



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: 2 John

I. Incontrovertible Evidence for the Johannine Community

A. Of the 4 Gospels, only John has Incontrovertible Evidence of a Gospel Community

1. John's Letters (1, 2, 3 John) as Evidence

듂 John's 'Letters, especially 2 & 3 John, are incontrovertible evidence for the existence of the Johannine community.' [Thomas F. Johnson, 1, 2, & 3 John, p.]

듂 '1-3 John appear prima facie to be evidence for at least one [Johannine] community.' 'David Smith

듂 'Of the Gospels, only John has a closely related group of Epistles written to a network of house churches. That network뒾[is] the Johannine community in the broadest sense뒾[John's] Epistles are뒾 used to realize the Johannine vision more effectively within that broad community' [John Painter, 1, 2, 3, John, p. 75]

2. The Theory of 'Gospel Communities' behind the 4 Gospels

듂 'In recent decades, scholars of the NT have뒾 [attempted to discern] the communities behind particular NT texts, 뒾to reconstruct communities behind the [4] Gospels. They've constructed the communities behind the Gospel of John (the Johannine community), the Gospel of Matthew (the Matthean community), 뒾Mark (the Markan community), &뒾Luke (the Lukan community) 뒾Where is the evidence for these Gospel communities?' [Dwight Peterson, Origins of Mark, pp. 1-3]

3. Evidence Strong for a Johannine Community vs Weak for Synoptic Gospel Communities

듂 'It is critical to note that unlike the Synoptic Gospels, our knowledge of John's community is aided by the presence of 3 epistles bearing John's name (1, 2, 3 John). These letters are written in the same style뒾 as the Gospel. This means [evidence for] a Johannine community rests on a much more secure foundation than do the other theoretical gospel communities [e.g. Matthean community].' [Chris. W. Skinner, Reading John, p.]

듂 There are 'near-unanimous associations of John the Apostle & John the Elder with

Ephesus & the churches of Asia Minor from the 2nd through 4th centuries; Put bluntly, there is no sector of post-70 AD Christianity that is more broadly attested over the next 3 centuries [2nd to 4th centuries, 100-400 AD], in the entirety of ancient literature, than that Johannine Christianity was centered in Asia Minor, which must have involved communities of faith & leaders within them.' [Paul Anderson, 'On Biblical Forgeries & Imagined Communities,' Bible & Interpretation (April 2020) p.]

II. Author

A. An eyewitness ' 1 John 1:1-3

B. Calls himself 'the elder.' 2 John, 3 John

1. A description, not necessarily a position.

46274; 'The term 'elder' may not denote an official position in the church; in the NT where office is indicated, it is always a plural form (elders) that is used, not the singular (elder) as here. However, the fact that two such brief letters by the elder (2 John and 3 John) have been incorporated in the NT canon is strong evidence for the importance of the author, and possibly indicates that he was 'the principal authority' in his circle.' Colin G. Kruse, *The Letters of John*, pp. 223-224

C. Same author as the Fourth Gospel

46274; 'Although the issue of authorship will not likely ever be known with certainty, the author of these letters clearly claims to be a bearer of the apostolic teaching about Jesus that was based on eyewitness testimony about his public ministry, death, and resurrection. The relationship between the three letters and between them and the gospel... indicates that the same author likely wrote all three letters, and he was also either the author of the gospel or a close associate. These letters insist that this apostolic testimony trumps any reinterpretation of Jesus by those who were not commissioned by him and who were far removed from personal knowledge of him.' Karen H. Jobes, *1, 2, & 3 John*, p. 23

46274; 'Manuscript evidence is unanimous that someone named 'John' wrote this little treatise, which is consistently labeled the 'first' of his extant letters in titles found in ancient copies. But who is this 'John'? For a number of reasons, John the son of Zebedee, author of the Fourth Gospel, is the most likely candidate.

First, the style and vocabulary of John's Gospel and 1 John are so similar that a common author is extremely likely. This is particularly evident in the opening verses of the respective writings, but the language of the Gospel echoes across the whole epistle. For example, only verbal forms of 'believe' occur (about a hundred times) in John's Gospel; the noun 'faith' never appears. First John follows suit, with nine occurrences of a verbal form of 'believe' and just one use of the word 'faith' (5:4).

Second, major themes and emphases of the writings overlap. These include Christ's simultaneous full humanity and divinity, the close relationship between believing (faith, doctrine) and obeying God's commandments (ethics), and the primacy of love as marking authentic knowledge of the true God through trust in his Son.' *ESV Study Bible*

1. Words and ideas resemble those found in the Fourth Gospel

2. Early church fathers ascribe the same author to both the Fourth Gospel as the three letters

46274; 'A strong case can be made for identifying the author of all three letters as 'the disciple whom Jesus loved' (John 13:23; 21:7,20 cf. 19:26), who in turn may be identified as John, the son of Zebedee (Mark 1:19-20), the apostle and author of the Gospel of John. Supporting evidence for this identification includes: 1) the beloved disciple may, based on evidence within the Gospel of John and by process of elimination, be identified as the apostle John, 2) both the author of John's Gospel and the author of 1 John were eyewitnesses of Jesus' ministry (1:1-3); 3) words and ideas in 1, 2, 3 John resemble those found in John's Gospel (e.g. life and death, light and darkness, love and hate, truth and lies); 4) early church fathers, including, e.g. Irenaeus, Dionysius of Alexandria, and Tertullian, ascribe the authorship of both John's Gospel and 1 John unequivocally to John the disciple and apostle of the Lord.' *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*

D. Time of writing

46274; 'Most scholars feel comfortable with a final date [for John's Gospel] within the last decade

of the first-century (90-100 AD) [If] the Letters were written after the final composition of the Gospel as a reaction against misunderstandings about the Gospel, [then] the date of the composition of the Letters would be shortly after the Gospel ' between 95 and 100 AD. However, if the Letters predate the Gospel; the date may be earlier; [Jan van der Watt, Introduction to the Johannine Gospel & Letters, pp. 123-4]

'If we assume that John's gospel was written about AD 85-90 and that the letters followed after the gospel had been in circulation for some time, the letters probably date from about AD 90-95, making them perhaps the last books of the NT to have been written.' Karen H. Jobes, 1,2, & 3 John, p. 29

III. Recipients of the Letter

A. Member of churches in fellowship with the author (John)

B. Probably in the area around Ephesus

'Because 1 John lacks the normal opening greeting, there is no designation of those to whom the letter is addressed. However, a careful reading of the letter does allow us to say something about the readers as well as the way the author thought and felt about them. The readers appear to have been members of a number of churches in fellowship with the church of which the author was a member. They were encountering people who had seceded from the author's church, and who were propagating an aberrant form of the gospel (2:18-27).' Colin G. Kruse, The Letters of John, p. 15

'As John spent his later years in Ephesus in the Roman province of Asia, his letters were probably addressed to believers living in this region.' NIV Zondervan Study Bible

IV. Connections with the Gospel of John

Gospel of John	1 John
John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. John 1:14 The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.	1 John 1:1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have observed and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life
John 3:21 But anyone who lives by the truth comes to the light,	1 John 1:6 If we say, 'We have fellowship with him,' and yet we walk in darkness, we are lying and are not practicing the truth.
John 1:5 That light shines in the darkness, and yet the darkness did not overcome it.	1 John 2:8 ... because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.
John 8:12 Jesus spoke to them again: 'I am the light of the world. Anyone who follows me will never walk in the darkness but will have the light of life.'	1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light, and there is absolutely no darkness in him.
John 8:32 You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.	1 John 2:20 But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.
John 14:17 He is the Spirit of truth. The world is unable to receive him because it doesn't see him or know him. But you do know him, because he remains with you and will be in you.	1 John 4:6 We are from God. Anyone who knows God listens to us; anyone who is not from God does not listen to us. This is how we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deception.
John 15:12 'This is my command: Love one another as I have loved you.	1 John 3:23 Now this is his command: that we believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and love one

	another as he commanded us
John 20:31 But these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.	1 John 5:13 I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.
John 17:3 And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.	1 John 5:20 And 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. He is the true God and eternal life.

V. Understanding the letters in relation to John’s gospel

A. Reading John’s gospel helps to understand these letters.

B. Similar words and ideas can be found in both

C. However, they are not always equivalent

e.g. parakletos ' in the Gospel it refers to the Spirit (John 14:16); in 1 John it refers to Jesus Himself (1 John 2:1).

‘What all this means for interpreters of the letters is that they find themselves referring again and again to the Gospel to seek elucidation concerning words and ideas found in the letters, but when they do so, they must be careful, for often there is not a one-to-one equivalence of usage. Nevertheless, the Gospel remains a most important source of comparison for the exegesis of the letters.’ Colin G. Kruse, The Letters of John, p. 7

‘When the language and concepts of the Fourth Gospel are taken up and used in the letters, they are given a different spin in order to serve the purposes of the letters. One notable example of this is the way the word parakletos is used.... In the Gospel parakletos denotes the Holy Spirit, about whom Jesus gives teaching to prepare his disciples for their encounter with a hostile world after his departure....In the letters parakletos denotes, not the Holy Spirit but Jesus himself. In the letters Jesus as the parakletos has a role, not vis-À-vis the world and believers but vis-À-vis the Father on behalf of believers...’ Colin G. Kruse, The Letters of John, p. 6-7

VI. Background

A. Some believers have left the community (secessionists)

‘The view that ‘the secessionists of 1 Jn. are ‘ultra-Johannine’ Christians, or ‘Progressives’ [based on 2 Jn. 9: ‘Anyone who does not remain in Christ’s teaching but goes beyond it does not have God.’]. The theory holds that the secessionists were initially members of the Johannine Community & adherents to the Johannine tradition, which has been substantially preserved in the 4th Gospel. At some point the secessionists began to develop their interpretation of the Johannine tradition in a direction that put them at odds with the rest of the community & the rest of the [‘Great Church’]. As a result, the Johannine community split ‘the schism to which 1 John testifies. The central tenet of the ‘Ultra-Johannine’ theory is that the secessionists develop their theology out of the original Johannine tradition. That is, they did not arrive at their beliefs by way of an influx of ‘foreign teachings’ [e.g. proto-Gnosticism, Docetism, etc.] Thus, in order to understand [their] views, we must analyse how they develop from the 4th Gospel. Likewise, in order to understand 1 John, we must recognize that the author of 1 John is disputing the secessionist interpretation of the tradition & providing his own ‘conservative’ take on the message. He appeals back to the ‘beginning,’ perhaps to older strands of the Johannine tradition that received less emphasis in the 4th Gospel.’ [Daniel R. Streett, They Went Out from Us: Identity of the Opponents in 1 John, pp. 9-10]

B. There has been a distortion and or misunderstanding of the NT gospel
 &#-46274; 'It is clear from John's letters that he was arguing against some serious misunderstanding and distortion of the gospel. Given the likely setting in Ephesus and the likely date of the letters, the influence of Greek philosophical assumptions, perhaps combined with a misunderstanding of the promises of John's gospel, had produced beliefs that were, perhaps unwittingly, opposed to the gospel of Jesus Christ (i.e., they were 'anti-Christ' beliefs).' Karen H. Jobes, 1,2, & 3 John, p. 25
 &#-46274; 'As with every letter in the NT, we must infer the historical setting of John's letters and the reason they were written from the contents of the letters themselves, an innately subjective interpretive task that we undertake with little other information....The major themes of right belief about Jesus, a right attitude toward sin, and interpersonal relationships characterized by love are clear, but why the author has chosen to discuss these particular topics is not.' Karen H. Jobes, 1,2, & 3 John, p. 23

C. The conflict in John's letters is a Christian conflict not a conflict with the Jews as in John's gospel.
 &#-46274; 'The background to the Gospel is the conflict between Jesus and some of his unbelieving Jewish contemporaries (recorded possibly for its significance for Christians who now found themselves in conflict with members of local synagogues). The background to the letters, however, is a Christian conflict, a conflict between continuing members of the author's community and the secessionists.' Colin G. Kruse, The Letters of John, p. 6

D. John's letters are more pastoral than polemic
 &#-46274; 'The author writes with the intent of a pastor to care for his people rather than as an apologist to argue directly against those who have left the Johannine church(es). As Brooke wrote, 'It is probably true that the writer never loses sight altogether of the views of his opponents in any part of the Epistle. But it is important to emphasize the fact that, in spite of this, the real aim of the Epistle is not exclusively, or even primarily, polemical.' Karen H. Jobes, 1,2, & 3 John, p. 23
 &#-46274; Some scholars feel 1 Jn. is highly polemical
 &#-46274; '1 John is occasioned by, & thus determined by, a traumatic rending of the community over doctrine & praxis. R. Law is representative: 'There is no NT writing which is more vigorously polemical in its whole tone & aim'. [Daniel R. Streett, They Went Out from Us, p. 118]

VII. Purpose of the Letters

A. Warning about those who go beyond what was given at the beginning ' 2 John 9-10
 9 Anyone who does not remain in Christ's teaching but goes beyond it does not have God. The one who remains in that teaching, this one has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your home, and do not greet him;

B. Keeping the believers orthodox and rescuing them from confusion
 &#-46274; 'His concern was to shepherd those in his spiritual care to remain within the bounds of orthodoxy rather than to directly construct with specificity the problems being addressed.' Karen H. Jobes, 1,2, & 3 John, p. 24

&#-46274; 'Many believe that it doesn't matter what you believe about a higher power as long as you believe it sincerely. But can any and all religions be true ' everything from Eastern ideas about reincarnation to 'new age' spirituality to beliefs taught in the sacred synagogues, mosques, and temples across North America and around the world? John wrote these three brief letters in a spiritually confusing time when there were conflicting theologies about Jesus Christ in order to assure his readers of their eternal life after death because they truly knew God in Christ.' Karen H. Jobes, 1,2, & 3 John, p. 21

C. By knowing God
 &#-46274; 'Do you want to know God? Is the truth about God important to you? Knowing God truly is the overarching theme of both John's gospel and letters. In a world that was already filled with conflicting religions and philosophies, a world in that respect similar to our own, Jesus said, 'Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent' (John 17:3). Jesus defines eternal life as knowing God, for it is only through responding to God's self-

revelation to humankind that any of us can come to know him and enjoy life with him both now and throughout eternity. That's a pretty significant issue for every person in any place in history.' Karen H. Jobes, 1,2, & 3 John, p. 21

D. Giving Assurance regarding:

1. God's testimony about Jesus
2. living in truth
3. their relationship with fellow believers
4. the command to love
5. the Spirit's testimony to Christ

&#-46274; 'The author's primary aim in writing 1 John was to reassure his readers whose confidence had been shaken by the activities of the secessionists. Assurance, then, is a pervading theme in the letter, and the grounds of assurance that the author provides tend to be objective and ethical rather than subjective. The readers' assurance is to be grounded in God's testimony about his Son; their own godly living, loving action, and concern for fellow believers; their obedience to the love command; and the Spirit's testimony to Christ.' Colin G. Kruse, The Letters of John, p. 34