

AP 47

1, 2, and 3 John / ΙΩΑΝΝΟΥ ΕΠΙΣΤΟΛΗ / Epistle of John

The Epistles of John¹ were written to counter false teaching in the church. Throughout the NT epistles we see two streams of false teaching that plague the Church. The first stream is a push to return to Judaism - **Go Back!** The second stream is a push forward past the gospel into incipient Gnosticism – **You Haven't Come Far Enough!** The author offers three tests of teaching 1) The Ethical Test – Are these teachers living, or attempting to live, a godly lifestyle – walking in the Light? (chp 1, 2) The Theological Test - do these teachers proclaim Jesus as incarnate God, fully human, fully God? and 3) The Love/Agape Test?

Today our secular culture espouses a relativistic approach to truth. “There is no universal truth, or true truth.” “There are many gospels – find what works for you.” The author, however, believes in absolute truth. We know this truth by revelation, available in some form to all. This truth can be tested. Given our secular culture, this book may seem dated to you – to the point of obsolescence, or it may be super important to you and the church. All this depends on your view of truth. I view it as super important, but deep dives into belief are not in vogue today, maybe because our secular culture has decided theology doesn't matter. Another example of post-modern deconstruction.

1 John is mostly written in the first-person plural, “we”. A few of Paul's epistles reflect this style (2 Corinthians and 1 Thessalonians), but Paul typically prefers the first-person singular. This style is like a splinter you can't remove, because, we don't know, and never will know who the “we” refers to.

Sunday, Nov 14 1 John 1 - The Ethical Test

For Reflection: I often say, “If someone you know is being slandered, well look at the wake of the person in question - look at what they leave behind (their relational legacy). This seems to be what John is encouraging. “Are these teacher walking in the light?” Verses 8-9 are core verses that shape my daily rule (my trellis). They also make me think the false teachers were suggesting super elite sinless status, or that they presented themselves as above silly things like sin. *How often do you lean into the promise of verse 9? Daily, Weekly, Monthly, Annually?*

Lagniappe: Matthew 5:14-16, John 8:12

Monday, Nov 15 1 John 2 – The Ethical and Theological Test

¹ These epistles have no named author identified in the text. But, by the end of the 2 century, we know Irenaeus (and others) believed the author was John. 2 & 3 John had a harder time being accepted into the canon, especially in the East. In 2 and 3 John the author refers to himself or herself as the Elder.

For Reflection: We begin to suspect a conflict as we read this chapter – especially with its mention of antichrists and deceivers. How do people today deny Jesus is the Christ (the Redeemer/Deliverer/ Savior)? Verses 15-17 - Are your values shaped by the world or by faith?

Lagniappe: Luke 19:10

Tuesday, Nov 16

1 John 4 - The Theological and Love Test

For Reflection: *How do you test a teaching, or a teacher?*

Christians have a very specific understanding of love. *How does this chapter (particularly 7-21) deepen your understanding of Christian love?*

Lagniappe: John 13:33-35

Wednesday, Nov 17 1 John 5

For Reflection: It isn't often in scripture that you run across a summary definition of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but in 11-12 we have just that. Verse 13 declares the purpose of the epistle – belief and assurance. *When it comes to matters of faith, how do you react to the word assurance. In what sense can we "know that we have eternal life"?*

Lagniappe: John 10:27-28

Thursday, Nov 18 2 John

For Reflection: A second letter attributed to John. A very odd opening almost feels like the author is afraid to use real names. He is the elder, and he is writing to the elect lady. *What does it mean to abide in the teachings of Christ?*

Lagniappe: John 15:4

Friday, Nov 19 3 John

For Reflection: Both the 2 and 3 John are personal letters. 3 John is written to Gaius. Verse 4 - *What does it mean to walk in truth? Who can you encourage today?*

Lagniappe: 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Saturday, Nov 20 Jude

For Reflection: The situation seems like the one John focused on. People who disconnected faith and behavior, and people who wanted move on past Jesus to some greater truth. Verse 19 -

Division in the church is not a new development. I love the doxology at the end. *Verse 3 - What does it mean to contend for the faith? What has caused you to question your faith? Was it an experience or new teaching?*

Lagniappe: 2 Timothy 3:1-5