

Johannine Studies

Lecture 9 Study Notes – April 1, 2008

1. **Ethics of John—love.** It is very simple that the ethic of the Gospel of John and the Letters of John is love. Simple and yet very profound. Profound in the sense that the ethics of love is not as easy to understand and practice as we might want to believe, especially with those who would oppose us. John, especially the Letters of John, deal with what love means in the practice of day-to-day living inside the Johannine community.

2. Let's look at references to love in John:

Love in reference to Jesus and God the father:

- a. John 5: 42 "I know that you do not have the love of God in you." The all-important test of discipleship is the love of God in us.
- b. John 8: 42 "IF God were your Father, you would love me..."
- c. John 14: 15-24 "loving Jesus means keeping his commandments."

Love in reference to one another:

- a. John 12:25 "those who love their life lose it..."
- b. John 13: 34 "a new commandment, that you love one another..." Very important in John's letters.
- c. John 13:35 "if you have love for one another."
- d. John 15: 12 "that you love one another as I love you."

Loving Jesus and Loving one another is one and the same:

- a. John 21: 15-17

Loving in John's Letters:

- a. 2:5, 15; 3:1, 10, 14, 16, 17, 18, 23; 4: 7,8,9,10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21; 5:2,3,
- b. 2 John 1: 1,3,5,6,
- c. 3 John 1: 1, 6

The Epistles of John

3. **Authorship.** 1, 2 and 3 John are attributed to John because of the similarities between them and the Fourth Gospel, but not until around three hundred years. Really, it could almost be anyone who was an elder (position of authority) in the Johannine community, or quite simply it could have been someone elderly in the community.

4. **Letter or what?** The latter two writings are obviously letters. 1 John does make several statements to the fact that he is writing to them, but 1 John doesn't fit the usual format of a written letter. Contrast 2, 3 John and Paul's letters to see how the letters of the New Testament day and times were written.

5. According to Kysar, "It is difficult to create an outline of 1 John, because it is nearly impossible to discern logical breaks in the flow of the discussion." Instead, "the document appears to be a series of loosely related admonitions and consolations, each written in rather rambling and almost stream-of-consciousness style" (page 167). It could have been bits and pieces of sermons passed on in loose fitting thematic format.

6. The heart of the concern of the material does seem to be a group of people who have left the community, either by choice or by necessity. The group that has left is causing a great deal of concern in the community by their leaving and the author makes considerable effort to say they were never about them or not even Christian for that matter (2: 18-19). In fact, he says that their going is another reason to believe that we are in the "last hour."

7. The elder likes to use some form of the Greek word “menet”—abide or remain, to console or encourage those left behind (see the following examples: 2: 6, 14, 24, 27, 28; 3:6, 9, 14,17, 24; 4: 13,15,16).
8. For those who left the community, most scholars believe that this is a group of Gnostics whom deny the humanity of Jesus in favor of a purely spiritual being. A thinking that they evidently feel excludes them from any moral law or responsibility.
9. His charges are the following:
 - a. They do not practice love, at least in relationship to the rest of the community (2: 9-11; 4: 20-21).
 - b. They deny the humanity of Jesus Christ (2:22; 4:2-3; 5: 5-6).
 - c. Allied with forces that are opposed to the church (2:15-16; 4: 5-6;
 - d. Are weapons of evil (3:8).
 - e. They are the antichrists of the last days (2: 18-23). In fact, anyone who does not believe that Jesus is the Christ is an anti-christ (vs. 22).
 - f. Guilty of mortal sin (5:16) even though they claim to free of sin (1: 6-10; 3: 3-6).
 - g. Live without moral restrictions (3: 4-10).
10. Even though the structure of the writing is hard to outline, there are five themes that John presents to us.
 - a. Fleshly humanity of Jesus Christ (1 John 4:2).
 - b. Saving work of Jesus Christ (1 John 1: 7b,9; 2:2, 3:5; 4:10).
 - c. Understanding of sin (1 John 1:8, 10; 3:4, 8, 9; 5: 16-17).
 - d. Importance of moral living (1 John 1:7; 2:3, 4,6,24; 3: 7, 14; 4: 5,7,16).
 - e. The Last days (1 John 2: 18, 28; 3:2; 4:17).