

THIS IS HOW WE KNOW: 1, 2, & 3 JOHN

1 JOHN 2:7-3:10

1 JOHN

TABLE TALK

- ▶ Introduce yourselves around the table.
- ▶ What lingering questions or observations do you have from last week's lesson?
- ▶ How would you summarize 1 John 1:1-2:6 in your own words?

1 JOHN

1 JOHN 2:7-11 - TABLE TALK

- ▶ Read the text in a few different translations
- ▶ What is the major theme of this section? How does it illuminate or explain what came before?
- ▶

1 JOHN 2:7

- ▶ "Beloved" - addressing the audience
- ▶ No "new commandment" but "old commandment" that you have had from the "beginning" (John 13:34; 15:12) - that is to say, they have received this commandment from Jesus through the Gospel
- ▶ John writes as if his readers are familiar with the Gospel of John
- ▶ Has the commandment of Jesus to "love one another" in mind, but assumes readers will know it
- ▶ 2:9-11 only make sense if they know that commandment of Jesus

EXCURSUS: LOVE IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

- ▶ Love for all, but focused on love between believers
- ▶ Focused on situation - a community facing hostility
- ▶ Opposition is so extreme that John calls them "antichrists" (2:18)
- ▶ John is galvanizing the community, encouraging them to be a witness to Christ through their love for one another

EXCURSUS: LOVE IN JOHN'S WRITINGS

- ▶ The definition of love is a key point in theological debate
- ▶ The cultural definition of love vs. the writer's intention
- ▶ We must be careful to use the words the way the author intended

1 JOHN 2:8

- ▶ "Yet I am writing you a new commandment..."
- ▶ The "old commandment" (from Jesus) can be called new because it belongs to the new age of God's reign that appeared with Jesus
- ▶ The passing away of the darkness, true light breaking in
- ▶ Notice again Johannine theme of light and dark
- ▶ Person who lives by the love commandment of Jesus is walking in the light of God's new creation; by contrast, all who refuse the light continue in darkness

1 JOHN 2:9-11

- ▶ Evidence of walking in light vs. darkness
- ▶ If one claims to walk in the light but "hates" a brother or sister, that person is still in darkness
- ▶ Clear meaning is that love involves action, not just thoughts or words
- ▶ By contrast, those who love brothers and sisters in Christ are walking in the light and have no cause to stumble (v. 10)
- ▶ Whoever hates, on the other hand, stumbles in darkness—they are blind (v. 11)
- ▶ Can't love other without first loving those closest to you!

1 JOHN 2:12-17

- ▶ Theme: hostility between God and the world
- ▶ Repeated clause: "I am writing to you because..."
- ▶ *hoti* - "because/that"
- ▶ Only those who have had their sins forgiven, who know Jesus and the Father, who have overcome the evil one, who are strong and have the word of God abiding in them, are able to refuse the love of the world

WHO IS JOHN ADDRESSING IN 2:12-14?

- ▶ Age groups?
- ▶ Church offices?
- ▶ Whole congregation? (children)
- ▶ Most likely different age groups in the congregation—exhorting them to use the knowledge and experience gained to resist the “love of the world” (v. 15)

1 JOHN 2:15-17

- ▶ A condemnation of worldliness
- ▶ What does John mean by “the world?”
 - ▶ v. 16 - desire of flesh, desire of eyes, pride in riches - these do not belong in God's new world, but are of the old world
 - ▶ The placing of things—material, mental, or spiritual—in the position of ultimate desire is condemned
 - ▶ Old world is passing away (v. 17), but those who “do the will of God” will live forever
 - ▶ Key question: the direction of desire and the will

1 JOHN 2:18-29

- ▶ Read this section at your table using several translations.
- ▶ How would you summarize the message?
- ▶ How does the message illumine or explain that which has come before?

1 JOHN 2:18-19

- ▶ "Children" = whole community
- ▶ Primary theme: eschatology - the present age is moving toward its climax as God and God's adversaries intervene in human life
- ▶ Appearance of "antichrists" signals arrival of "last hour" - not supernatural figures but schismatic Christians who have left the fellowship
- ▶ "belonged to us" = maintained same Christological convictions
- ▶ The "hour" has arrived - how does the community determine what is true?

A WARPED CHRISTOLOGY

- ▶ Docetism - Jesus only appeared to be human, but was not really
- ▶ Gnosticism - special "divine knowledge" (gnosis), material inferior to the spiritual, denial of the body, Jesus as wisdom sage but not world's only Savior, cross and resurrection as metaphors not necessarily historical events
- ▶ Wesley: antichrists are "all false teachers and enemies to the truth who seek to deceive other believers"

1 JOHN 2:20-21

- ▶ "But" (contrast) - anointed = work of the Holy Spirit
- ▶ "knowledge" comes from Spirit and from "truth"
- ▶ Adequacy of their knowledge has been called into question by the "antichrists"
- ▶ John reassures them that they have heard and believed the truth about Jesus, which John has been so diligent in teaching in both the Gospel and this homily

1 JOHN 2:22-23

- ▶ How to identify "antichrists"
 - ▶ the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ
 - ▶ the one who denies the Father and the Son
 - ▶ no one who denies the Son has the Father - confessing the Son includes the Father
- ▶ This is a doctrinal dispute!

THE NATURE OF THE DOCTRINAL DISPUTE

- ▶ What is at issue is the humanity of Christ - opponents do not confess
- ▶ They deny that *Jesus* was the Christ, which is also a denial that Jesus is the Son
- ▶ In effect, they deny that the man Jesus was truly the Christ, the Son of God
- ▶ Reversal of Gospel emphasis, where opposition stated that Jesus nothing more than human (20:30-31)
- ▶ Difficult to discern nature of opponent arguments in 1 John due to lack of detail.

1 JOHN 2:24-25

- ▶ John calls community back to what they heard "from the beginning"
- ▶ If that teaching "abides in you" then you will "abide in the Son and in the Father" - abiding leads to "eternal life"
- ▶ What about the Holy Spirit? Is the Spirit the means of "abiding?" (anointing)

1 JOHN 2:26-27

- ▶ John's argument focused on those who would deceive by presuming to teach another deceptive Christology and/or gospel
- ▶ But you don't need anyone to teach you, says John, because you have already received the "anointing from him" (baptism, catechesis, Holy Spirit)
- ▶ In other words, stick with what you have been taught from the beginning. Don't let false teachers lead you astray
- ▶ Anointing and teaching will help believers identify false teachers

THE MEANING OF "ABIDE"

- ▶ An important Johannine word (John 15)
- ▶ Greek - *meno* - "to continue in a certain state, to remain, stay, reside"
- ▶ As the Father "abides" in Christ so Christ "abides" in us via the Holy Spirit
- ▶ indwelling, connection, source
- ▶ Those who "abide" have "confidence" and assurance - not be put to shame

1 JOHN 2:28-29

- ▶ Abiding has an eschatological dimension
- ▶ Question is, to whom are you listening? Do you have confidence in Christ and in the teaching about him? If so, you will have nothing to be ashamed of at his coming.
- ▶ If you "know" he is righteous, those who do as he did evidence that they have been born of him (born from above, John 3)
- ▶ For John, the proof is always in the life of the believer!

TABLE TALK

- ▶ Why is John's teaching here so important?
- ▶ What false teachings do you hear about Jesus?
- ▶ Why are we so susceptible to the next new thing in theology?
- ▶ How do we "abide" in Christ?

1 JOHN 3:1-10

- ▶ Read the next section carefully using several translations
- ▶ What do you notice? What questions does it raise?
- ▶ How does this passage illumine or explain that which came before?

1 JOHN 3:1-3 - BECOMING CHILDREN OF GOD

- ▶ Themes of love of God and being children of God now taken up in detail
- ▶ Related to Gospel of John 1:12-13
- ▶ Result of the Father's love (v. 1) - a gift that we do nothing to merit
- ▶ World doesn't accept God's children because it didn't receive God or his Son (v. 1; John 1:10-11)
- ▶ We are God's children now, but still awaiting completion (perfection?) - v. 2
- ▶ We will "be like him" - perfected - physically/spiritually
- ▶ That hope purifies us as (Christ) is pure - v. 3

1 JOHN 3:4-10 - PURPOSE OF CHRIST'S REVELATION

- ▶ The basic problem - sin (lawlessness) - v. 4
- ▶ One who had no sin was revealed to take away sin - v. 5
- ▶ Sin and Jesus do not coexist - v. 6 - you must abide in one realm or the other
- ▶ Let no one deceive you (things are quite simple) - either be righteous as Christ is righteous, or sin and choose the lot of the devil - v. 7-8
- ▶ A conundrum - does 3:9 contradict what John has said in 1:8-10 & 2:1? "Do not sin, cannot sin" - how do we explain this?

JOHN WESLEY

- ▶ "It is plain, in fact, that those whom we cannot deny to have been truly born of God...nevertheless, not only could, but did, commit sin, even gross, outward sin. They transgress the plain, known laws of God, speaking or acting what they knew he had forbidden."
- ▶ Examples: David and Bathsheba, Peter at Antioch
- ▶ What Wesley means to say is that when one is truly abiding in faith and love and in the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving, one does not and indeed cannot commit sin. When one is out of that state or neglects it, sin is certainly possible if not probable.

IN OTHER WORDS...

"This work of Christ brings about the birth from God that is freedom from sin, but a freedom that must be ratified by continually willing and doing what is right, as John never tires of urging." - D. Moody Smith

- ▶ Children must continue to grow, to mature, to put away childish things. The more we grow as children of God, the more we cultivate our relationship with him, the less sin rules over us.

TABLE TALK

- ▶ How would you summarize John's argument in 2:7-3:10?
- ▶ How would you describe it to someone new to Christian faith?
- ▶ How do believers overcome sin, according to John?
- ▶ How do you identify false teaching versus the truth?

QUESTIONS?
