

It's all about the Center

I John 1:1-2, CBC, Wednesday, September 10, 2025

vv. 1-4, From reading initial verses, already bunch of questions—who is this written to? Who wrote it? Once again, my head spun today (who is “the Elder”? 2 different Johns? Someone from the Johannine school of thought, each of apostles who started churches, took on flavor of founders; same person could not have written Revelation and Epistles, John the disciple wrote two of them, or perhaps the first draft of gospel of John); **Elder John separate?** “no patristic writer prior to Eusebius (writing ca. 300) proposed the existence of such a person” Yarbrough, p. 14; Yarbrough argues that Eusebius interpreted Papias in a way to get another John b/c needed him to write Revelation “since Eusebius under Origen’s influence had embraced amillenarianism, whereas the ante-Nicene church generally and Eusebius in his younger years understood Revelation in millenarian terms.” P. 14 but as summarize, comes back to what you already thought—I John seems to be written by John the Apostle (see Carson/Moo/Morris Intro pp. 229-254) **no ancient manuscripts of John’s Epistles do not bear his name, Yarbrough, p. 12; basic thought (internal evidence—parallel after parallel w gospel of John--John listed in Jn. 21:23-24 as author—same themes here), and writes as eyewitness; external evidence little shakier for II & III John, but all early church tradition attributes to John—ie. Irenaeus ties I & II John & Gospel of John to apostle John, Dionysius, Tertullian, etc.)**—pages and pages read, did not read, seems tied to Revelation and Gospel of John background—raised questions which needed to be answered—we are thousands of years separated from this and assume so much, yet important if life/calling/eternity based on this (some other countries die for believing more than here), but upheaval here on foundation of Word of God; **1. Be careful about throwing out what you’ve “always heard”** – this happens when lose trust in one or group of people where heard things **2. Examine slowly**—does no good to ignore—life is bound up in some of these studies—make a fool of gospel by holding to what don’t know & allow crazy heresies like DaVinci Code, etc. to rattle us b/c don’t have a clue; **(good start would be Carson, Moo, Morris) When write? who written to?** Must guess, John is said to have been pastor of church at Ephesus following fall of Jerusalem in AD70; date tied to Gospel of John, guess somewhere between 85-95 AD; while II & III John are clearly letter form, this one comes as more of a sermon, pamphlet, tract to specific group addressing similar problem (similar themes in II & III John helping to link them together—**II Jn. 12, III Jn. 14** speaks of getting around to them; though no specific group mentioned, personal (cf. 2:19 went out from us, uses I you we, calls them dear children/friends—he knows them and their situations Stott, Intro, familiar w churches around Ephesus as see in Revelation w 7 churches--**book not so much like we used to argument/sermon today—tight alliteration and forward motion, (remember some of sermons of Dr. Bob Jr. wandering – thought just old man, perhaps, but learned another style of rhetoric read some of sermons from past to see this—ie. Spurgeon); starting point is setting foundation (I Jn. 1:1-4), ends w purpose I Jn. 5:13—in b/n wanders on things important, circles back and covers them again —simple structure, Greek—I translated from this book in college/seminary b/c of this—NT uses 5437 words—epistles of John here use 303, Marshall, p. 2. Main theme: New English Bible titles I John “Recall to Fundamentals” Marshall, p. 1, or tests by which we can know if we are in Christ—start here and will have good skeleton to be filled out w rest of NT—especially helpful to reading gospel of John (deals w same issues—Jesus IS the Son of God—20:31); **written not so much to test to see whether they were saved, but pastorally to assure them that they were based on their profession that Jesus is the Son of God;** you can know fellowship with God through Jesus Christ 1:3-5; starts w nature of God ch. 1 no darkness at all, therefore no sin with fellowship w Him; only path to fellowship through atoning death of Christ, this leads not merely to fellowship, but to obeying commandments of God, right at front, to love one another; **so where was the the confusion?** Denial that Jesus was Christ, the Son of God, come in flesh—I Jn. 2:22, 4:2-3, 5:1,5, didn’t believe that His death was needed for forgiveness of sins 5:6-7, didn’t accept His commandments as binding 2:4—believed possible to live w/o sin 1:8, 10—thought they were 1:7 in light & fellowship w Him, seemed to have inside track—based their truth about God on spiritual revelations 2:20, 27, imagine—no guilt, just overcoming—knowledge of God and sinlessness, through emphasis on love of brethren, yet 2:9 did not love their brothers – the knowledge gave right to pull away, the sinlessness gave independence, confidence—freedom from needing cross – this book answers why all of these things were essential, foundational to Christian belief **II Jn. 9--what is this heresy?** Kruse, some speculation—ie. those who agreed w John, those who from Jewish backgrounds focused on law, probably developed into Ebionites—Jesus natural born prophet, not divine, then Hellenistic pagan background influenced by dualistic ideas (Gnostic) probably found difficult to accept full humanity of Christ—developed into Docetics, p. 21 seems closer to the docetics that Ignatius wrote against—died AD 107 p. 22—p. 23 claimed he suffered only in semblance, so didn’t suffer for our sins—some thought Holy Spirit came on at baptism, left at crucifixion—b/c God as spirit couldn’t suffer, etc. 5:6 confusing statement about water, blood, etc.; **Number of known strands, individuals****

representing them; Cerinthus 2nd century heretic against whom Irenaeus spoke—referred to Polycarp But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time,—a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth, than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the heretics. He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus caused many to turn away from the aforesaid heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles,—that, namely, which is handed down by the Church. There are also those who heard from him that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, “Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within.” And Polycarp himself replied to Marcion, who met him on one occasion, and said, “Dost thou know me?” “I do know thee, the first-born of Satan.” Such was the horror which the apostles and their disciples had against holding even verbal communication with any corrupters of the truth;¹ must recreate situation where these are fighting words b/r interpret universal principles for our context NOT fully developed so hard to make clear line b/n any of the heresies that came and this one though Ignatius writing against docetics seems closest, what should sober us when can’t trace group John dealing with to any one specific heretical group later? for sake of discussion, lump together, but different areas popular, different strands, different focuses—point was that these thoughts don’t just disappear, they keep surfacing, reappearing—don’t just bring tension—divide 2:19; breaking apart friends, co-laborers, families as these ideas become center of thought, mission, heart of identity in the gospel; but doesn’t end there; they kept seeking to spread their ideas back into the churches seeking to pull others away I Jn. 2:26, 4:1-3, II Jn. 7—talking about hurt, brokenness that doesn’t go away (ie. vacation—love churches visit—but brokenness—one trained, took off, took others with; another said most leaders left, then kept inviting to parties like nothing wrong; another relative talks about brokenness as pull apart)—created confusion among the believers who remained true to what the eyewitnesses had passed down as the gospel; “As a result of the confusion, these believers began to question whether they really knew God, whether they really were experiencing eternal life, and whether they were really in the truth.” Kruse pp. 2-3 what other results can you think of that arise from this kind of confusion? We so want to figure it out, find the error and get rid of it (reading about ways to deal w phones—far more subtle than just getting rid of them although NEED boundaries, but more than that—need central guide, purpose, focus) what exactly IS that purpose for you? Listen to Marshall writing about this “Links can be found with Paul’s opponents at Corinth, with Cerinthus, and with Ignatius’s opponents. It seems most likely that the opponents were Christians who felt that they had moved beyond the elementary stages of orthodox theology to a new position which called orthodox affirmations into question. They were like men kicking away the ladder on which they have climbed to the heights and leaving themselves without any visible means of support. Relying on their belief that they were inspired by the Spirit and claiming a direct knowledge of God, they thought that they no longer needed Jesus or his teaching. Under the influence of Docetism they argued against a real incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus, and probably adopted a view like that of Cerinthus or Basilides, that the Christ or Son of God inhabited Jesus only for a temporary period. Probably Weiss goes too far in saying that they attached no significance at all to Jesus; it is more likely that he had a nominal importance for them. On the whole, then, a combination of reliance on spiritual experiences and a Gnostic type of world-view led the opponents to a form of Christianity in which Jesus Christ no longer occupied a central position.” p. 21-22 how does Jesus lose the central position as Living Head in our lives, in the church specifically with our thoughts about God and life of service for Him?

John 21:23–24 Therefore this saying went out among the brethren that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but only, “If I want him to remain until I come, what is that to you?” 24 This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.