

The Epistles of John

Week 15: Introduction to 1 John

Introduction to 1 John

Things to discuss:

- Author
- Date
- Themes/Purpose
- Relationship to 2 John and 3 John
- Relationship to the Gospel of John
- Genre and Style

Relationship to the Gospel of John

John 1:1–5, 14 (ESV)

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Relationship to the Gospel of John

1 John 1:1–4 (ESV)

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— 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— 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. And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

Relationship to the Gospel of John

I John can be considered to be amplification of John 14-17a

B. H. Streeter observed, “The three Epistles and the Gospel of John are so closely allied in diction, style and general outlook that the burden of proof lies with the person who would deny their common authorship.”

Anyone reading the Gospel of John and the Letters of John can hardly help recognizing the similarities of language and concepts that exist between them

Relationship to the Gospel of John

The Epistles of John stand closer to the Gospel in style and content than do any other writings to one another in the New Testament

The close stylistic similarities are quite sufficient to outweigh the differences that have been discovered. For such reasons as these, critics are generally agreed that the linguistic differences between the Gospel and Epistles are certainly not adequate to bear the weight of proof of different authorship

1 John - Genre & Style

This document is not just an ordinary exhortation; it also is a problem-solving document, and it's going to use something known as *epideictic rhetoric*. Epideictic rhetoric is the rhetoric of praise and blame. The author is going to praise certain theological and ethical virtues, he's going to blame certain other kinds of vices that should not be practiced by Christians.

Epideictic rhetoric, which relates to attitudes and values, is intended to bring about a deepening and reaffirmation of values already held in the present.

1 John - Genre & Style

Epideictic Rhetoric - Praise and Blame

1 John 1:5–6 (ESV)

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. If we say we have fellowship with him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

1 John - Genre & Style

As a piece of epideictic rhetoric, 1 John, not surprisingly, lacks a clear structure. Instead it revisits the same themes over and over, each time amplifying them further. For this reason commentators have great difficulty describing the structure of this letter.

Few issues are more difficult in Johannine studies than the structure of 1 John. There are as many opinions as there are commentaries on the book.

1 John - Genre & Style

1 John is also going to use a rhetorical technique known as amplification. He will take certain key themes and repeat them over and over and over and over again, until the audience has them drummed into their head. Amplification is a rhetorical technique where you take an idea and you expand upon it, and you show how it's related to other key ideas like the idea of sin or truth or love

The point of amplification is to speak strongly, loudly, and in stark enough terms that you actually make a dent in the consciousness of the audience.

1 John - Genre & Style

Amplification - repetition and expansion

1 John 1:8–10 (ESV)

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

1 John - Genre & Style

One of the things we need to understand about amplification rhetoric is: **it's with the volume turned up.**

It's using black and white terms, and it's highly hyperbolic.

So when you're exegeting or interpreting 1 John, it's a mistake to try to compare the minutiae of one verse when it says one thing about sin—that if you're a believer you don't sin, while in another verse it seems to say that if you do, then you can have an advocate with the Father, that He'll take care of that. It's a mistake to analyze it as if it were a modern analytical scientific document.

Application for This Week

Once again we are looking at a letter written to a church or churches about a prevailing problem.

Our goal is to look at the heart of this pastor/elder/apostle and see what he is bringing to us that we can make use of today in our lives and in our church.

Homework

John McArthur has said that he reads each book of the Bible 30 times before he begins to study it in preparation for teaching it. I'd like us to all read 1 John chapter 1 just one time per day this coming week to prepare for next week.

Read one translation of 1 John chapter 1 each day this week. It takes less than 2 minutes. Go slowly and think about what is being said.

Write down any questions or things you'd like to discuss in class next week on the first page or email them to me.

Thank you for coming!

See you next week