NT Lit. Dave Mathewson, 5/2/11, Lecture 33

John’s Epistles

Just a couple of announcements by way of reminder this is your last week of this class as far as lectures and class discussion. Although there is there will be an exam next week, as I said, it'll probably be probably be Monday. But I will not be here so this will be your last week of formal classes. Then on Monday, there will be exam number four. Right now the second thing is that it looks like Thursday night at will be the next extra credit review session for exam number four. I’ll let you know for sure, but right now looks like Thursday night at eight, and hopefully again in this room, will be you’re last extra credit review session for the fourth exam. Then the exam will be Monday. So what that means is we have quite a bit to cover this week.

Today I want to wrap up our discussion of group of epistles that we’re looking at, that we call the General Epistles and then move into Revelations and spend a little bit of time in that book on Wednesday and Friday. That will be it then until I shall be back in time for final exams.

Let’s open up with a prayer and then we will get on with the New Testament.

Father, I thank you for the day you’ve given us for the beautiful weather again, and thank you for your faithfulness in and your provision for us. Father, we thank you for the hope that your son Jesus Christ gives us in the midst of all the events that take place on world scene that can sometimes cause confusion, question or wonder that we have a hope in a secure hope in your son Jesus Christ. Father, I pray that as we are confronted with that reality by examining and paying attention to the documents of the New Testament that we will be reminded of the hope, in particular, and be reminded of the need to live that out. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Right now we’ve been looking at a collection of documents that we have labeled the General Epistles or another name for them is the Catholic Epistles. By Catholic, we do not mean what we often mean. Sometimes you see some writings refer to the epistles as the Catholic epistles, but we’re not talking about the epistles written by or associated
with the Roman Catholic Church, but we’re referring to the term used to refer to the church universally or generally. Starting with the book of Hebrews we began to look at a selection of writings that could be labeled the General Epistles and the reason is because in stark contrast to Paul’s letters which are all addressed to rather specific churches and or persons. Although Hebrews could’ve been and probably was addressed to a more specific audience, but it lacked the name Hebrews does not tell us who wrote it or who it was addressed to but all the other letters James and 1 Peter particularly indicate that they are written for Christians who were scattered rather widely and broadly as opposed to individuals or persons in one specific geographical location. So, I use the term General Epistle or Catholic Epistle for the documents we want to look at today continuing that tradition. Actually we will conclude that hopefully today. Continuing that tradition and actually we will conclude the hopefully today conclude the group of writings that we call the General or the Catholic Epistles, and that is the letters of First, Second, and Third John.

But before we do that I do have a little exercise for you. It’s your last quiz. Alright, please hand those in. As I said the last section before we talk about Revelations, the last of a group of books I want to consider is this broader collection of the General of Catholic Epistles. They are letters that were written to address Christians broadly or at least a couple of them there’s no specific indication of the readers and we’ll see that today. Very quickly today they’re very very short and are probably best labeled General Epistles because they do seem to be addressed to a specific church, although it doesn’t tell us exactly where that church is in the letters. There’s a lot that we’re going to leave out and we can’t be entirely sure of this as far as who these letters were written to and why they were written and where the church would’ve been located or what problem they were addressing etc. But at the same time we recognize that there’s not a lot of evidence to be real certain, but the group of letters I want to look at are First, Second, and Third John. We’ve already looked at Jude in connection to Second Peter.

Now the first thing that you notice will starting with First John but in a sense all three of these are like the book of Hebrews. First John does not have any indication of
authorship. In fact, it doesn’t even start like a letter, which has led some to wonder if it’s really a letter at all, although that’s what we call it the First letter of John. But you’ll notice it doesn’t begin like a letter. It doesn’t have any indication of who in the world wrote it.

It just jumps right into the first verse by saying, “we declare to you that what was from the beginning what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we’ve looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life. We declare to you what we have seen and heard that you may have fellowship with us.” So that’s how the book of First John begins. No indication of who wrote it, no indication of what problems it was addressing, or where the letter was sent. So if you were a postal carrier, and if this was in fact the letter and you were told to deliver it, you would have a really rough time. If there’s no indication of where it’s supposed to go, but by reading the letter carefully and by paying attention to church tradition we can maybe piece together a possible picture. Interestingly, the church history, and by church history, I primarily mean the church fathers, those of leaders and writers in the first 2 or 3 or 4 centuries after writing the New Testament, all claimed that First, Second and Third John, were written by John. Although there is dispute as to which John. There were a number of possible John’s that could have written this letter. Some of the persons that talk about John is the author, it’s not clear exactly which John it is. But there is a very strong opinion that John, the apostle of Jesus Christ, was the author of this letter. Although again, the letter doesn’t tell us and we are completely dependent on the early church fathers on the testimony of very early Christians to determine that. But another reason why some think that John wrote it is those words I just read, “We declare you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at, and touched with our hands.” Some would suggest that the only one who was present with the person of Jesus Christ could have written something like this. So many conclude that John, most likely John the apostle. According to early church testimony he would be the most likely candidate. So I’m going to leave it at that. John the apostle of Jesus Christ is as good a candidate as any for the authorship of this book. But just again so you know, the labels
First, Second, and Third John were not written by the author of these letters. They were put there by early Christians as an indication of who they thought the author of the letter was.

Now as far as the readers, when you compare First, Second, and Third John and the gospel of John, many have actually constructed a historically interesting scenario of how these letters all fit together. For example, and it is interesting when you read First John, it has a number of similarities with the gospel of John—the fourth gospel. We’ll talk about why that could be the case. But some would suggest that the gospel of John, John being the name of the fourth gospel John.

Some suggest that one of the things that the gospel John was addressing was a Gnostic type of heresy or false teaching. Remember, back in the very early days of this class we talked a lot about the different religious options, one of them being Gnosticism, Now it’s important to recognize while Gnosticism did not develop as a full-blown teaching or religion until the second century and towards the end of the century when the gospel of John and First, Second, and Third John were supposedly written. Many feel that all the elements of Gnosticism were already developing and would later emerge as a full-blown Gnosticism, but a small “g” gnosticism may have already been present in the first century.

We saw that one of the hallmarks of Gnosticism was an emphasis on salvation being this escape from the physical body from the imprisonment of the physical world that was salvation. So some feel that the gospel of John in part may have been addressing this kind of teaching, if it wasn’t yet this full-blown Gnosticism in the second century. It may have already been present in initial form in the late first century with again this emphasis on the spiritual that salvation being spiritual, denigration of a physical salvation, consisting of the secret knowledge that was available only to the elite few.

Now where First John comes in as many feel that First John was addressed to some of these who espouse this Gnostic type of heresy. They had already infiltrated the church of the time First John was written and now they are leaving the church. We’ll see why that’s the case, but that these heretics or these false teachers, these Gnostic type of
teachers now have left the church and now we’ll see will se what that means for interpreting First John.

Now they have left behind a group of Christians that now John addresses in the letter we know as First John. But these teachers that the gospel of John may have been refuting have now infiltrated the church and are now leaving it. They are seceding from it and leaving behind a minority of Christians that now John addresses with First John. Second John and some feel that these persons who have left the church are now attacking the church from the outside. So these same Gnostic type of teachers emphasizing the spiritualism and spiritual salvation and emphasizing the possession of the secret knowledge now they are attacking John’s church from the outside. Then finally, Third John may reflect a situation where the church is now in danger of actually being overtaken by these false teachers. Some would even move further and include Revelation chapter 2 where the very first church that John addresses in Revelation is the church at Ephesus, who had lost their love. Some would suggest that even Revelation would suggest a further stage beyond this. So there is kind of a progression some see in these letters historically in relationship to how the church is faring in the context of this teaching.

Now I have to confess I’m a little bit suspicious of this. It just seems that it’s constructing a whole scenario based on not a lot of evidence. In fact, as we are going to see Third John, there’s really no evidence in Third John that there’s any problem with false teachers at all. There could be, but there’s really no evidence.

The best case that could be made for these is First John which is indeed addressing the church that a group of Christians are now left behind after these false teachers have left them. Now John addresses these, the small group of Christians that are now left behind. Second John does seem to address the situation of warning the church not to allow these teachers, these false teachers teaching perhaps this Gnostic type of teaching, into the church, but other than that this scheme is a little bit too cut and dry. In fact, it’s really impossible to tell whether this order is the correct order. It could have been, but we can’t be certain. The least we can say is that First John does address the church where
teachers have these false teachers have walked out and left a group of Christians. Second John does address false teachers trying to get into the church from the outside but whether they were written in that order is impossible to say. So I’m going to assume that this is the correct order in which these books were written, but we will follow them in the order in which they appear in the New Testament.

Now as far as the background of especially First John, the problem that First John was addressing as I said is secessionists or these false teacher who have seceded from or left the church. Think about it for a moment. If these false teachings and if they’re not yet the full-blown Gnostics of the second century but they do have Gnostic tendencies already that is again an emphasis on salvation being spiritual, denying the physical, emphasizing the possession of a secret knowledge, the possession of a knowledge that belongs to an elite few, that have this knowledge by emphasizing that it appears now that these false teachers have left the church. They secede from it, and what they have left behind is a group of Christians who are now basically what we might say feel spiritually abused or their spiritually beaten up or wounded because the false teachers with their emphasis on the spiritual and their emphasis on the possession that they alone are truly God’s people or to the false teachers have gotten them to call into questioning their status as God’s people. After all, if they don’t buy into the teaching of this false teaching and if they don’t, if they are not part of the elite few that possess this knowledge, then they are outsiders. Once the false teachers leave the church they leave behind a small group of embattled Christians who are questioning their spiritual status.

The true purpose of John can be found in chapter 5 and verse 13 of First John where he says, “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.” That’s basically why John writes it. Put that together with the scenario with those who have been tempted to doubt their spiritual status because of these false teachers. They are battered and wounded spiritually and questioning their status. Now John writes to assure the readers of the fact that they do in fact have eternal life that they are God’s true people. He writes to assure them of their spiritual status. In the wake of these teachers damaging them spiritually and now leaving
and seceding from the church.

One way John does that in this letter is the next section your notes you’ll notice there are three actually three tests. The plan of 1 John revolves around three tests. So how do they know how can they be sure they have eternal life? How can they be assured that they and not these false teachers who overlap, how can they be sure that they are the true people of God? How can they be certain of their spiritual status? John basically gives them three tests and what he does in his letter he cycles through these tests about two or three different times. Much like we saw James cycled through the themes of faith, endurance, wisdom and speech etc. First John takes three tests that the readers can utilize to demonstrate to be assured of their true spiritual status and the first one gets cycled two or three times through the letter is that of love. That is if they demonstrate they have love for each other then they can be assured that they are the true people of God and they can be assured of their spiritual status so that is test number one.

The second text is obedience to the commands of Christ. There’s been a lot of question as to what how or why the false teachers or what they were doing that would’ve gotten them to perhaps to question of their obedience to the commands of Christ. Whether the false teachers were antinomian in whatever, but the point is that the John assures them that if they hold onto the commands of Christ, if they walk in obedience to Christ, they can be assured they are God’s children.

The third one is confession that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh and John repeats that a number of times: If you confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh. Why do you think he emphasizes this? Why does he say if you believe that Jesus is the son of God or if you believe that Jesus is the Messiah son of David, or why doesn’t he use that language. For example, Paul talked about Jesus as the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. Why doesn’t he tell them if you believe that Jesus is that image of the invisible God or if you believe Jesus is the son of God. Why do you think he says if you believe Jesus is come in the flesh? Perhaps to link it back to fulfillment in the Old Testament, which again to knock out what this teaching may have been denying and rejecting. If he’s out along the Old Testament background and perhaps if he’s addressing
Christians, who have been influenced by this Gnostic teaching that denies the physical. They would’ve perhaps denied Jesus as a human, then it’s necessary for him to reassert that. It probably wouldn’t have been questioned among John’s readers that Jesus was God. What they may have been tempted to doubt from the false teachers was whether Jesus was truly a human being. Remember, when we talked about Docetism back in the early days of this class, that Docetism was a heresy. Later on in the church that denied Jesus’ humanity. It said Jesus only seemed to be human. It comes from a Greek word which means “to think” or “to seem” and that is the root from which we get Docetism. That is Jesus only appeared to be a human, he only seemed to be human. These teachers if they had strong Gnostic tendencies they may have taught that Jesus was not truly a human being or denied his humanity because of their strong contrast between the spiritual and the physical. Remember, for them salvation consisted of escaping from the physical body and from the physical world.

So now in light of that John sees it necessary to reassert the humanity of Christ. So they could know that they are truly God’s children by confessing unlike the false teachers who have just left them. They can no know that they truly are God’s children if they confess that Jesus Christ has indeed come in the flesh. That doesn’t mean that they need to deny that he’s God and he’s deity, but it does mean that they also need to cling to and assert his humanity.

These three tests, in the sense that as I said it, get cycled throughout the book over two or three times, three times probably as John’s answer to how do we know that we have eternal life? How do we know that we are truly God’s children in light of the spiritual abuse and the now the fact that we have been bruised and wounded spiritually by these false teachers who have left us a minority embattled group of Christians? How can we know that we’re truly God’s people? So John says if you love each other if you obey Jesus’ commands and if you confess Jesus Christ is come in the flesh.

Now, First John is one of the books that to me has one of the most perplexing statements in them. In the first one, the first group of statements is found in First John 3. This is what John says in chapter 3 verses 6, 9 and 10. Listen to what he says. “No one
who abides in him, [referring to Jesus or God]. No one who abides in Jesus sins. No one
who sins has either seen him or known him. That is pretty strong language. Listen to
verse 9. “Those who have been born of God do not sin because God’s seed abides in
them. He uses birth language and biological language metaphorically, he says now
because “you’re children of God, God’s seed abides in you, and you cannot sin.” It says,
they cannot sin because they have been born of God, verse 10: “The children of God and
the children of the devil are revealed in this way. All who do not do what is right are not
from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers and sisters.”

Now that’s a rather absolute and startling language. John comes right out and says,
“If someone sins, if you claim to be God’s children, you don’t sin, and anyone who sins
has not been born of God because you cannot sin.” In fact, this is the language he uses.
That’s rather startling language. What are we supposed to make of that again John
doesn’t even qualify it. He doesn’t say if you if you sin occasionally or if you don’t
make it a habit to sin, if it’s not you know if, if you sin occasionally or if, if you don’t
make it a habit to sin, if it’s not your lifestyle. He just comes around and says if you
claim to be God’s children you can’t. You are not able to sin, and anyone who sins has
not been born of God.

Now, to couple that with another couple statements from John back in chapter 1
and verses 8 and 10. Here is chapter 1 verse 8, “if we say that we have not sinned we
deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.” Verse 10, “if we say that we have not sinned,
we may God to be a liar and his word is not in us.” So my question is how do we make
sense of this? To me, that definitely seems like an outright contradiction. In strong
language, John says simply if you claim to be God’s children you are not able to sin and
anyone who sins simply has not been born of God. Then he turns around and he says
things like but if you say you don’t have sin, you’re a liar and you make God out to be a
liar too. Here we have a contradiction, and I guess this isn’t the word of God after all, as
John blatantly contradicts himself. On the one hand, he says that Christians can’t sin, and
then turns around and says that if you do, if you say you don’t, you’re a liar, and make
God out to be a liar. What do you do with this? Is there another way to understand this? I
mean, is John all that he would write something another way to understand what’s going on here?

I mean, first of all, why do you think this most of us don’t have a problem with experientially with the second part of this. I mean the rest of us would agree that Christians sin and to the claim that we do not sin on this side of eternity the claimant we have no sin and that we never sinned or somehow we can reach a state where we’ll never sin in deed or thought. It is definitely an impossibility. We agree with 1 John 1. Someone that says they cannot sin is simply deceiving themselves and makes God out to be a liar.

But what about, I would guess that this first one’s a little more difficult. What do you think John is doing and saying, and why would he talk like that? And finally, by the way, you probably recognize that it’s ok and go ahead it’s no big deal because you sin anyway but in between that, this is where you find the verse that if we confess our sins, Christ is faithful and just to forgive us from our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. So Christians, even when they do sin, they turn to God for forgiveness. They turn to the father to ask to confess their sins and find forgiveness. Again we probably don’t struggle with this. Then it’s the first one that the probably seems a little odd to us. How may we reconcile the juxtaposition might of these two stark statements? What might lead John to say Christians don’t sin? If you’re born of God, you’re not able to sin. Anyone who sins has not been born of God. Persisting in sin, interestingly if you have an NIV, it actually interprets these verses with the word “continues to sin” or “persistent sinning.” So it’s not just if you have been born of God you are not able to sin, the NIV would says something like you’re not able to continue to sin or if you persist in sin, then you are not born of God. So the NIV would agree with that. The New International Version suggests that what John is talking about here is continuing and persisting in sin, making it a habit in a lifestyle. So this one would be, Christians do sin, but Christians don’t sin period. That is they shouldn’t continue in it. But I think, John’s statement is even stronger. I think he’s saying you should be able to guess what I’m thinking about by now. I think this is that “already but not yet” tension dressed up in another disguise. The already is Christians don’t sin. That is by virtue of it’s the same
language, but for Paul it's like saying, “you die to sin. How can you live in it any longer? Christians don’t sins.” Yet, the reality is that Christians still do sin. I think John is still reflecting that same tension kind of in another guise or another form that yet Christians don’t sin that we’ve been with again. I’m using Paul’s language to be similar to Paul saying we died with Christ to sin, we have been raised with Christ in newness of life. Christians don’t sin. There’s an inconsistent to claim to be born of God and yet to still have sin. Yet, “not yet” the reality is Christians still do sin. So I think of another way to put it this is the indicative and this reflects the imperative. Now, the other way of looking at it as well I think this also it functions within First John within the New Testament, that I think both of these need to be heard at different times when we’re tempted that sin is just normal and when we have the attitudinal Christians that are going to sin, I might as well not worry about sin anyway or when we use our faith in Christ or the death of Christ as an excuse to sin. When we think we can live however we want, then we need to hear this one. Know that there’s something fundamentally wrong and inconsistent about Christian sinning.

Yet when we are frustrated by attempts to live holy lives when perhaps we’re tempted to doubt our spiritual status and wonder if we’ve done something that separates us from Christ’s love that I think we need to hear this. When Christians do sin but at the same time they turn to the Father for forgiveness. So, I think both of these play an important role and we need to hear both of them at different times in our lives whether, whether we’re comfortable with sin and tempted to ignore it and think it’s no big deal. We need to hear the first one when we’re racked by it. When we’re upset doubting our status and wondering if we have done our frustration with trying to overcome sin and we need to hear the second message as well. So that’s how I understand the tension. Certainly it’s right that Christians do not persist in sin continually yet again I think John is saying something a little more than that. Reflecting the tension between the indicative/imperative or that the now what is already true and what is not yet is now emerging in First John again.

Alright, the first one would reflect the “already.” If I can use Paul’s language, he
says we’ve already died to sin. That’s again, that’s a rather stark statement. You died to sin, how can you live in any longer I’m quoting Romans 6, and John’s way of saying it, “is if you’re born of God you don’t sin,” and again Paul says “you died to sin.” In other words there’s something absolute that has happened by virtue of now belonging to Christ by virtue of this rebirth that John talks about. Then because we have not yet arrived, because we have not reached perfection, the second coming of Christ and that’s why Paul can go on and says “therefore you still need to put to death sin in your mortal body, you still need to offer up yourselves as instruments of righteousness that, that’s the “not yet” imperative. Did that make any sense? Good.

Second John again I remind you it’s not absolutely certain who the author of this is although again, a very strong Christian witness early Christian witness associates it with John and probably it is the same writers as what we call First John, but fairly strong early Christian testimony associates it with the apostle John. But interestingly in Second John notice how the author refers to himself in Second John in the first verse--the elder. It actually begins like a letter but and he doesn’t give us his names. It is “the elder,” this is how the author refers to himself “the elder to the elect lady” is a metaphor for the church itself in the same way that the church elsewhere. Paul will use female image for the church. The church is the bride of Christ.

Revelation calls the church the completed people of God. The bride of Christ to something that the elect lady here is metaphorical for the church, just like calling the church bride of Christ but others think it’s more literal, that it refers to an actual lady of an actual woman who is the leader of this house church. But in any case, most likely John is addressing a small contingent of house churches probably being attacked again. The thing I didn’t mention in First John, but the other thing that early Christian tradition does is that it associates these three letters or at least a couple of them with the city of Ephesus. So First John and Second John may be addressing the church or house churches in the city of Ephesus. Again, we can’t be certain because the letter itself doesn’t say anything about it. It just says to the elect lady and her children, that’s all we know about the recipient. We really don’t know anything else. But Second John then is written by “the
elder,” the term that the again if this is the apostle John is the term by which he refers to himself and he addresses the elect lady. Whether a lady who is the head of the church, or metaphorically referring to the church itself.

It appears, that again that false teachers perhaps, of the Gnostic type of influence are now attempting to infiltrate this house church. So John is going to warn them not to allow this false teaching perhaps of the same kind of false teaching that threaten the church in First John. But I don’t know whether Second John was written before First John. It is difficult to tell this, but the background helps us to understand a rather perplexing verse.

This is verses 9 and 10 of Second John. Second and Third John are chapters like some of the others short books, like Jude and Philemon. But here’s a Second John verse 9 and 10. “Everyone who does not abide in the teaching of Christ that goes beyond it, does not have fellowship with God, whoever abides in the teachings does have both the Father and the Son. Do not receive into your house or welcome anyone who comes to you and does not bring this teaching. For to welcome is to participate in the evil deeds of such a person.” Now the reason why I bring this up while I was actually brought up in a tradition that said, you don’t see this as much anymore I don’t think, but when I was growing up we always had different religions whether Jehovah’s Witnesses or Mormons and others coming to our door and wanting to talk, and I was always taught these verses. That you’re not allowed, to let them in your house because John says, “don’t even let them in your house. To do so is to promote or have fellowship with this teaching. So it’s okay if you stood at the door and talk to them but you weren’t supposed to let them in your house.”

But when you set this in its background you have to understand two things. Number one is that most of the churches met in houses in small house churches in the first century. So the references to house here has nothing do with my, my personal home. It has to if the primary reference is the place where the church meets. It’s when the church is meeting. So the first thing recognizes the house he refers to is the house church. The second thing to recognize is that in the first century it was very common to have itinerant preachers and teachers who would go around spreading their teachings to
different congregations and to put those together for what John is talking about. Here is guidance for the house church to allow someone to come into their church and teach this. As a part of their worship services, part of their community, and to allow them in and to give them a base for their teaching and preaching. That’s what John is speaking of. It has nothing to do with whether you let somebody in your house or not, it has everything to do with the church in the first century actually supporting and giving a platform for these false teachers teaching this kind of thing. So John says do not allow them in your house church, my paraphrase, when these itinerant preachers come along teaching this Gnostic type of teaching. If it’s that, then when they come around do not invite them in your house church. Do not allow them to take to have a base in sin and to establish a base and to spread their teaching within your house church as it gathers for worship is what I take John to be referring to. Again, to summarize the message, John warns the congregation against accepting these false teachers in to in the midst and simply calls for them to maintain theologically and morally to maintain purity and to not, not to allow these itinerant traveling teachers that are promoting probably the same kind of teaching addressed in First John. Do not allow them into the church.

I want to look very quickly at Third John. Any questions? Again I reiterate it’s not certain whether Second John came after John, and it made good sense to see the false teachers leaving and now trying to get back in attacking the church from without, but still that’s not absolutely certain.

Third John is a book that again when you read it carefully, there’s really no hint that there was some kind of false teaching threatening the church. It could be but there’s not enough evidence to tell. Not only is Third John itself said to short letter but they is just no references at all to any kind of deviant teaching that is threatening the church or inside the church. So, I’m tempted to see Third John. It just as its own letter. It doesn’t necessarily relate to the same problem that one finds in First and Second John. It is probably just a completely separate letter written on its own. But Third John, concerns an individual named the Diatrephees, who is dividing the church by trying to establish a power base in the midst of the church and trying to gather a following that is basically
trying to split the church or dividing it by trying to establish a following. Although, again the letter doesn’t tell us whether it’s based on some false teaching, it simply doesn’t say.

So basically, the message of Third John, John writes to tell them how to deal with Diatrephe. In the end he has some very harsh words that they’re simply not to put up with him. That is that the church is no place for divisive troublemakers, those that would try to establish a power base or caused division in the church. That’s basically is what Third John was about.

Again, I don’t know whether it was written before the other two or after it’s impossible to tell whether some false teachings was involved. Third John may be a cover letter for First John or Second John. That’s possible. Or Second and Third John may be cover letters for First John. It’s just Second, Third John they’re so brief and cryptic it’s really hard to tell a lot about specifically what they were addressing and how they function in relationship in First John, but that’s a possibility. Any other questions about First, Second, or Third John. Again, you could even see in sense that Second and Third John are not general letters because they do seem to be addressed to a specific church, but the problem is the letters themselves do not tell us what church or groups of house churches. All we can tell from Second John at least and Third John is that they were addressed to a specific group meeting somewhere again a strong early church tradition associates it with Ephesus, but the letters themselves are silent on that. Again that's part of reading a letter that the author, and the readers, as we said, it's like listening in the one half of a phone conversation. The author and readers know what's going so the writer of the letter doesn't have to tell them everything because they know. They share certain information that you and I are not privy to. Sometimes when we read letters like this especially with as the ones as short as Second or Third John. It's a lot more difficult to draw those kind of conclusions far as who exactly the author was who the readers are, and what problem they’re facing. Then we’re much more dependent solely on the text itself. So there's always a danger of constructing a scenario and enforcing it on the text as opposed to letting the text itself speak and determine how we read and understand it.

Alright, Wednesday and Friday then we will turn the rest of our attention to the
book of Revelation. So have a good day and I'll see you Wednesday.

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