

# Johannine Writings: Session 3



## Last session:

- Overall structure of John  
(Book of Signs, Book of Passion)
- Who was John?
- Key theological concepts
  - Pre- existence
  - Incarnation
  - The I Ams

# This Week

- Key terms & themes in Jn
- Key conflicts (the situation)
- Whistlestop tour of 1,2 & 3 Jn
- So what?

# Key Terms

## Jesus as the Word (*Logos*)

- John 1:1 - Verse speaks of the creative and revelatory Word of God which is now incarnate in the person of Jesus
- Logos - We see both a Greek and Jewish influence behind this word
  - Greeks - Saw 'Logos' as the rational principle behind **all** things
  - Jews - Believed in the spoken word of Yahweh who created all things (Gen 1; Psalm 33:6)
- **Jesus as the word - What does this mean?**

# The Word cont...

- Both Greeks and Jews would have understood the importance of the Word of God
- The whole of the Old Testament points to the importance of the Word of God
  - Genesis - God spoke (Gen 1)
  - 'The Word of the Lord...' (Ex 9:20)
  - The Prophets spoke the Word of the Lord - (Jer 1:2)
- The Power of the Word in Scripture is dominant
- The Logos is the concept of the absolute / authoritative wisdom of God, and Jesus is seen as the oracle; the mouthpiece of this wisdom

# Key Terms cont.

## To Know (*ginosko/oida*)

- 'To Know' is used 45 times in John
- Jesus; the purpose of his incarnation was to make God known to all people (Jn 1:18)
- For John, knowledge is both **inner** and **spiritual**
- Has a depth to it, which is very different to the contemporary use of the phrase 'to know'
- Scripture links 'to know' with physical intimacy as in '*knowing*' someone biblically!!
- 'To know' is 'to experience'
- Jesus is seen as the one who 'knows' the Father better and more intimately than anyone else

## To Know cont.

- Many think they know, but in reality are a long way from actually knowing
- Here there is a stark contrast between Jesus and the Pharisees.

# Key Terms cont.

## Life (*zoe*)

- Can be linked in with Light (*phos*); a flow on effect!
- The connotation of darkness is death, so the flip side of this is that light is commonly associated with life
- Paul talks of the life available to us through Jesus - Romans 6:23
- Christ stated that he came so that we may have life and have it in abundance (Jn 10:10)
  - There is the offer of physical life (*bios*) - Lazarus (Jn 11:38-44)
  - New and improved life - (Jn 5:1-15)
  - And then the spiritual / eternal life (*zoe*) - Jn 3:16

## Life cont.

- God in essence *is* life, and so it is automatic to us when we believe.
- Life only comes to us when we have an intimate relationship with the living God

# Key Terms cont.

## Counsellor/Comforter (*advocate*)

- There are two problems:
  - Jesus was leaving the earth and
  - It would be a long time before He returns
- **What is the answer to the absent Christ?**
- The Holy Spirit as promised - Jn 16:7-11, 13-14
- John's treatment of the Spirit is unique - impossible to express the meaning in one English word
- He came as a comforter and helper
- Will give us the presence of Jesus even when we don't have him in the physical

# Key Terms cont.

## The Truth (*aletheia*)

- Jesus reveals the truth
- not only brings truth, is truth
- theme in prologue
  - “the true light” (1:9)
  - “grace & truth” (1:14, 17)
- contrast with “father of lies” (8:44)
- witnessed by Spirit of Truth (15:26)
- Climax:
  - “I am the way and the truth and the life”**  
(14:6a)

# Key Terms cont.

## Signs (*semia*)

- "Book of Signs"
  1. Water into wine (2:11)
  2. Heals official's son (4:54)
  3. Heals paralysed man (5:1-18)
  4. Feeds the multitude (6.14)
  5. Walks on water (6:26)
  6. Heals man born blind (9:16)
  7. Raises Lazarus (11:1-44, NB 11:47)
  
- *semia* is word used 6/7 times
- key tool used by John to deliver his message

# Key Terms cont.

## Witness/Testimony (*marturia*)

- Legal sense
- Jewish law: truth claim supported by 2/3 witnesses
  
- Witnesses in John:
  1. John the Baptist “witness to that light” (1:7)
  2. Scripture (5:39)
  3. Disciples (15:27)
  4. Samaritan woman “because of the woman’s testimony” (4:39b)
  5. The multitude (12:17)

# Witness cont.

6. Works of Jesus (5:36)

7. Spirit of Truth (15:26)

8. The Father (18:18)

9. Jesus himself "my testimony is valid" (8:14)

- John portrays Jesus as *the* truth
- Needs no witnesses but supplies over & above the legal requirement so that we don't miss the point

# Key Terms cont.

## To Believe (*pisteuo*)

- Important: how we receive Jesus  
“Yet...to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (1:12)

NB some scholars: pivotal point of prologue

- On a deeper level: not believing *in* but believing *into*
- Stated purpose of gospel  
“that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ...and that by believing you may have life in his name” (20:31)

# Key Terms cont.

## Exercise

- 3 more key terms/issues
- **Group 1:** 1:4-5,8,9; 3:19f; 8:12; 12:35-36
- **Group 2:** 2:1-10; 3:5-6; 4:13-14; 7:37-38; 9:7
- **Group 3:** 1:14; 2:20-21 / 5:39,46; 6:32 / 1:51 (cf Gen 28:10-13)
- **Group 4:** 2:13,23; 6:3-4; 11:55-56;13:1 / 6:43, 48-51)
- **Q1.** What is the key term/theme linking the passages?
- **Q2.** Sum up what John has to say about this and how this furthers the aims of his gospel

# Exercise cont.

## Group 1:

### Light/Dark

contrast is typical of John's writing  
typical of his contemporaries (Qumran)

## Group 2:

### Water

occurs in important contexts

## Group 3:

### Fulfilment of OT

Jesus as the tabernacle

Typology: One greater than Moses & Jacob

## Group 4:

### Fulfilment of OT

Jesus as new Passover

Jesus as living bread instead of manna

# Key Conflicts (the situation)

- The Gospel of John was written in a time of conflicting and opposing views and sects.
- Therefore the slant of what is written, is in order to combat these situations.
- There is a polemic quality to John's gospel.

# Key Conflicts cont.

## Polemics against Gnosticism

- John has long been recognised as addressing the issue of Gnosticism
- One of the earliest heresies to affect the church
- Concept of separating the physical and the spiritual
  - Physical/Material - regarded as inherently evil
  - Spiritual - believed to be inherently good
- Therefore - spiritual reality 'Word', could not be incarnate in a physical body.
- Docetism and Adoptionism
  - **Docetism** (*Dokeo*) - the Divine Word only appeared human - wasn't really

# Gnosticism cont.

- **Adoptionism** - This heresy held that the purely human person of Christ was adopted to become the Son of God but could not have existed before his earthly life.
- Therefore both heresies rejected the incarnation.
- In combats Gnosticism in the following ways:
  - Gives verses that exclude Docetism - 1:14; 6:53; 9:34. These speak of the physical nature of Christ
  - He states verses which support the divine nature of Christ - Jn 10:11; 5:36.

# Key Conflicts cont.

## Polemics against a John the Baptist sect

- John the Baptist sect - a stubborn group who follow John, but fail to realise that Jesus is the fulfilment of his claims.
- John points to Christ - 1:21-23; 3:27-30
- Jesus very clearly states that the only way to the Father is through himself - Jn 10:1-18; 14:6
- Jesus' unique claims surface explicitly throughout the gospel.

# Key Conflicts cont.

## Polemics against the Jews

- Should be polemics against the Jewish authorities - NOT individuals
- To break the notion of anti-Semitism
- Anti Jew statements - Jn 8:42-47
- Arguments against the 'anti-semitic' claims
  - Jesus himself was a Jew
  - Author more than likely a Jew
  - There were many Jews who believed the gospel and the inspired words of Christ

# 1 John

## Exercise: Structure of Letter

- Several options
- R.R. Jones *A Structural Analysis of 1 John* 1970  
based on nature of God
- Prologue, Epilogue and 3 main sections dealing with characteristics of God

# Exercise: Structure of Letter cont.

## Group 1:

**1:5-2:27**

- A. 1:5-2:2
- B. 2:12-17
- C. 2:12-17
- D. 2:18-27

## Group 2:

**2:28-4:6**

- A. 2:28-3:10
- B. 3:11-18
- C. 2:28-3:10
- D. 4:1-6

## Group 3:

**4:7-5:12**

- A. 4:7-21
- B. 5:1-12

**Q1.** What is the main characteristic of God?

**Q2.** Can you provide headings for the sub-sections?

# 1 John

## An Outline

### Prologue 1:1-4

#### 1. God is light 1:5-2:27

- A. Communion with God and confession of sin 1:5-2:2
- B. Communion with God and obedience 2:12-17
- C. Attitude towards the world 2:12-17
- D. Warning against the antichrists 2:18-27

#### 2. God is righteous 2:28-4:6

- A. The righteous children of God 2:28-3:10
- B. The righteous love of the children of God 3:11-18
- C. Confidence before God 3:19-24
- D. Warning against the spirit of antichrist 4:1-6

#### 3. God is love 4:7-21

- A. The nature of true *agape* (love)
- B. The cruciality of faith in Jesus 5:1-12

### Epilogue 5:13-21

# 1 John

## The Situation

- Internal evidence points to pastoral situation
- The problem: Heretical teachers
  - “antichrists” (2:18)
  - “those who are trying to lead you astray” (2:26)
  - “false prophets” (4:1)
- Have been unmasked and expelled but their influence remains

# The Situation cont.

- **Can deduce their claims**

"the man who says..." (2:4)    "If anyone says" (4:20)  
rhetorical questions (5:5)    (cf 1 Cor)

1. Boasting of knowledge and love of God but living a lie (1:6; 2:4; 4:20;)
2. Prided themselves on immunity from moral conduct (1:8,10)
3. Taught Gnostic Christology (4:2; 5:5)
4. False sense of superiority to God's commands and selfish behaviour (2:4; 3:10)

NB 2 & 4: Antinomianism (anti - the law)

# The Situation cont.

**John's answer:**

**2-fold rebuttal of false teaching**

**1. Assures them of identity as children of God (3:1,10)**

**2. Gives 3 tests of true salvation:**

**I. Test of faith**

proper faith believes Jesus was truly God *and* man (4:2-3)

# The Situation (John's answer cont.)

## II. Test of obedience

connection between faith and conduct

"No-one who lives in him keeps on sinning" (3:6a)

## III. Test of love

"Dear friends, let us love one another for love comes from God" (4:7)

exemplified by God

expressed by believers

sum of all commandments (cf Jn 13:34)

## 2 John

- **Appears to be brief abstract of 1 John**
- **Same material but shorter!**

(NB this amount of text is about how much would have fit on a sheet of papyrus at that time!)

- **The characters:**

“elect lady” the particular church it is written for  
the “children” its individual members

“children of your elect sister” members of Jns own  
church

- **Same themes: faith, obedience & love**
- **New element: ‘doctrine of Christ’**

# 3 John

- More intimate epistle
- Written to Gaius encouraging him to show hospitality to messengers of God
- Contains a word of rebuke for Diotrephes  
“who likes to put himself first” (v 9)  
denying John’s authority and refusing to entertain messengers of the truth

# Johannine Writings Session 3

## Conclusion: So What?

- Key terms & themes in Jn
- Key conflicts (the situation)
- Whistlestop tour of 1,2 & 3 Jn
- So what?

### Exercise:

- Q1. What have you learnt tonight that has particularly impacted you?
- Q2. How are you going to apply this to your own relationship with God?