

have been anointed by the Holy One (2:20-21, 27) which enables them to know the truth, they must beware of antichrists who deny the incarnation (4:3) and seek to draw others into their error (2:18-19). The knowledge given believers by Jesus is what enables them to discern truth from error and gives eternal life (5:20; 4:1-4).

#### Questions:

Was 1 John written as an epistle? Was it a homily transcribed as a letter or a tract? Why does the author call himself simple "the Elder" in 2 John and 3 John? Why is 2 John addressed to "the chosen lady and her children"? Was this greeting used to avoid persecution?

#### Archaeology

The heresy which John attacked in 1 John seems to have been a forerunner or precursor of docetism. This early heresy taught that Jesus did not actually become a man but merely seemed to be human (Greek "dokein" means "to seem or to appear"). This doctrine arose out of the belief that matter was evil. Jesus could not, therefore, have partaken of a material body and been a Savior. Papias records the story that John was once in a public bath in Ephesus when Cerinthus, a Docetist teacher, walked in. John immediately left, saying that he would not bathe in the same place as that "enemy of the truth."

Both 2 and 3 John are the right length for a standard sheet of papyrus in the first century (about 8 x 10 inches). One papyrus particularly resembles 1 John: "Irenaeus to Anollinarius his dearest brother many greetings. I pray continually for your health, and I myself am well... Many salutations to your wife and to Serenus and to all who love you, each by name. Goodbye (date and address?)"

#### Study tips:

Read through 1 John several times alternating versions to avoid repetition. What are its basic themes? How do they relate to each other? How are they interwoven in this letter? Why did the author choose such a repetitious manner of composition? Read about John and 1 John in a Bible dictionary or encyclopaedia. Read the Gospel of John noting the themes found in 1 John. How much of 1 John reflects the teachings of the Gospel? Study the gospels for references to the Apostle John.

Read 2 and 3 John several times. What is the basic theme of each? How do they relate to each other? to 1 John? to the Gospel of John? Read about them in your Bible dictionary or encyclopaedia. Look up Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius as well. Does this add anything to your study? In addition to their doctrinal issues these epistles also address many practical questions of the Christian life. How do these reflect Jesus' teachings in the Gospel of John? How should they affect the life of the church today? Your life?