

ST ARMANDS KEY LUTHERAN CHURCH
SARASOTA, FLORIDA

COME, JOIN THE CONVERSATION!
ON
THE EPISTLES OF JOHN

Lesson Plan for Thursday – March 6, 2014

CONVERSATION #5 – “Truth and Error”
I JOHN 2:18-27

Our objectives for this session:

- to share ideas, attitudes, and experiences relating to the message proclaimed by John; and, in doing so, strengthen our SAKLC fellowship;
- to finish consideration of the Apostle’s teachings on “Love and Obedience”
- to discuss John’s teachings on the “anti-Christ,” “the Last Times” and “Separation from the Church”
- to examine heresy in the early church, and its consequence
- to look at the contemporary church in light of all of the above

AN OPENING PASTORAL PRAYER -

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

2 items held over from our last session

1) THE THREE GROUPS whom John was addressing on the matters of ‘Love’ and ‘Obedience’ –
I JOHN 2:12-14:

¹² Little children, I’m writing to you because your sins have been forgiven through Jesus’ name. ¹³ Parents, I’m writing to you because you have known the one who has existed from the beginning. Young people, I’m writing to you because you have conquered the evil one.

¹⁴ Little children, I write to you because you know the Father. Parents, I write to you because you have known the one who has existed from the beginning. Young people, I write to you because you are strong, the word of God remains in you, and you have conquered the evil one. [COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE]

¹² I am writing to you, little children, because for His name’s sake your sins are forgiven [pardoned through His name and on account of confessing His name]. ¹³ I am writing to you, fathers, because you have come to know (recognize, be aware of, and understand) Him Who [has existed] from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have been

victorious over the wicked [one]. I write to you, ^[a]boys (lads), because you have come to know (recognize and be aware) of the Father. ¹⁴I write to you, fathers, because you have come to know (recognize, be conscious of, and understand) **Him Who [has existed] from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong and vigorous, and the Word of God is [always] abiding in you (in your hearts), and you have been victorious over the wicked one.** [THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE]

1. John used the metaphor of physical development to help his readers understand spiritual development. He presented the idea of **little children, young men** and **fathers** as the three levels of Christian maturity, rather than as age-groups. Thus all people were included, no matter where they were/are in their relationship with the world and with the Lord.
2. Some biblical commentators feel that John wrote this epistle to enable his readers to determine whether, or not, they were true believers. They say that the questions John raises throughout the epistle were '**tests**' of the presence of spiritual life. Your facilitator sees no evidence that John was writing to test his readers' salvation. Rather, John said he was writing to them because they were genuine believers. John presented **tests of fellowship** rather than tests of the presence of spiritual life.
3. In many cases spiritual maturity is related to age. The "**fathers**" have enjoyed fellowship with God through Christ for a long time and are mature in the faith. The "**young men**" are growing in grace and knowledge and ready to assume positions of leadership; the "**children**" are young in the faith and need careful guidance and teaching.

FOR DISCUSSION:

1. What does it mean to overcome (*conquer*) the evil one, and how does one do it?
2. John states that "the young men" have defeated the devil (*verse 14*). Since the devil still tempts us, what does this mean?
3. In formulating answers to questions #1 & #2, you may want to give particular attention to the account of the temptation of Jesus (***Matthew 4:1-11***) and St. Paul's description of a Christian's armor (***Ephesians 6:1-17***).

2) "THE WORLD" – I JOHN 2:15–17

¹⁵***Don't love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in them.*** ¹⁶***Everything that is in the world—the craving for whatever the body feels, the craving for whatever the eyes see and the arrogant pride in one's possessions—is not of the Father but is of the world.*** ¹⁷***And the world and its cravings are passing away, but the person who does the will of God remains forever.*** [COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE]

¹⁵ **Do not love or cherish the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him.** ¹⁶ **For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh [craving for sensual gratification] and the lust of the eyes [greedy longings of the mind] and the pride of life [assurance in one’s own resources or in the stability of earthly things]—these do not come from the Father but are from the world [itself].** ¹⁷ **And the world passes away and disappears, and with it the forbidden cravings (the passionate desires, the lust) of it; but he who does the will of God and carries out His purposes in his life abides (remains) forever.** [THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE]

1. The word **“world”** (in Greek, **KOSMOS**) has at least 3 meanings in John’s writings. Sometimes it refers to the **planet earth**; the physical world.
2. More often, it means humankind, the **human race**, created by God, and redeemed by the Son. See John 3:16–17 and 1 John 2:2. (*Usually in John’s writing “world” signifies mankind organized in rebellion against God.*)
3. In still other places it refers to **human culture as influenced by Satan**; the power of sin working in the human race and in the structures of society. See John 15:18; 17:14; and 1 John 3:1. This is the godless world in which “lust” is prominent. Sin is deeply embedded in the hearts and souls of human beings, as Jesus taught in Mark 7:20–23.
4. In this particular section of I John, it is the godless world which is in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19). At the end of the age this godless world will be judged and destroyed by Christ at his Second Coming.
5. In this passage, John presents 3 contrasting pairs of ideas regarding love and its relationship to the world:
 - v. 15 **Love of the world** **Love of the Father**
 - v. 16 **comes from the world** **comes from the Father**
 - v. 17 **the world passes away** **the one who obeys God remains forever**
6. John talks about fundamental sin as standing in opposition to the Father’s love.
 - a. Lust (*of eyes and craving of the flesh*)
 - b. Pride
 - c. How are these related?
 - d. When did we first see this sin in the Bible?
7. The **“if”** in vs. 15 is a 3rd class condition and shows that John assumes that believers will do this. That means, it is possible for us not to love this world; but, it does not mean it is easy. Also, we should note that this is a rather stern command given directly to the loyal members of John’s church. Some believers might find it difficult to stop loving the things of the world; others might think that they have. Both should listen carefully to John’s message. John talks about fundamental sin as standing in opposition to the Father’s love.

8. Resisting the appeal of the world is difficult for every believer. John urged his readers in view of its attractiveness to understand the avenues of its temptation and to remember four things:
- a. ... Love for the world indicates lack of love for God (v. 15).
 - b. ... it results in consequences that are not what our loving heavenly Father desires for our welfare (vs. 17)
 - c. ... it lasts only a short time (v. 17)
 - d. ... it precludes intimate fellowship with God (v. 15).

FOR DISCUSSION: What are some modern-day examples of the contrast between the world's love and Christian love?

TRUTH and ERROR I JOHN 2:18-27

A) I John 2:18–21 - The Enemies of Christ

¹⁸ *Little children, it is the last hour. Just as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. This is how we know it is the last hour.* ¹⁹ *They went out from us, but they were not really part of us. If they had been part of us, they would have stayed with us. But by going out from us, they showed they all are not part of us.* ²⁰ *But you have an anointing from the holy one, and all of you know the truth.* ²¹ *I don't write to you because you don't know the truth but because you know it. You know that no lie comes from the truth.* [COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE]

¹⁸ *Boys (lads), it is the last time (hour, the end of this age). And as you have heard that the antichrist [he who will oppose Christ in the guise of Christ] is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen, which confirms our belief that it is the final (the end) time.* ¹⁹ *They went out from our number, but they did not [really] belong to us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us. But [they withdrew] that it might be plain that they all are not of us.* ²⁰ *But you have been anointed by [you hold a sacred appointment from, you have been given an unction from] the Holy One, and you all know [the Truth] or you know all things.* ²¹ *I write to you not because you are ignorant and do not perceive and know the Truth, but because you do perceive and know it, and [know positively] that nothing false (no deception, no lie) is of the Truth.* [THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE]

1. **The word "ANTICHRIST"** (*enemy of Christ*) found only in John's letters: I John 2:18, 22; 4:3; II John 7. However, the same idea (*if not the exact word*) is also found in II Thessalonians 2:1-12.
 - a) at the end of the age, before the Second Coming, there will appear an obvious opponent of Christ
 - b) what form this antichrist will take is not clear

- c) before this the churches were plagued with antichrists, human teachers identified as false prophets (see Mark 13:22 – ***“False christs and false prophets will appear, and they will offer signs and wonders in order to deceive, if possible, those whom God has chosen.”***)
- d) For John, the ‘battleground’ is in the human mind. The spirit of anti-Christ was struggling with the Spirit of God for the possession of men’s minds. (*WHAT MAKES THIS SO SIGNIFICANT IS THAT WE CAN SEE THIS PROCESS AT WORK TODAY!*)
- e) The antichrists or false teachers do not possess the Holy Spirit; true Christians have the gift of that spirit. (See Paul in ***II Corinthians 1:21-22 - God is the one who establishes us with you in Christ and who anointed us. ²² God also sealed us and gave the Spirit as a down payment in our hearts.***)

2. **“The Last Time (Hour)”** –

- a) Christians always live as though it were *“3 minutes to midnight”*; never knowing when the events connected with *“the End”* will begin. – this is a phrase often used in the Bible; it does not always have the same meaning:
- b) Genesis 49:1 – Jacob, before his death, assembles his sons in order to tell them what will befall them in the *“last days”*
- c) Numbers 24:14 – The days prior to Israel’s entrance into the Promised Land
- d) Isaiah 2:2 – The prophet Isaiah dreamed that in the *“last days”* the mountains of the Lord will be established in the top of the mountains ... and, all nations would flow to it
- e) The *“Last Time”* does not mean a time of annihilation – a time when everything as we know it – will cease to exist!
- f) In biblical thought the *“last time”* is the end of one age and the start of another; not a time of complete destruction, but a time of re-creation; not a time of extinction, but a time of consummation.
- g) John message has urgency about it. If it were a matter of total obliteration, nothing could be done; but it is a matter of re-creation – Whether or not one enters into the new world depends upon whether he/she has given his/her life to Christ!

3. **Separation from the Church:**

- a) false teachers had departed the Church voluntarily
- b) they were not excommunicated
- c) likely that these were GNOSTICS – people who claimed that they had special advanced knowledge not open to ‘ordinary’ Christians
- d) yet, vs. 20 reminds us that they all have knowledge
- e) elsewhere in the N.T., St. Paul provides multiple reminders that in matters of faith the humblest Christian need feel no inferiority to the most learned scholar!
- f) John writes not because they were ignorant of the truth, but because they did know it! It was not ‘new’ truth that was required; but, practicing the truth already received!

B) I JOHN 2:22-23 THE NATURE OF THE HERESY (a.k.a. “*THE BIGGEST LIE*”)

“Who is the liar? Isn’t it the person who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This person is the antichrist: the one who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Everyone who denies the Son does not have the Father, but the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.” {COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE]

²² ***Who is [such a] liar as he who denies that Jesus is the Christ (the Messiah)? He is the antichrist (the antagonist of Christ), who [^b]habitually denies and refuses to acknowledge the Father and the Son.²³ No one who [^c]habitually denies (disowns) the Son [^d]even has the Father. Whoever confesses (acknowledges and has) the Son has the Father also.*** [THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE]

1. remember that the heresy John is addressing is a fundamental misunderstanding of the nature and work of Jesus Christ; John is dealing on the one hand with Judaism and its disregard for the divinity of Christ, and on the other hand Gnosticism and its disregard for the humanity of Christ.
2. those who had left the church had denied that Jesus was the Messiah (*the Christ*).
3. they denied that Jesus was a genuine man, for they held to the position that flesh is an evil substance.
4. they denied the Incarnation – namely, that the eternal Son of God took upon himself a full humanity and lived a fully human life on earth.
5. to deny Jesus is, indeed, the biggest of all lies; for, to deny him is to be separated from God – to lose entirely the faith and the knowledge which He alone makes possible!
6. only the Son of God in human flesh can truly reveal The Father to us:
 - a. **John 12:44-45 - Jesus shouted, “Whoever believes in me doesn’t believe in me but in the one who sent me. ⁴⁵ Whoever sees me sees the one who sent me.**
 - b. **John 14:9 Jesus replied, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been with you all this time? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’?”**
 - c. **John 1: 18 - No one has ever seen God. * God the only Son, who is at the Father’s side, has made God known.**
7. only the Son of God as Man can reconcile us to the Father:
 - a. **John 14:6 - Jesus answered, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.**
 - b. **I Timothy 2:5 - There is one God and one mediator between God and humanity, the human Christ Jesus**

FOR CONVERSATION and some ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: The process of division and separation continues within the modern church ‘*visible.*’ There always seem to be those who call for division and who leave for many reasons. Yet, at the same time, the process of unity and communion in love is always operating within the church ‘*invisible.*’

1. In our present 21st century world, whom or what do you regard as antichrist?
2. Is the antichrist usually inside the church or outside, or just on the edge/circumference?

C) PROTECTION AGAINST HERESY – I JOHN 2:24-27

²⁴ As for you, what you heard from the beginning must remain in you. If what you heard from the beginning remains in you, you will also remain in relationship to the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ This is the promise that he himself gave us: eternal life. ²⁶ I write these things to you about those who are attempting to deceive you. ²⁷ As for you, the anointing that you received from him remains on you, and you don't need anyone to teach you the truth. But since his anointing teaches you about all things (it's true and not a lie), remain in relationship to him just as he taught you. [COMMON ENGLISH BIBLE]

²⁴ As for you, keep in your hearts what you have heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the first dwells and remains in you, then you will dwell in the Son and in the Father [always]. ²⁵ And this is what He Himself has promised us—the life, the eternal [life]. ²⁶ I write this to you with reference to those who would deceive you [seduce and lead you astray]. ²⁷ But as for you, the anointing (the sacred appointment, the unction) which you received from Him abides [^epermanently] in you; [so] then you have no need that anyone should instruct you. But just as His anointing teaches you concerning everything and is true and is no falsehood, so you must abide in (live in, never depart from) Him [being ^frooted in Him, knit to Him], just as [His anointing] he has taught you [to do]. [THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE]

1. Two divine realities must live in the hearts and souls of Christians to keep them in the narrow way (**Matthew 7:13-14**) - ¹³ ***“Go in through the narrow gate. The gate that leads to destruction is broad and the road wide, so many people enter through it. ¹⁴ But the gate that leads to life is narrow and the road difficult, so few people find it.***
 - a) The first is the message of the gospel by which comes eternal life (vss.24-25); a temptation is to abandon this message in the face of the latest novelty; consider St. Paul in **2 Timothy 4:3** ³ ***There will come a time when people will not tolerate sound teaching. They will collect teachers who say what they want to hear because they are self-centered.***
 - b) The second reality is the presence and power of the Holy Spirit – see **Jeremiah 31:34** - ³⁴ ***They will no longer need to teach each other to say, “Know the LORD!” because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD; for I will forgive their wrongdoing and never again remember their sins. also see I Thessalonians 4:9 - You don't need us to write about loving your brothers and sisters because God has already taught you to love each other.***

- c) The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth because God is truth (see **John 17:3**) -
³ ***This is eternal life: to know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent.*** and, Jesus Christ is truth (see **John 14:6**) ⁶ ***Jesus answered, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.***

2. "Anointing" (vs. 27)

- a) a special privilege
- i. in O. T. times, it had been the privilege of the chosen few: priests, prophets, kings
 - ii. in N. T. times, it was the privilege of every Christian, no matter how humble
- b) The High Priest was called '*The Anointed One*' but Jesus was the *Supremely Anointed One*, by the action of The Holy Spirit
- c) False teachers were claiming they had a different and distinctive anointing which gave them a special knowledge of God
- d) John's claim is that baptism is the only required ceremony to come into relationship with God; by the time of Tertullian (an early church father c. 160-225 AD) it was standard practice to anoint Christians with holy oil at baptism
- e) In Greek, it is also possible to read the anointing which a Christian receives as *the instruction in the faith which a Christian receives when she/he enters the church* (i.e. – the Christian is anointed with the true knowledge of the faith and the Christian way of life.)
- f) John's teaching is that if a man/woman abides in the truth in which he/she has been taught, and if he/she brings the test of the Holy Spirit to all truth, he/she will be enabled to accept only the truth, and reject every lie, and so forever abide in Christ!

FOR FURTHER CONVERSATION and some ADDITIONAL THOUGHT:

1. Thinking specifically of I John 2:24, what exactly is the message (*in common language*) of the Gospel that Christians are to keep and cherish in their hearts?
2. If the Holy Spirit is in us and is our teacher (I John 2:20 & 27), do we really need human teachers in order to understand the Bible and grow in grace?