

## The First Epistle of John

...so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1John 1:3)

1John 5:19-21

### Review

Where is John writing from?

What heresy was he addressing?

What flavor of Gnosticism was John specifically dealing with?

What did the heretics teach?

How does John deal with this false teaching?

1John 1:6-10

Someone read vv5:13-17

Someone read vv5:18-21

We wrapped up last time discussing whether “this” (Greek *houtos*) most logically referred to the Father or Christ. I tried to make the case that the phrase “eternal life” most often “predicated” of the Son.

### 5. *grammar*

- a. the part of a sentence in which something is asserted or denied of the subject of a sentence

This doesn't necessarily mean that “eternal life” is a person, although it's clear to me (at least) that it refers to Jesus Christ in 1:2, despite the fact it's not capitalized (interestingly, FF Bruce capitalizes it in his own translation from the Greek). It *does* mean that eternal life as a state of being is attributed to God's Son far more often than it is to the Father (and in Jn 17:3 and 1Jn 5:11, both Father and Son are the givers of life eternal).

Verses used: 1:2, 2:25, 3:15; 5:11; 5:13; 5:20

Thus, I conclude that it refers to Jesus Christ in 5:20 as well. Of course, all members of the Trinity are involved in granting eternal life, and all can be said to be The True God.

Read the last verse a second time.

“Little Children” = Greek *teknia*

Why does John address his readers in this way?

A tender term of endearment

He also may wish to comfort them from the dangers surrounding them

The word rendered “guard” (or ‘keep’ in the NIV) is defined by Thayer as:

2a) to avoid, shun flee from

2b) to guard for one’s self (i.e. for one’s safety’s sake) so as not to violate, i.e. to keep, observe  
(the precepts of the Mosaic law)

The Greek tenses signify “effectively keeping YOURSELVES” – it highlights their personal responsibility in assuring their security (For God’s sovereign ability to keep His own, see v18). God works in and through the efforts of his people in guarding them from harm.

The next phrase is arresting: “From Idols.” It is the only the word “idols” appears in John’s letter. Literally, “from *the* idols.

What do you think John means by this?

Robert Thomas list no less that 10 (!) views, but they generally may be regarded as falling one of three categories:

Literal vs Figurative vs Specific

Literal:

This is the only usage throughout the entire NT.

John gives no hint that he is writing figuratively

First rule of Biblical Hermeneutics (Interpretation): When the literal sense makes sense then seek no other sense.

Dr. David L. Cooper wisely observes: “When the plain sense of scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense, but take every word at its primary literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context clearly indicate otherwise.”

Figurative:

But other commentators hold that a literal meaning seems inconsistent with the content and scope of the letter.

Westcott notes: “‘Idolater’ (Eph 5:5) and ‘idolatry’ (Col 3:5) have a wider sense for St. Paul: the context here seems to require a corresponding extension of the meaning of the term.”

The use of the article gathers up anything that comes before God.

But, this explanation may be more than John intends.

A more reasonable explanation is that in giving this warning, John had the false teachers in mind, with their perverse view of the person and work of Jesus Christ. Over and over, John has warned against corruption of the redemptive message in Christ and the perversion of the true identity of the Incarnate Son of God.

The heretics are called what in v2:18?

The terms “iniquity,” “darkness,” and “evil one” are all associated with the heretics in 1John. Their false view of the Son and therefore of the Father constituted – in the words of John Stott - a “monstrous idolatry.”

The reference to the true God in v20 seems to have prompted John to brand their fictional, humanly contrived conceptions of Christ as idols, placing them in the same category the pagan images of the imagined gods they represented.

The commentator Grayson comments: “this is a final wounding blow against the dissidents’ attachment to God.”

And Hiebert writes: “Their infatuation with their own views concerning the True God and His incarnate Son was indeed a new kind of idolatry. His verdict is equally valid today!”

No wonder he closes with this final warning. "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." Do not go off to something else. Do not give your attention, your interest, your time, or your energy, and your money; it is what you live for, what you get excited about, what enthuses you. That is your god. What is it with you? Is it Jesus Christ, or is it something else?

John writes these things will destroy you, they will rob you of what God has for you. "Little children, watch that you do not drift off into the worship that the world around you is constantly engaged in. Do not let these things become important in your life, for God has set you free that you might live as God intended man to live." No wonder his word comes, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols." What makes you enthusiastic? To what do you give your money? What are you saving up for now? What is it that you regard as supremely important? It is with this question that John closes this book.