



CAPITOL COMMISSION

In Conclusion (1 John 5:6-21)

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After a series of defeats from Dunkirk to Singapore, Churchill could finally tell the House of Commons that "we have a new experience. We have victory - a remarkable and definite victory...Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. but it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning..."

John is bringing his epistle to a close, summing up, while highlighting certain salient realities. For ease in remembering, I have taken the liberty of categorizing them under the Rubric of a Series of **Trinities**.

John recognizes the recipients of his epistle are among those who in fact, are experiencing not the ultimate end of history, though they are experiencing the end of the Old Covenant; but the end of the beginning of what God had designed.

Consider the impact of this reality: close onto a millennia and a half of unique and favored status as God's covenanted peoples. John is now suggesting this is simply the "end of the beginning" versus the "beginning of the end"? John had companied with Jesus during which time Jesus had sought to bring this peoples to repentance following centuries of infidelity. Finally, at the start of John the Baptizer's ministry the people are informed that "...the axe is already at the root..."².

Wow. Unbelievably difficult to conceive and embrace in that first century context.

They were, in fact, and to use Churchill's terms, experiencing "the end of the beginning"!

To be certain, this reality, following the death of the apostolic band and first century believers, is somewhat difficult to grasp. Two millennia have unfolded since this epistle was penned and the ideas of "what happened" still plague the saints around the world! We won't resolve it this morning, for certain, but let's at least make the attempt to set our minds in that first century context.

The recipients of John's epistles are experiencing the end of the beginning. The end of the Old Covenant, and the beginning of the New Covenant. They are experiencing the end of the beginning initiated by John The Baptizer close

onto 40 years earlier³ and alluded to on many occasions in Jesus teachings.

That this was recognized at the time is made clear in Jesus' teaching that final week in the temple area when the religious leadership confronted him and were subjected to a number of parables directed toward them⁴.

⁶This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷For there are three that testify: ⁸the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. ⁹If we receive the testimony of men, the testimony of God is greater; for the testimony of God is this, that He has testified concerning His Son. ¹⁰The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. ¹¹And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹²He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. ¹³These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. ¹⁶If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. ¹⁷All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death. ¹⁸We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. ¹⁹We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. ²⁰And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding so that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ This is the true God and eternal life. ²¹Little children, guard yourselves from idols.

It does not fall to John, nor to any other divinely inspired, apostolic writers to explicitly develop the doctrine of The Trinity. That there is an implicit trinity within the godhead is already evidenced in John's epistle (3:21-24 & 4:13-15).

In the good providence of God and under the reality of the New Covenant, this teaching is to be developed over the course of time and by virtue of saints in the New Covenant

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wrestling with the body of revelation provided by God, The Spirit.⁵ We will leave for later serious consideration the issue of The Trinity in The Deity.

For now, it seems reasonable to me to observe that John's concluding observations are somewhat easily organized under a series of trinities, a series of three observations under a general heading. The first of which is:

WITNESSES

Verses 6-10

Water (most probably, Jesus' baptism)

Blood (most probably Jesus' crucifixion)

Internal (the Spirit's witness to each individual who believes)

DESTINY

Verses 11-13

Source

Reception

Assurance

COMMUNICATION

Verses 14-17

Confidence

Content

Consequences

CERTAINTIES

Verses 18-20

We know that...there is victory over indwelling sin.

We know that...the world system lies in the lap of the wicked one.

We know that...God has come and given us understanding.

BOTTOM LINE SUMMARY

Verse 21

Whatever takes our focus off from God is biblically termed **Idolatry**.

John's small epistle is chock full of riches for our reflection and meditation. The Old Covenant came to an end in AD 70. The beginning of the end began when the angel announced to Zacariah that day in the Temple that Elizabeth was to have a son, to be named John and he was to be a forerunner of Messiah to come.⁶ God had announced to Malachi the sign of recognition regarding this end⁷ and John the Baptizer was that sign.

¹ The Lord Mayor's Luncheon, Mansion House, 10 November 1942

² Matthew 3:7

³ Matthew 3:7

⁴ Matthew 21:23-22:46

⁵ John 16:7-15

⁶ Luke 1:13-17

⁷ Malachi 4:5, 6