



CAPITOL COMMISSION

A Review To Date 1 John 1:1-9

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Given our long hiatus, let's review where we have been to date:

As the Session closed we had been spending time in what is known as The First Epistle of John.

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.⁴ And we are writing these things so that our^[a] joy may be complete.⁵ This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.⁶ If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.⁷ But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

I say, "what is known as", since none of these three small letters identify the Apostle John as the author. Tradition has afforded authorship to John based on some internal similarity of phrases, especially in Chapter 1 of the first epistle and what might be a quotation in chapter 4 from John's Gospel, chapter 1.

There is nothing in any of these three small epistles to suggest the audience John is focusing on, whether in the immediate area of Palestine or somewhere in Asia (Modern day Turkey).

Tradition says John pastored a congregation in Western Turkey (Asia), but we have no objective evidence of that fact, to date.

We have two other writings purportedly by John, 1) the **Gospel** (which does not explicitly declare John the author, though it may be implied in John 21:20-24), and 2) **The Revelation of Jesus Christ** which while naming John, notes him as "...his servant...", which might easily imply some other servant named John.

In any event, the early history of the church never displays a question as to the legitimacy of these three epistles nor, ultimately, of the Gospel though for centuries questions raged relative to the legitimacy of including **The Revelation of Jesus Christ** into the Canon. (And remember: the Canon is a development post-AD 70 and not definitively determined til the 4th Century)

We are proceeding on the basis of the church's longstanding acceptance of this epistle keeping an open mind as to authorship, audience, etc.

Time of writing

As study leader, I am personally persuaded this missive was penned in advance of 70 AD though the preponderance of scholarship through the ages has argued for a later date, i.e. 85-95 AD or later. Since the 18th century and up to this time, a growing number of scholars are persuaded of the early date and I have also been persuaded. Why do I hold to an earlier date?

None of the New Testament writings make mention of the most horrific experience in the life of the Jewish nation, on a par with their defeat and transportation of a significant portion of the populace to Babylon in 586 BC. At that time (586 BC), the first temple was destroyed and the impact of this on the national Psyche is well attested in the writings of the Prophets and during the Inter-Testamental period.

Surely, the destruction of Herod's Temple, the Second Temple, involving in excess of 45+ years of construction and considered a wonder of the world, would have made notice in Jewish-Christian contemporary writings.

BIBLE STUDIES

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Since early Christians were also Jews and many, ardent temple followers as evidenced in much of The Acts of The Apostles, it beggars the mind to think neither Peter or Paul, or even John would not have drawn attention to such a calamity. Especially so, given Jesus' denunciations.

The Jewish historian, Josephus, makes mention of this tragedy in both of his major works, written post AD 70; yet none of the NT writers make mention of the event. Ergo, my suggestion all of the NT literature was written pre-AD 70.

What Am I Suggesting/Implying?

Candidly, what has been referred to as *The Tyranny of the Paradigm*.

Up front, you know this as "don't confuse me with facts, I know the truth".

We see it all the time. I guess one would refer to this, politically, as an Ideology: but, it is a paradigm nonetheless. And it presses us, whether we like it or not, to wrest/twist facts to conform to our paradigm.

Forgive the comparison, but how about the ideology or paradigm of "Evolution". How many careers have been sacrificed/slaughtered on that stone? I could also cite other sacred cows.

What is true in politics is and has been true in the history of religion, or "The Faith". All of which to say, our study is and will be focused on what the text **says, means**, for the intended audience and the possible implications for believers, today.

The Author's Fundamental Concerns:

The author is focusing on two groups: 1) the secessionists and 2) the faithful. He seeks to identify the former while encouraging and establishing the latter.

The Secessionists: deny the son (2:23), deny that Jesus the Christ came in the flesh (4:7 [cf: 2 John 7]), and deny that Jesus is The Christ (2:22).

The Faithful: they believe Jesus is The Christ (5:1), that he came in the Flesh (4:2), the Jesus is the Son of God (1:3, 7,; 2:23; 3:8, 23; 4:9, 10; 5:11), and that Jesus came "by water and blood" (5:6).

The author's concern is not restricted to doctrine, but also to the ethical issues involved.

The Secessionists: say they are without sin and do not/have not sinned (1:8, 10); they say they know God yet walk in darkness (1:6), they say they know and love God yet hate their brother (3:, they say they are in the light but hate their fellow Christians (2:9, 11).

The Faithful: believe that to abide in God is to obey him (2:3, 4), that to love God is to love fellow believers and one's neighbor (3:10, 11), to abide in Jesus is to live like Jesus (2:6), and willful sins demonstrate one does not know God and reflects, instead, one's true spiritual heritage (3:8).

The author is not arguing against the secessionists, i.e. proving them wrong, but rather stating what the faithful in the community believe in contrast to that of the secessionists.

In conclusion

This epistle, though short, is a powerful resource for the believer and believing community irrespective of culture, reigning religious climate or political environment. Given this was penned in a climate of Henotheism, Monotheism, and Polytheism it will find applicability today.

As we continue through 1 John, we will seek to understand both the text and the times in which it was written and then seek to extrapolate that which is enduring and valuable for our times and circumstances remembering:

Psalm 33:11 The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.