

John's Love/Hate Relationship with the World

(From Brown, *The Gospel According to John*, Appendix 1.7)

- The Greek word translated “world” is *kosmos* (κοσμος). It has a range of meaning which can include the world, humanity, the way of the world, and variations of these.
- In the Gospel of John, the world begins as the focus of God's love:
 - Jesus was sent to save it (Jn 3:16-17) and give it life (6:33, 51) as the Lamb of God who takes away its sins (1:29)
 - He came into the world as its light (8:12, 9:5) to witness to the truth (18:37)
 - Out of the darkness some were selected by God to come into the light; others preferred the darkness, and the light only provoked their self-condemnation (3:19-20)
- As Jn continues, “the world” comes to refer to those who rejected and opposed Jesus:
 - Jesus coming into the world becomes a judgment on it (9:39, 12:31)
 - Jesus and his followers can't be of this world, because it is incompatible with faith in him (16:20, 17:14-16, 18:36)
 - The Spirit which Jesus sends is incompatible with the world and hostile to it (14:7, 16:8-11)
 - The world hates Jesus and his followers (7:7, 15:9, 16:33)

What 1 Jn says about the world:

- It is *not to be loved* lest the Father's love be forsaken:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (2:15)
- It is full of sinful cravings, the lust of the eyes, boasting of accomplishments (2:16)
- It is ephemeral, not like the person who does God's will (2:17)
- It does not know the Father nor does it know John's community (3:1)
- It is overcome by the faith and good works of those not of the world:

This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. (5:3-5)
- It is under the control of the evil one (5:19), whom our strong young people have overcome (2:14—quoting a hymn?)
- Note that this attitude of world-avoidance isn't so far from Paul's:

But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. (2 Tim 3:1-5)