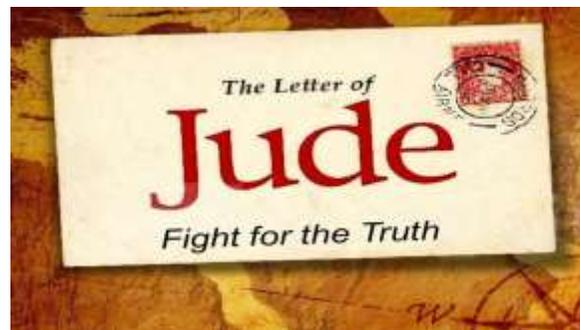
3 John also raises questions about the shape of authority within the church.

The elder speaks as though each was able to decide some fundamental matters of discipline.

Despite its issues the church was summoned to welcome the stranger.

In 3 John hospitality is not talked about generally but within the context of Demetrius.

Church is to make a home for others because (through Christ) love was the first to welcome us.



Jude

Nothing definite can be said about the author, origin, or date for this epistle.

The author calls himself Jude (Judas) and the brother of James.

Only brothers with those names mentioned in the New Testament are the brothers of Jesus.

The letter is not a *catholic* letter addressed to all Christians.

It is addressed to an unspecified church or group of churches (probably Jewish Christians).

Purpose of the letter was to address false teachings.
Group divided the church by rejecting its leadership and then gathering a following of its own.
Motivation was partially financial gain.
False teachings denied the authority of the Law of Moses and of Christ.
People were immoral and corrupted the church.

Jude believed the situation was spiritually fatal and sought immediate and drastic action.
The presence of the false teachers was a precursor of the Parousia.
Church was to cling to traditional doctrine in order to bolster its spiritual life.
They were also to convince those persuaded by the false teachers to abandon their ways.

Jude was not concerned solely with doctrinal issues.
He was concerned with the moral implications of errant doctrine that denied the final judgment.
He strongly affirmed the lordship of Christ based on his work of salvation.

Jude 4	2 Peter 2:1
Jude 6	2 Peter 2:4
Jude 7	2 Peter 2:6
Jude 9	2 Peter 2:11

Assignment for March 27

Complete the Exercises from Lesson 44 on Pages 227-230

Read *Revelation 1-11*