

25-11-22

I John is one of the most difficult books in the NT. I would rank it below Revelation and above Matthew and I Corinthians. Why is it so hard to get a grip on?

1 John 1:8-10 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.

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for *the sins of* the whole world.

1 John 5:16-17 If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not unto death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not unto death. There is a sin unto death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.

The first problem, then, we see in the next verse:

1 John 5:18 We know that whosoever is born of God sinneth not; but he that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth him not.

And then

1 John 3:8-9 He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.

When you read through I John, you constantly see what seems to be contradictions. He exhorts them not to sin, then says that they cannot sin. He commands them to love their brother, then tells them that those who walk in light (believers that he is writing to) do love their brother.

He tells them that they need no man to teach them because they know the truth, yet the whole book is teaching them.

He tells them that he is not writing them a new commandment, but in the next verse he says that he is writing them a new commandment.

There is more, but these are the main sticking points for me in the book. We are going to look at these issues and take a broad look at I John over the next few weeks.

To say that I have a complete grasp of it isn't true. I do believe I'm getting close, and you can all judge that as we go through the book. Some of what I say may prove to be incorrect, but even so, I think it will be something to build on.

There are three things I always emphasize when I teach the Word and when I study it. They are always the same.

1. Who is speaking?
2. Who is being spoken to?
3. What is being spoken about?

I also understand that numbers two and three have dangling prepositions, but we'll just have to live with that.

Who is speaking?

Tradition and writing style tell us that the apostle John penned the book. I don't have a problem with that, but we can't really be absolutely sure of it because the writer doesn't identify himself.

Look at Hebrews 1:1, another book that doesn't identify the writer.

Hebrews 1:1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

As most other epistles begin by identifying the writer, we always just say that God is the author of Hebrews. And He is indeed the author of all of the scriptures, but the actual writer remains unknown. Even so, God is identified as the author.

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

Just as in Hebrews, the writer isn't identified, but the author is made clear. The first chapter of the Gospel of John makes it clear that Jesus Christ is the Word.

Revelation 19:11-13 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him *was* called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes *were* as a flame of fire, and on his head

were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he *was* clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God.

So if one wants to be specific, you could say that Hebrews was authored by God the Father and I John by God the Son. We will assume, for convenience sake, that the apostle John was the writer, but the words come from Christ Jesus.

Who is being spoken to?

We will start broadly, and narrow it down to some distinctions.

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: **and not for ours only, but also** for *the sins of* the whole world.

Jesus Christ is the propitiation specifically for this audience's sins, but also for the sins of those he is not addressing. So now, if we look at the message of salvation that is declared in I John, we can by comparison see who is broadly being addressed.

1 John 5:1 Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God: and every one that loveth him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of him.

John 20:31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The salvation message is the same in I John as it is in the Gospel of John. If you believe that Jesus is the Christ, you obtain salvation through his name. It is still his blood that cleanses them from sin, but they obtain salvation by trusting that Jesus is the Messiah, or Christ.

Although the means of salvation is the same, the message is different than the one we have today:

1 Corinthians 1:17-18 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. **For the preaching of the cross** is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

1 Corinthians 1:23-24 But **we preach Christ crucified**, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.

1 Corinthians 2:2 For I determined not to know any thing among you, save **Jesus Christ, and him crucified.**

1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how **that Christ died for our sins** according to the scriptures;

The message of salvation we believe today assumes that Jesus is the Christ and that he was crucified as the payment for our sins. It is his blood that saves us, just as it saves those in I John, but what you believe to have that blood applied is different.

The message in the Gospel of John and I John then, is to the nation Israel.

But I John isn't written to unbelieving Israel, just as I Corinthians wasn't written to unbelieving Corinthians.

There are three groups in the nation that are addressed, and one group is specifically written to. That will become important in understanding the book.

1 John 2:12-14 I write unto you, **little children**, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. I write unto you, **fathers**, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I write unto you, **young men**, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto you, **little children**, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto you, **fathers**, because ye have known him *that is* from the beginning. I have written unto you, **young men**, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.

The three groups are identified in these three verses: little children, fathers, and young men. I'm not going to go into who I believe the fathers and young men are, because basically the only place they would be included as being written to in the book would be the first chapter, which we will look at later.

As for the little children: they are addressed twice in the verses we just read, but if you look at the tenses of the writing, you see that the fathers and young men he writes to and has written to. The little children, both times mentioned, he is writing to them present tense. Now:

1 John 2:1 My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:

1 John 2:28 And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.

1 John 3:7 Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous.

1 John 3:18 My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

1 John 4:4 Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

1 John 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen.

Now, I've missed one for a reason. The reason will become plain when we see it.

1 John 2:18 Little children, **it is the last time**: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time.

The main thrust of I John is written to those who are called little children in the last time. It isn't written, for the most part, to those who are called fathers and young men, but with the exception of the first chapter, and briefly in chapter 2:12-14, the rest is for the benefit and warning those who are called little children in the last time.

Who is being called little children?

Matthew 18:2-6 And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and **become as little children**, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore **shall humble himself as this little child**, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But **whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me**, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and *that* he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

For a Jew to humble themselves as a little child would be for him to stop believing that the works of the law and his own actions can give him eternal life, and place all of his trust in the true Messiah, Jesus Christ. We see this later on.

On the night Jesus was betrayed, after he had sent Judas Iscariot out to do what he would do, Jesus called those disciples that remained little children. What he says to them then is one of the main themes of I John.

John 13:33-35 Little children, yet a little while I am with you. Ye shall seek me: and as I said unto the Jews, Whither I go, ye cannot come; so now I say to

you. A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Here they are called little children. After his crucifixion, something happens to them that makes them simply children, and no longer little children:

John 20:21-23 Then said Jesus to them again, Peace *be* unto you: as *my* Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on *them*, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; *and* whose soever *sins* ye retain, they are retained.

They receive the Holy Ghost and are given a commission.

John 21:3-5 Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, **Children**, have ye any meat? They answered him, No.

They are no longer little children, but now they are children. I believe very quickly, in Acts 2 and beyond, they became fathers as the Apostle Paul became a father.

1 Corinthians 4:15 For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet *have ye* not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus **I have begotten you through the gospel.**

In the same manner, Peter and the apostles would soon beget the kingdom church throughout the early part of Acts.

Little children, then, as we see addressed in I John, are those in the last days who have forsaken all that they believed before and put their faith in the name of Jesus as their Christ. We'll discuss more about that as we go on.

What is Being Spoken About?

This is kind of where the rubber meets the road in the understanding of the book.

1 John 2:18-19 Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if

they had been of us, they would *no doubt* have continued with us: but *they went out*, **that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.**

This book mainly concerns manifesting, or making known, in the last days, who is teaching them truth and who is teaching them lies.

1 John 2:26 These *things* have I written unto you **concerning them that seduce you.**

Again, who are the seducers and who are the truth tellers.

And one note on this: When any political, philosophical or religious idea wants to take over a society, where do they always end up? In the schools and universities, because the children are always the most vulnerable to the seduction of lies.

And once someone totally believes a lie, what do they have to do to change their mind? Humble themselves and become as a little child to learn the truth.

1 John 3:10 In this **the children of God are manifest**, and **the children of the devil**: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother.

1 John 4:1 Beloved, **believe not every spirit**, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world.

The book of I John is written mainly to those believers of the twelve tribes of Israel who are called little children in the last times after the end of the dispensation of grace. The main subject matter is discerning who are the teachers of the truth and who are the teachers of a lie, those who would seduce them.

From that jumping off point and doctrine we will try to understand the epistle.