

1 John 1:1 - 2:2

Introduction.

- A. Written by the Apostle John.
- B. Date: approximately A.D. 80 - 90.
- C. From Ephesus to a circle of churches in Asia Minor.
- D. Purpose.
 - 1. To give assurance of salvation to confused believers.
 - 2. To combat the rise of Gnosticism.
 - a. Dualism (matter-spirit; cf Ac. 17:32).
 - b. Illumination.
 - i. Knowing certain secrets brings salvation.
 - ii. Only the initiated were “in the light.”
 - c. Rejection of the incarnation.
 - i. Docetism (from Gr. word “to appear”): Christ only appeared to be human; he was a phantom playing a human role.
 - ii. Cerinthianism (from Cerinthus, assoc. with Ephesus in the late first century): Jesus was an ordinary human upon whom the Logos of God descended at his baptism and which was removed just before the crucifixion.

I. Prologue (1:1-4).

- A. Main topic -- the Word of Life.
 - 1. Logos -- rational, articulate utterance of thought.
 - 2. Clear to all; not a secret to be discovered.
- B. Historical manifestation of the Word.
 - 1. In ancient times, the testimony of two senses authenticated a witness.
 - 2. The experience of the apostles.
 - a. Heard -- ordinary perception.
 - b. Saw -- physical act of seeing.
 - c. Looked at -- intentional perception.
 - d. Handled -- examined closely.
 - 3. John is emphasizing the historicity and actuality of the Word.
 - 4. The Gospel, personified in Jesus, the living Word.
- C. This manifestation of the Word leads to proclamation of the Word.
- D. Purpose:
 - 1. Fellowship with Father & Son and with other believers.
 - 2. Joy.
 - a. Only possible through Jesus Christ.
 - b. It is not complete if not shared by all believers.

II. God is light (5).

- A. Stresses the holiness of God.
- B. Expressed both positively and negatively for emphasis.

III. Denial that sin breaks fellowship with God. (6-7).

- A. The false claim: we can be righteous with doing righteousness.
 - 1. Walk = way of life (continuous).
 - 2. A libertine spirit (cf. the Corinthian believers).
- B. John's accusation: lying and not living in the truth.
 - 1. To practice evil is to be in a place where God is not.
 - 2. Practical living demonstrates our relationship with God.
- C. The answer: walk in the light (present continuous tense).
 - 1. Fellowship.
 - 2. Continuous cleansing.

IV. Denial that sin exists in us now (8-9).

- A. The false claim: sinless perfection (Gnostic dualism).
- B. John's accusation: self-deceived and the truth is not in us.
 - 1. Behind the outward lie of verse 6 is this internal lie.
 - 2. Truth is God's absolute standard.
- C. The answer: confession.
 - 1. Present tense: keep on confessing.
 - 2. Results.
 - a. Forgiveness.
 - b. Cleansing.

V. Denial that sin ever had a claim on us (10 - 2:2).

- A. The false claim: never sinned (perfect tense).
- B. John's accusation: we are calling God a liar (cf. Ro.3:23).
- C. The answer: face the facts.
 - 1. Our goal must be sinlessness.
 - a. We must not simply give up.
 - b. We must not presume on God's forgiveness and sin lightly.
 - c. We sin because we choose to sin.
 - 2. When we sin, we have an advocate with the Father.
 - a. He satisfies God's righteous demands.
 - b. He paid for all our sins.
 - c. He paid for the sins of the world.