

The Epistles of John

Week 1 - Introduction

The epistles of John are something of an enigma when considered together. Few books of the New Testament are more loved, memorized, or quoted than 1 John. On the other hand one is hard pressed to find any books of Scripture more ignored and taught less than 2 and 3 John.

Ben Witherington III

NT Authors

- Paul - Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
- John - Gospel of John, 1, 2 & 3 John, Revelation
- Luke - Gospel of Luke, Acts
- Matthew - Gospel of Matthew
- Mark - Gospel of Mark (sourced from Peter)
- Peter - 1 & 2 Peter
- James - James
- Jude - Jude

NT Authors

The different NT authors write in differing styles and vocabularies. These styles are based on:

- Personality
- Experiences
- Education

NT Authors

What do we know about these men?

- Paul
- John
- Luke
- Matthew
- Mark
- Peter
- James
- Jude

John

Almost always a part of the group of three disciples:
Peter, James and John

- At the transfiguration
- At the house of Jairus
- In the garden

With Peter

- The preparation of the Last Supper
- In Acts: healing the lame man and before the counsel

John

When John was with Peter, it was Peter who did the talking and preaching (Acts 3&4)

John was the brother of James

James and John were fisherman when Jesus called them to follow him

John was the last of the Apostles to die, and the only living Apostle after the deaths of Peter and Paul in the mid 60's. He likely lived into the 90's

According to church history, John lived out his last years in the city and church in Ephesus

The Epistles

What constituted an epistle (letter) in the first century?

- A greeting usually telling both who the letter is to and who the letter is from
- The main body
- A closing, often mentioning something personal

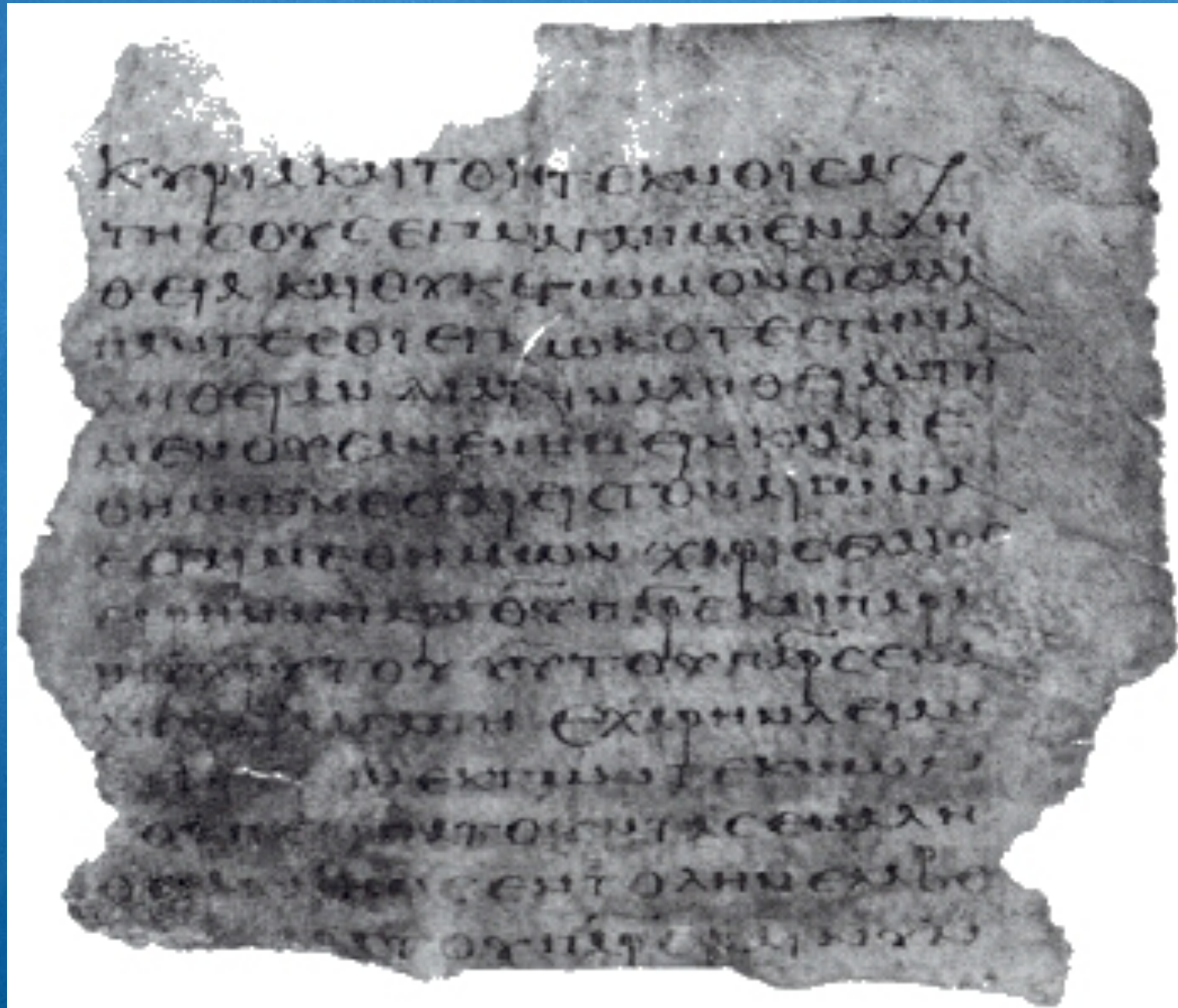
Of all the NT epistles, 1 John bears none of the opening or closing elements which would indicate it was an epistle. It bears more resemblance to a homily or sermon which may have accompanied an epistle, likely 2 John and/or 3 John.

The Epistles

Each of these three epistles show that they were written to address specific problems and issues.

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Actual Manuscript of 2 John 1-5



The Author Of The Epistles

Technically the author of these three epistles is anonymous. However, there is good reason to believe that the author was the Apostle John.

- The vocabulary and language of all three epistles is very similar to that of the Gospel of John
- The early church from the very beginning acknowledged 1 John to be written by the Apostle John
- 1 John parallels very closely the contents of John 14-17

The Author Of The Epistles

The author of 1 John claims to be an eyewitness of Christ

1 John 1:1-3 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.

Application for This Week

Think about the lives of each of those whom God used to write the New Testament.

- Each one had a different background, different education, different experiences.
 - Some did manual labor.
 - Some were highly educated.
 - One participated in murder
 - Some sinned boldly
 - Some were two faced

Homework

I'd like us to all read 2 John just one time per day this coming week to prepare for next week. Pay attention to three key ideas which we will see throughout all three epistles:

- Jesus is God's son, come in the flesh
- Truth
- Love

Read one translation of 2 John 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