

**CRISES IN JOHN'S COMMUNITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS TO THE
CHURCH IN NIGERIA**

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AUGUST 2023

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**A PROJECT SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION,
FACULTY OF ARTS UNIVERSITY OF BENIN IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF
BACHELOR OF ARTS (B.A)
HONOUR DEGREE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIONS**

AUGUST 2023

CERTIFICATION

This is to certify that this project was carried out by **Ikpemhi Marvellous ININO** with the Mat. Number; **ART1802039** in the Department of Religions, Faculty of Art, University of Benin, Benin City, in partial fulfillment for the award of Bachelor of Arts

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to God Almighty, for His infinite mercies, guidance and protection throughout my study. To my grand mother, Mrs. I.F Imhabekhai and to my uncles Mr. Callima Inino and Mr. Godwin Inino

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I'm really grateful to God Almighty who saw me through school, for His protection, guidance, provisions and favour in my life.

Special thanks to my Grandmother, Mrs. I.F Imhabekhai who has been the bedrock from the beginning, I want to sincerely appreciate her for her love and support in prayers, care and encouragement towards all my affairs both emotional and financially and even in trying times. Special thanks also to my Uncles Mr. Callima Inino and Mr. Godwin Inino, who stood by me in every aspect during the period of my stay in school both in prayers, financially, emotionally and in encouragement. I pray that God continue to bless and increase

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to a number of people, whose contributions were instrumental in the realization of this Project and by implication my academic pursuit. First, my sincere gratitude goes to my supervisor Rev. G.O.

Ubuane for his advice, constructive critiques, and efforts in ensuring the feasibility of this Project. I also wish to appreciate my lecturers who has been with me from my day one in the university; Very Rev. Dr. Sibani, Mr. Bismark Efe, Mrs. Belinda Bienose-Osagiede, Mr. Valentine .A. Inagbor and the Head of Department Prof. Wilson E .Ehanu and also I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to all my departmental staff and lecturers even though I may not be able to mention all of their names but I still have them in heart

A huge thanks to my pastor and mentor, Apostle Tim Wealth for his spiritual support and prayers. and to all my friends and we'll wishers I want to say a really big thank you and God bless you.

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Abstract

The Johannine community, a scholarly concept related to the authorship and theology of the Gospel of John, faced numerous crises and challenges that had potential implications for the Nigerian Church. This abstract examines the main crises within the Johannine community and their potential implications for the Nigerian Church, these crisis faced by the Johannine community have implications for the Nigerian Church. The theological and social challenges experienced by the Johannine community mirror some of the persistent issues faced by the Nigerian Church. Understanding these similarities can facilitate dialogue, promote greater understanding, and potentially lead to the resolution of crises within the Nigerian Church. Additionally, it highlights the importance of addressing theological differences, promoting peaceful coexistence within society, and ensuring the religious rights and liberties of minority Christian communities.

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The Johannine community is a term used by scholars to describe the group of early Christians who were associated with the writings of the Apostle John, particularly the Gospel of John, the three letters of John, and the Book of Revelation. This community is believed to have originated in the late 1st century in the region of Ephesus, in modern-day Turkey. The Johannine community was distinct from other Christian communities of the time and it was characterized by a strong emphasis on the divinity of Jesus Christ, and his role as the Word of God made flesh. This is reflected in the Gospel of John, which contains a number of unique teachings and narratives that are not found in the other Gospels. The Johannine community placed a great deal of

importance on the concept of love, which is a recurring theme in the writings of John. This love was seen as the central characteristic of God, and was to be emulated by followers of Jesus and the Johannine community was known for its close-knit nature and strong sense of community. It is believed that members of the community lived in close proximity to each other, sharing resources and supporting one another in their faith. John's letter were seen to be pastoral in form because they were written out of his great passion for the congregations under his watch in Asia minor.

The Johannine community was also known for its mystical and apocalyptic beliefs. The Book of Revelation, which was likely written by the same author as the Gospel of John, contains vivid descriptions of the end of the world and the return of Christ. The Johannine community played an important role in the early development of Christianity, and its teachings continue to influence Christian theology and spirituality to this day. The Johannine community faced a number of crises throughout its history, which are reflected in the writings attributed to the Apostle John. These crises were both internal and external, and they challenged the community's beliefs, practices, and sense

of identity. One of the most significant crises faced by the Johannine community was the challenge posed by Gnosticism, a heterodox movement that claimed to possess secret knowledge about the nature of God and the universe. Gnostics believed that the material world was evil and that salvation could only be achieved through the acquisition of this secret knowledge, which they claimed had been passed down from Jesus to his disciples. The Johannine community rejected these claims and emphasized the importance of the incarnation of Jesus and his physical presence in the world. This is reflected in the opening verses of the Gospel of John, which declare that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us".

Another crisis faced by the Johannine community was the threat of persecution from the Roman authorities. The Book of Revelation, which is believed to have been written in response to this persecution, contains vivid apocalyptic imagery and predicts the eventual triumph of Christ over the forces of evil. Internally, the Johannine community faced challenges related to leadership and authority. Some scholars believe that there were competing factions within the community, each vying for control and influence. The

letters of John contain warnings against false teachers and those who would lead the community astray.

Despite these challenges, the Johannine community persisted and its teachings continue to inspire and influence Christians today. The crises it faced helped to shape its identity and clarify its beliefs, and its legacy remains an important part of Christian history. The crises faced by the Johannine community have had a significant impact on the development of Christian theology and practice, and continue to be relevant to the church in the modern world and even in Nigeria. One of the most important implications of the Johannine crises to the Nigerian Church is the importance of maintaining a clear and coherent understanding of Christian doctrine and belief one of the major problems of the church in Nigeria is the issue of false teachings and wrong doctrines that are not inline with the teachings of the Bible . The Johannine community faced challenges from heterodox teachings and competing factions, and its response was to emphasize the importance of a unified faith grounded in the teachings of Jesus. Today, the church continues to grapple with questions of doctrine and belief, as well as competing interpretations of scripture and the

nature of God. The Johannine emphasis on the importance of a clear and unified faith can serve as a guide for contemporary Christians seeking to navigate these challenges.

Another implication of the Johannine crises is the importance of community and support for individuals and groups facing persecution or other challenges. The Johannine community was known for its close-knit nature and strong sense of mutual support, and this can serve as a model for the churches in Nigeria to seek to create a supportive and caring community within their own churches to help their fellow Christians in need and to give and support one another.

Finally, the Johannine emphasis on the importance of love as a central characteristic of God has implications for the church's mission and outreach. The Nigerian church can learn from the Johannine emphasis on love as a means of expressing God's grace and reaching out to those in need, both within the church and in the wider world. Overall, the crises faced by the Johannine community continue to have important implications for the church in Nigeria and all over the world, and its teachings and example can serve as a guide for contemporary Christians seeking to navigate the challenges of their own time.

1.2 Statement of Problem

The crises faced by the Johannine community can be summarized as a series of challenges to the community's beliefs, practices, and sense of identity and some of the challenges faced in the Johannine community can be seen in relation to the challenges faced in the Nigerian church so through this research we will give a detailed account of the challenges faced in the Johannine community and how it's implies to the Nigerian church. Some of the problems and issues in the Johannine community are:

1. Gnosticism: The Johannine community faced challenges from Gnostics, who claimed to possess secret knowledge about the nature of God and the universe. This challenged the community's emphasis on the incarnation of Jesus and his physical presence in the world.
2. Persecution: The Johannine community faced persecution from the Roman authorities, which threatened the survival of the community and challenged its faith.
3. Leadership and authority: The Johannine community faced challenges related to leadership and authority, with competing factions vying for control and influence within the community.

4. False teachings and doctrines: The Johannine community faced challenges from false teachers who sought to lead the community astray and challenge its beliefs.
5. Disunity and love for one another: This issue was seen as one of the major issues in the Johannine community and it led to disunity, hatred for one another and people not having the mindset of togetherness and love for one another both in deeds and in truth (1 John 3:1-8)

These crises challenged the community's faith and sense of identity, and these crises can also be seen in the Nigerian Christian society (Church) and the effects it causes to the church in Nigeria and how it led to chaos, it is now left for the church to work with the teachings of John in curbing this menace.

1.3 Definition of Terms

The importance of the definition of terms in any academic work cannot be overemphasized. It is therefore necessary to define some terms in this work.

1.3.1 Church

According to Adolf V.H(1849)"*A sacramental community of worshipers in which the humanity and divinity of Christ are manifested, and in which believers receive the life-giving grace of the Holy Spirit*"(p.51).

1 .3.2 Crisis

According to Rosenthal et al. (2012) describe crisis as "*an event that is unpredictable, severe, and potentially destructive, not only for individuals, but for organizations and society at large*" (p. 71).

1 .3.3 Community

Community can be defined as a group of people living in the same place and having certain attitudes and interests in common. According to Minkler and Wallerstein (2011) define community as "*a group of people who share something in common, such as geographic location, culture, language, history, or identity, and who interact with one another over time to create social networks and develop shared values and norms*" (p. 15).

1 .3.4 Implications

Implication can be defined as the action or state of being involved in something. According to Babbie (2013) defines implications as "the potential consequences or effects that a particular research finding or theory has for understanding or addressing a broader topic or issue" (p. 33).

1.4 Aims and Objectives

1. This study is aimed at creating awareness of the crisis in John's community
2. To show to the Nigerian church how to learn from the crisis in John's community
3. To provide solutions to the crisis in Johannine community and its implication to the Nigerian church.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is of great importance in the sense that the crises in the Johannine community will be thoroughly examine and through this study the Nigerian church will come into full knowledge of their role in learning from the crises in John's Community so as to offer solutions to the problems in the Nigerian christian community in relating to the teachings in John's Epistles and the ones offered through the discourse of this study.

To give the church a clarion call and to come into awareness errors and practices that are extravagant in the Nigerian christian community using the the crises in the Johannine community as case study

Through this research if the church will pay attention and carryout their role in discharging their duties in learning from the crisis in the Johannine community their will peace and tranquility in the Nigerian church and even in the community as a whole.

1.6 Scope and Limitation of study

This research intends to cover the crisis in John's community and it's resultant effect on the the church and how it how it implies to the church in the Nigerian community.

This research intends to offer solutions to the problems in the church in Nigeria using the crisis in Johannine community as case study because some of the problems in the Nigeria church is in a way related to the crisis in the Johannine community. But a limitation to the research of this work is that the

solution offered will it be carried out by the church in Nigeria because they are already multiple research concerning the issues of the crises in Johannine community but will the church carry out the solutions offered so as to curb the menace.

1.7 Research Methodology

This research will be base on intense study from book,articles relating to the subject matter (The Crises in John's community) will be used for the work. This entails the analysis and sythesis of primary and secondary materials that are relevant to this subject matter.

CHAPTER TWO

THE JOHANNINE COMMUNITY

2.1 HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Johannine community was a group of early Christian believers who were influenced by the teachings of John the Apostle, one of Jesus' closest disciples. It is believed that they lived and worshiped in or around the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern-day Turkey).The Johannine community likely

emerged in the late first century, several decades after the death of Jesus, as a result of evangelism and missionary activity in the region. They were part of a larger network of Christian communities in the eastern Mediterranean that were influenced by the teachings of the apostles and that shared common beliefs and practices. The Johannine community was known for its distinctive theology, which emphasized the divinity of Jesus Christ and stressed the importance of love and obedience to God. They also emphasized the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer and placed a high value on the sacrament of baptism. The Johannine community faced a number of challenges and controversies in the early years of Christianity. They were likely opposed by some Jewish religious leaders who saw them as a threat to traditional Judaism. They also may have faced opposition from other Christian communities that espoused different teachings or practices. The Johannine Community is a term used to describe the community of believers who were associated with the Apostle John in the late 1st century CE, and to whom he may have written the Gospel of John, the three Johannine letters, and the Book of Revelation.

There is significant debate among scholars regarding the exact nature and origins of the Johannine community, but there are several commonly accepted

theories. One theory is that the Johannine community was a distinct group of believers who lived in or around Ephesus, a city in modern-day Turkey that was an important Christian center in the early centuries of the Church. This theory is based on evidence from early Christian writings that suggest that John may have been based in Ephesus for a time, and that there was a particular community of Christians associated with him in that city.

Another theory is that the Johannine community was more of a loose, decentralized network of believers who were bound together by common theological beliefs and practices rather than by physical proximity. This theory suggests that the Johannine writings circulated widely among Christian communities in the late 1st century and that they helped to shape a particular strand of Christian thought and practice that emphasized the importance of spiritual rebirth, love for one another, and faith in Jesus as the Son of God. Scholars have long debated the exact origins and characteristics of the Johannine community, but there are certain historical and literary clues that can help us piece together a general picture. Historically, the Johannine community likely emerged in the late first century AD, after the death of Jesus and the main apostles. Some scholars believe that the community grew

out of a specific group of Jewish believers who were drawn to John's teachings and became known as the "Johannine Jews." Others suggest that the community was more diverse, including both Jews and Gentiles who were drawn to John's distinctive theological and spiritual perspectives.

One of the hallmarks of the Johannine community was a strong focus on the divinity of Jesus. The Gospel of John, in particular, presents Jesus as the "Logos" or Word of God who was present with God from the beginning of creation. This emphasis on Jesus as divine set the Johannine community apart from other early Christian groups and may have contributed to some of the community's conflicts with other Christians. The Johannine community also emphasized the importance of love and unity among believers. In the Gospel of John, Jesus famously commands his disciples to "love one another" and this emphasis on love and fellowship is echoed throughout John's other writings.

2.2 The Johannine Epistles

The Johannine Epistles are three letters, believed to have been written by the apostle John, that are included in the New Testament of the Christian Bible. The Johannine Epistles consist of 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John, and they contain

important teachings about Christian living, faith, and relationships with other believers.

The first epistle, 1 John, is the longest of the three and focuses on several key themes. These include love, obedience, righteousness, sin, and the nature of Christ. The letter is written in a highly poetic style and uses metaphors and symbols to convey its message. John emphasizes the importance of loving God and loving others in order to truly live out one's faith. He also warns against false teachers who deny the divinity of Christ.

The second epistle, 2 John, is extremely short, only thirteen verses long. It is addressed to "the chosen lady and her children," and warns against false teachers who deny the teachings of Christ. John urges his readers to remain faithful to the truth of the gospel and not to be led astray by those who deny its central teachings.

The third epistle, 3 John, is addressed to a man named Gaius and commends him for his hospitality towards travelling preachers, while criticizing another church leader named Diotrephes for his lack of hospitality and apparent abuse of authority within the community. Overall, the Johannine Epistles offer important teachings on Christian living, community, and relationships with

other believers. They reflect the concerns and debates of early Christian communities and provide guidance on how to remain faithful to the teachings of Christ in the face of challenges and conflicts. We shall now proceed to study in details this wonderful works of John the Beloved.

2.2.1 The Book of 1 John

The epistle of 1John in some ways differs from the general style or format associated with most letters written in the first century to the early christians. Most of those letters in their opening remarks often tell more about their destination, recipients and in often cases, they shed more light on the authorship. In other words, 1 John does not exhibit any of the formal characteristics that are normally associated with the openings of letters written in Greek in the first century” (Carson and Moo, 669). The unusual style is one of the reasons why the authorship, destination and the nature of the letter had been a subject of debate amongst scholars. Although there is nowhere in the epistle that the name of John or any other author was mentioned, there are enough evidences to suggest who the actual author is.

Authorship

It is generally believed that the book of 1John was written by John the Apostle. McCain asserts that though the epistle does not specifically include the author's name most scholars attribute it's authorship to Apostle John(p. 288). There are some external and internal attestations to the authorship of 1 John.

External Evidence: Some early church fathers attested to the authorship of John the apostle. These fathers stand as external evidence to John as the author. Eusebius, one of the early church fathers said that Papias used some testimonies from John's former epistle (Thiessen,p.307). More so, Clement of Alexandria, another early church father and contemporary of Irenaeus attested to John's authorship of the book. He is said to have quoted several passages from 1 John and referred to the epistle as the "greater epistle" while attributing it to Apostle John (McCain p.289). Another external evidence to Apostle John as the author of 1 John is the Muratorian canon. This evidence was based on the assumption that I John and the gospel of John have a common origin and that the church has accepted as such (Barker, p.1081).

Internal Evidence: Apart from the external attestations to John's authorship, there are some exciting clues within the texts itself that suggest who the author is. These information within the text are known as internal evidences. One of them is that the

author described himself as the eye-witness of Christ. In the opening passages, specifically in chapter one alone, he made use of the word “we” nineteen times. He seemed to be re-affirming that he and other apostles were eye witnesses and close associates to the ministry of Christ. In one of those passages, he was more equivocal about his claim as an eye witness; “when this life became visible, we saw it; so we speak of it and tell you about the eternal life which was with the father and made known to us” (1 John 1:2). "In addition, there are some striking similarities between the gospel of John and the Epistle of I John. More specifically, there are fifty-one (51) phrases that are common to both books (McCain,289). This, coupled with so many other similarities seems to suggest a common authorship. According to Thiessen, there is a practical unanimity of opinion that the one who wrote the gospel wrote also the Epistle(p.307).

Furthermore, in the course of this study, the writer discovered another striking similarity between the gospel of John and the Epistle of 1 John that strongly suggests or re-affirms a common authorship. The author, in discussing one of his favourite themes, which is “love”, chose an identical Bible verse to proclaim the degree and depth of God's love for humanity. They are John 3:16 and 1 John 3:16. “For God loved the world so much that he gave his only son, so that

everyone who believes in him may not die but have eternal life” (John 3:16 NIV). Similarly the author re-affirmed this great love of God for humanity in a similar and identical passage in I John where he proclaimed that “this is how we know what love is: Christ gave his life for us. We too, then, ought to give our lives for our brothers and sisters” (1 John 3:16 NIV). It becomes imperative to ask: why would such similarity of purpose occur in the same chapter and exact verse of both books? This points to a logical conclusion that the same author would have written both books and that author is John the beloved - the Apostle of Jesus Christ. This writer believes that if more research is done on these two identical verses more discoveries would be unveiled and the body of knowledge would be further enriched.

Date of Writing

There is no consensus amongst scholars on the date the book of John 1 John was written. To get a precise date would amount to reconstructing the history of the Johannine community perfectly (Barker, 1081). However, many scholars believe that the letter was written after John’s gospel. According to Carson and Moo, *“1 John was probably written around the early 90s based on their belief that the gospel of John was written around AD 80-85”* (p. 676). De Young, in his own

assertion, suggests that the letter was written around AD 90-95 shortly after the Gospel of John(p.1177)This suggestion of De Young seems to tall in line with the early 90s dating postulated by Carson and Moo. Furthermore, some other scholars believe that the Epistle was written a little bit earlier than the early 90s as suggested. Scholars such as Barker believes that the heretical developments that prompted John to write his epistle occurred about ten years after the fourth gospel, which is dated AD 70-80. In his view, 1 John was written around AD 80-90 (p.1082). Although Thiessen seems to agree with them that the letter was written beyond the early 90s, he was more concise with his timing; AD 85-90 (p.310). Having examined the different dates given by the aforementioned scholars, this writer believes that there is no actual date attached to the first Epistle of John but it will be safe to suggest any date between AD 80-95.

The Recipients and their Relationship with John

The addressee of this letter was not specifically stated or mentioned in this text. However, internal evidence suggests that the author was very familiar with his intended audience and they know him particularly well. Phrases like “I am writing this to you my children, so that..”(1John 2:1) and “My dear friends, this command...” (I John 2:7) shows that there exists some degree of intimate familiar

relationship between the author and his audience. The familiarity may have accounted for the absence of specific greetings, the addressee and all other formal styles that are associated with most apostolic letters in the New Testament. In addition, the author spoke with an air of authority (McCain, p. 289). That is, he spoke with the conviction that the recipients of the letter would respect his message. This conviction can be connected to the apostolic evidence he somehow emphasized in this letter when he frequently employed the first person plural pronoun (we) in the opening passages. This implies that the recipients have a previous knowledge of him as a man who commands authority—an apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. However, internal evidence in the texts suggests that the recipients were Christians and they were probably Gentiles (Adewale and Ojo, p. 176). According to them, the recipients were already Christians; since the author stated that they know the teachings of Christ and obey his commandments. In addition it is apparent that the recipients were Gentiles, since allusions to the Old Testament history and scripture was not a popular feature in the text, therefore suggesting a Gentile gathering of Christians (Adewale and Ojo). More so, it is a documented fact that John moved to the Gentile territory of Ephesus around the period of the Jewish war and eventually died there (Carson and Moo, 675). Early church fathers like

Irenaeus, specifically, alluded to the fact that John was residing in Ephesus in the latter days of his life and overseeing the churches around that region of Asia Minor (Thiessen p.308). Also, Justin Martyr, another early church father who was residing at Ephesus at about that same era (AD 135) described John as an apostle of Jesus Christ who lived in Ephesus (Harris). This is overwhelming evidence to this argument since Martyr also lived in Ephesus. Therefore it is natural to assume that John would have written the epistle to the Gentile believers in the region of Asia Minor, particularly those in Ephesus.

Purpose

Evidences within the texts suggest that there was a developing schism within the Johannine community that led to this writing (Barker, p.1078). The Schism was as a result of the activities of false teachers, within the Christian community. These false teachers armed with their false doctrines, threatened the faith and fellowship of the Christian community and there was a need for an apostolic intervention. While some believe 1John was occasioned by pastoral concerns, others argue it was purely polemical or a combination of both, yet some adduces other reasons. De Young believes that two purposes (primary and secondary) are reflected in John's epistle, *"the primary purpose was to assure readers of their*

fellowship in Christ and eternal life and to encourage maturity"(p. 1177).The other purpose according to him was polemical; to warn its recipient against heretical teachings.

However,Adewale and Ojo suggest five (5) reasons for the writing of 1 John. These include, to make his joy full, warn his reader not to fall into sin, to assure the faithful that they possess eternal life, warn them about heretics and to intimate them with the text of true discipleship(p.117). Rather than converge, opinions continue to differ with more critical study of the text. However, this writer, while acknowledging and respecting the various opinions of scholars, agrees with the way McCain summarized the purpose in one word "Christology ". He seemed to suggest that the key doctrine John emphasized in his epistle was Christology(p.292). He argued that nearly all the problems that arose within the Johannine community were on the misconception of Jesus Christ. This writer agrees with the suggestion that the main aim of John's first epistle was to shed more light on the knowledge of Christ to his recipients who were in apparent confusion on the issue in question. This doctrine of Christology runs through the body of the text from the beginning to the end. In fact, John began the text with the Christological question and ended with it. In the opening verse of 1 John, he

declared his intent. “We write about the word of life, which has existed from the very beginning, we have heard it, and we have seen it with our eyes... our hands have touched it ’ (1 John 1:1) In this opening passage or verse, the author was specifically referring to Christ Jesus as the subject of the statement. In the same light, the concluding verses have a similar style with the opening verse and also emphasize the knowledge of Christ Jesus. "I am writing this to you so that you may know that you have eternal life you that believe in the Son of God" (1 John 5:13).The author began with the knowledge of the “word of life” and started the concluding passages or verses with the knowledge of “eternal life”. Both allusions are to Jesus, and the aim is to furnish the recipients with the right knowledge of him.

In addition, in chapter one alone the author directly and indirectly made references to Jesus christ seventeen (17) times. (Word of life we have heard it, we have seen it...we have touched it,(v.1).Also in verse 2, “when this life became visible, and we touched it, we speak of it.. the eternal life In chapter 2, the reference to Jesus Christ directly, or implied with a pronoun was thirty- three (33) times. In some of the verses he was referred to as the righteous one (v. 1), light (v.8) Word of God (v. 14) one who has existed from the beginning (v. 14), the truth (v

21). The Son (v.23) in other verses in the same chapter 2 he was also referred to directly as Christ or Jesus Christ. In chapter three, references to him were about fifteen (15), while in chapter four, it was about seven (7) times, and about seventeen (17) times in the concluding chapter.

This writer suggests, in line with McCain's summary of the purpose of 1 John that the writer's aim was to stress or reemphasize the Christological truth to the Johannine community in order that they may recognize who they were in Christ and not get carried away by false teachings that do not represent Christ Jesus. In other words, his aim was to reassure them of their salvation in Christ Jesus and to remind them of the need to maintain a healthy fellowship with him and God the father through an accurate knowledge of His person

2.2.2 Second John(2 John)

Authorship:

There exist different opinions concerning the authorship of 2 John. However, majority of biblical scholars and followers believe that the epistle was written by

John. More so there exist a number of internal and external evidences that suggest who the author is. According to Carson and Moo (p.671) "*the external evidence for 2 and 3 John is not as strong as for 1 John, but never is any of the Johannine epistles attributed to anyone other than John the son of Zebedee*".

External Evidence: Papias of Heirapolis specifically referred to a certain Johannine epistle as the writing of John. Irenaeus also agreed with the above suggestion that the first and second epistles of John were authored by John. The apostle in the same vein, Clement of Alexandria also appeared to know of more than one epistle when he referred to a certain document as greater epistle. He attributed those epistles to John the apostle. However, it was Origen in (AD.255) that first mentioned all three epistles as John's works.

Internal Evidence: There is nothing specific within the texts of the epistle to specifically suggest who the author is. However, there are some striking similarities between 1 and 2 John that supports the Johannine authorship. In other words, there exist similar phrases, vocabulary, syntaxes that are synonymous with both epistles. More so there are also some similarities between the gospel of John and the second epistle of John which support a common authorship. According to

McCain, Phrases such as “Walking in” the Truth,” “love one another” “have known the truth”, “anti-Christ”, “deceive” are some of the common phrases between both books. The same theme of salvation flows through both the gospel and the epistles (Carson and Moo, 72). Some of the similar verses are (1 John 3: 8/ John 8:44,) and (2:16; 4:5/ 8:23,15:19) (3.4/ 8:34,)(1:8/9:41)2 John 7/ 1 John 4:2. Secondly, there is another example of internal evidence within the body of the epistle the author used the term “elder” (le Presbuteros) to refer to himself in the text. Titles such as that would fit John both as an officer in the church and an older man. However, it was argued that the title Apostle instead of an elder would have been much more appropriate for someone like John. Due to that argument such scholars rejected John's authorship.

Date and place of Writing: Some early church fathers quoted and made use of excerpts from the epistle around A.D.107. This suggests that the epistle would have been written some years before A.D 100. Thiessen suggests a date around A.D 85-90 but this writer agrees with McCain's view which holds that anytime between AD85-95 was a more appropriate date the epistle was written . The epistle was written from Ephesus, the last known place before John died.

Recipients: Like most first centuries letters, this epistle has a direct addressee mentioned in the letter. The epistle in its opening identifies a certain addressee the “elect lady” as the recipient of the letter. Some have interpreted this addressee metaphorically to mean the church while others directly interpret as godly lady and her children. The former opinion seems to be the more appropriate interpretation of the phrase “elected lady”. In addition, a comparative look at the following text gives more insight into the interpretation of the phrase: 2 John 4, 5, 12, are 2John 6, 8, 10, 13.

Occasion of Writing: Due to the activities of itinerant preachers who went about spreading falsehood among believers, John deemed it necessary to respond to their overture. This, he did by writing 2 John.

Purpose of Writing: John wrote his second epistle in order to warn the church or the elect lady and their children against opening lady and their children against opening their doors for those itinerant false teachers who have gone into town to spread their false hood around the first two centuries (2 John 10). His aim was to keep believers from being contaminated by those peddling false .According to

Thiessen There are some other reasons that could have prompted John to write these letters . enumerates them as follows:

1. To appreciate the loyalty of the lady and her children (v.1-4)
2. To entreat the lady to continue to walk in love and keep the Lord commandments (v. 5-6)
3. To inform her of his plan to visit her soon (v. 12).
4. To convey the greeting of the children of her sister (verse 13).

Third John

The third epistle of John is the shortest book in the New testament canon.It is the final epistle that John wrote to the church during his last days at ephesus.it was written to address a certain conflict that had crept into one of the churches located in province of Asia.The letter is a personal one to address to a man name Gaius.

Authorship: Much of what was said about the authorship of 2 John applies also to 3 John The internal evidence suggesting John as the writer is obvious from the similar vocabulary, ideas and style associated with 2 John. Secondly, the use of the title ‘Elder’ in verse 1 of both epistles further points to a common authorship of

John the apostle of Jesus. The external evidence that supports John's authorship is the attestations of some early church fathers like Eusebius and Origen who classified 3 John as part of the antilegomena. Irenaeus also supported the authorship of John.

Date of Writing: The letter was written about the same time 1 and 2 John were written (A.D 85-95), it was specifically written a short while after 2 John was written.

Recipient: The letter was personally addressed to a man called Gaius. Not much is known about Gaius. It is not also clear from biblical account if he is the same Gaius who was an associate of Paul when he embarked on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:29), or the Gaius mentioned in (Acts 20.4), or the Gaius who had hosted Paul during his stay at Corinth (Romans 16:23) or a different Gaius entirely. However, this Gaius was trusted and highly regarded by the Apostle John for his hospitality and for standing on the side of the truth. From the letter one deduces that Gaius was a very influential and hospitable member of this church.

Occasion: Schism had erupted in one of the churches under John's watch. A man called Diotrephes had opposed and rejected the itinerant preachers sent by John to the church. He went as far as excommunicating members of the church who had

shown hospitality to the itinerant preachers. It is assumed that Diotrephes was an influential layman or member of the church for him to wield such authority. However, Gaius another influential but kind member of the same church welcomed the preachers and showed them much hospitality (Dinnett, p.85). It was this crisis and schism within the church that prompted John's third epistle, in order to commend Gaius and rebuke Diotrephes, the dictatorial leader of the church.

Purpose

1. The letter was written to achieve the following purposes:
2. To commend Gaius for his hospitality and stand for the truth
3. To condemn and rebuke Diotrephes who had opposed John and his itinerant preachers.
4. To commend another man called Demetrius.

McCain (p.295) quoting Gromacki added the following purposes:

5. To inform Gaius of his love and prayer (v. 1-2)
6. To promote a rejection of Diotrephes' leadership and a following of Demetrius' example (v. 11)

7. To inform Gaius of his plan to visit him (v. 13-14)

2.3 Beliefs and practices

The Johannine community appears to have had a distinctive set of beliefs and practices that set them apart from other early Christian groups. This included a strong emphasis on the divinity of Jesus Christ (John 1:1-18; 20:28), as well as an understanding of the Holy Spirit as a personal guide and mediator of divine revelation (John 14:1-6). They also placed a high value on spiritual practices like baptism, the Eucharist, and prayer. In details their Beliefs and practices are as follows:

1. Beliefs:

A high Christology: The Johannine community believed in the divine nature of Jesus, who they saw as the Word made flesh (John 1:14). They believed that Jesus was the Son of God (John 20:31) and pre-existed with the Father before the world was created (John 1:1-3).

A sacramental theology: The Johannine community placed an emphasis on the role of the sacraments in Christian life. In the Gospel of John, baptism is linked to

being born again (John 3:5), and the Eucharist is presented in terms of consuming the flesh and blood of Jesus (John 6:53-58).

A sense of distinctiveness: The Johannine community believed that they had a special relationship with Jesus and were distinct from other communities. They saw themselves as being 'in' the world but not 'of' the world (John 17:14), and believed that they had a special relationship with the Father (John 14:6-7).

An esotericism: The Johannine community used symbol and metaphor to convey their beliefs in a way that was not always immediately obvious. They saw Jesus as being the true temple, and his death and resurrection as being the destruction and rebuilding of the temple (John 2:18-22). They also used the symbol of light to represent Jesus and his nature (John 1:4-5).

2. Practices:

A focus on love: The Johannine community placed a strong emphasis on love, the Greek word agape, and saw it as being the defining characteristic of Christians (John 13:34-35). This was reflected in their care for one another and their desire to be united as a community.

Mutual support: The Johannine community supported one another through mutual care and support. This is seen in the way that the community was willing to sell their possessions and share their resources with one another (Acts 2:44-45).

Prayer and worship: The Johannine community engaged in regular prayer and worship, which was often centered around the Eucharist. They saw this as a way to connect with Jesus and the Father on a deeper level.

These beliefs and practices show that the Johannine community placed a strong emphasis on a personal relationship with Jesus and his teachings. They placed a high value on love and mutual support, and saw the sacraments, particularly the Eucharist, as central to their life and worship.

2.4 Outline/Features of the Johannine community

1. Relationship to wider Judaism: While the Johannine community likely had some connection to the wider Jewish community in which they were situated, there seems to have been some tension and division between them. Some scholars have suggested that the Johannine community may have been comprised of Jewish believers who were expelled from

synagogues due to their Christian beliefs, while others argue that they may have been primarily made up of Gentile converts to Christianity.

2. Internal conflicts: There were likely disagreements and conflicts within the Johannine community over issues such as the nature of Christ(John 1 :1 - 1 8, 6:41 -51 , 1 0:30-33; 1 John 4:1 -3), the role of the Holy Spirit, and the correct interpretation of Johannine theology(1 John 2:1 8-27, 3:24-4:6) . The letters attributed to John reflect some of these tensions, as the author exhorts his readers to adhere to the true doctrine and reject false teachings because one of the major problems in the Johannine community was the issues of false teachings.
3. Persecution and exclusion: The Johannine community faced hostility and persecution from both Jewish and Roman authorities, as Christianity was seen as a subversive and threatening movement. This may have contributed to a sense of isolation and a need to develop a distinct identity and theology(John 1 8:33-1 9:1 6).
4. Apocalyptic orientation: The Book of Revelation, the final book in the Johannine corpus, reflects an apocalyptic outlook that sees the end of the world and the reign of God as imminent. While the exact significance of

this text for the Johannine community is unclear, it suggests a sense of urgency and expectation for the final resolution of history.

5. Love as Central: Love played a central role within the Johannine community. They emphasized the love commandments of Jesus, which mandated loving God and loving one another (John 13:34-35). Love was viewed not merely as an emotion but as a practical demonstration of their commitment to Jesus and each other.

Overall, the Johannine community was a group of early Christians who held distinctive beliefs and practices related to Christology, the Holy Spirit, and spiritual practices. They faced internal conflicts and external persecution, and their writings reflect a sense of urgency and anticipation for the final resolution of history.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 CRISES IN THE JOHANNINE COMMUNITY

3.1 General Concept of the Crisis in the Johannine Community

The crisis in the Johannine community refers to an internal conflict or theological challenge faced by the early Christian community associated with the author of the Gospel of John and the Johannine letters. While the exact details of the crisis are not explicitly mentioned in the Johannine texts, scholars have attempted to reconstruct the nature and context of this crisis based on the content of these writings. The Gospel of John and the Johannine letters (1 John, 2 John, and 3 John) were likely composed within a specific Christian community or communities, possibly in the late 1st century CE. These texts were written in response to a theological and social conflict present within these communities.

The Johannine community, which existed during the late first century AD, faced various issues that threatened the unity and stability of the group. While the exact nature of the crisis is not explicitly mentioned in the texts, scholars have inferred some key elements based on the content and context of the Johannine writings.

One major issue was the presence of false teachings and the emergence of different theological perspectives within the community. These false teachers, also known as "antichrists" in the Johannine literature, challenged the community's core beliefs and teachings. They may have rejected the divinity of Jesus, denied his incarnation, or questioned his role as the redeemer of humanity.

Another source of conflict was the relationship between the Johannine community and the larger Jewish community. The Gospel of John portrays a tense relationship between Jesus and the Jewish authorities, which may reflect the tensions between the Johannine community and its Jewish neighbors. This could have led to divisions or ostracization within the community.

Additionally, the Johannine community likely faced internal divisions and power struggles. The letters of John address issues of leadership and authority within the community, suggesting a need for strong and unified leadership to address the crisis and maintain the community's identity and beliefs.

Despite the challenges, the Johannine literature also presents a message of love and unity within the community. The writer of the Gospel of John and the letters of John emphasize the importance of love and obedience to God's commandments as means of combating the crisis and preserving a sense of community.

Overall, the crisis in the Johannine community represents a complex set of internal and external challenges that threatened the unity and theological integrity of the early Christian group. The various issues addressed in the Johannine writings provide insights into the context and dynamics of early Christian communities in the first century AD.

Based on the contents of the Johannine texts, scholars propose that the crisis in the Johannine community involved a divergence of theological beliefs and practices.

Some aspects that have been suggested as possible issues include:

1. Christology: The Johannine writings emphasize the divinity of Jesus and his unique relationship with God. It is possible that the community faced challenges from individuals or groups who had different Christological beliefs, possibly focusing more on Jesus' humanity or downplaying his divinity.

2. Ethical Conduct: The letters of John address issues such as love, obedience to commandments, and righteous living. It is possible that there were disagreements or conflicts within the community regarding proper ethical conduct, and the Johannine texts sought to address these concerns.

3. Separation from the World: The Gospel of John repeatedly mentions the idea of believers being "in the world but not of the world." It is possible that the Johannine community faced tensions and conflicts regarding their relationship with the broader society and how they should interact with non-believers.

4. Leadership and Authority: The Johannine writings emphasize the authority of the community's leaders and their role in teaching and guiding the community.

Scholars suggest that there might have been disputes over leadership or conflicts related to the authority and status of individuals within the community.

These are some broad outlines of the crisis in the Johannine community, though it's important to note that the exact details and causes of this crisis are speculative and not explicitly stated in the texts. Scholars continue to debate and explore various theories and interpretations regarding the precise nature of the crisis faced by the Johannine community.

3.2 The Crises in Johannine Writings

The Johannine writings, which include the Gospel of John, the three epistles attributed to John, and the book of Revelation, reflect a number of underlying crises that the Johannine community was likely facing. While the exact nature and historical context of these crises remain open to scholarly debate, the texts themselves provide insights into the challenges confronted by the early Christian community.

One key crisis revolves around the theological and Christological controversies that the Johannine community encountered. The Gospel of John, for example, presents a highly exalted view of Jesus, emphasizing his divine nature and role as the Word or Logos of God. This elevated Christology likely emerged in response

to alternative understandings of Jesus within the larger Christian movement. The Johannine community sought to distinguish its perspective from others and assert the unique identity and mission of Jesus.

Moreover, there are indications that tensions existed between the Johannine community and other Jewish groups. The Gospel of John frequently highlights conflicts between Jesus and Jewish authorities, portraying a strained relationship between Jews and Christians. While it is important to approach these portrayals cautiously to avoid perpetuating anti-Jewish sentiments, the text suggests that the Johannine community may have experienced animosity or separation from Jewish communities.

Another crisis that emerges within the Johannine writings pertains to the issue of false teaching or false prophets. The Johannine epistles, in particular, address the presence of individuals who espouse divergent theological views and practices within the community. These false teachers likely propagated ideas that were at odds with the Johannine understanding of Jesus and salvation. The epistles respond by underscoring the importance of correct beliefs and ethical living as key markers of true faith.

As the book of Revelation depicts, the Johannine community also faced the challenges of persecution and uncertainty. The apocalyptic language and imagery employed in Revelation communicate a sense of crisis and turmoil, as the community grapples with the suffering and trials associated with their faith. Through symbolic visions and messages, the book encourages endurance and hope, assuring the community that God's ultimate victory and vindication are certain.

It is important to note that these crises within the Johannine writings are not standalone issues but interconnected aspects of the challenges faced by the early Christian community. The texts reflect the community's theological concerns, identity formation, and responses to persecution or exclusion. Scholars continue to explore and analyze these crises, illuminating the historical and theological context in which the Johannine writings were produced.

3.2.1 Crisis of the Gospel of John

The exact nature and historical context of the crises that led to the writing of the Gospel of John are still subject to scholarly debate. However, there are several potential crises that have been proposed by scholars based on analysis of the text:

1. Christological controversy: One suggested crisis is a theological and Christological dispute within the early Christian movement. Asthon asserts the

Gospel of John presents a highly exalted view of Jesus, emphasizing his divine nature and role as the Word or Logos of God(p.92).This could have been a response to alternative understandings of Jesus that emerged within the larger Christian community. The Johannine community sought to assert the unique identity and mission of Jesus against competing interpretations.

2.Jewish Opposition: The Gospel of John portrays a significant opposition between Jesus and the Jewish authorities, particularly the Pharisees and other religious leaders. This opposition may reflect a larger conflict between the early Christian community and the broader Jewish community in which they were situated. The Gospel of John may have been written to provide a defense of the Christian faith and explain the differences between Christianity and Judaism.

3. Departures and Betrayal: The Gospel of John portrays various instances of people leaving or betraying Jesus, including the "many" who desert him in John 6:66 and Judas' betrayal in John 13:21-30. These departures and betrayals may have caused significant worry and uncertainty within the early Christian community. The Gospel of John may have been written to encourage those who had remained faithful to Jesus and explain why the departures and betrayals occurred.

4. An Apology against forces within the Church

Others see the reason for the writing of John's Gospel as combating Gnosticism and Docetic teachings. The Docetists held that the Christ never became incarnate; everything seemed. The term comes from the Greek word *dokein*, to seem, which gives

the name to the heresy. They point to 1.14; 6.53-54; 19.34 as proof for this understanding for being the purpose of John. Kummel asserts John lays claim to the language of *gnosis* in order to show Christians that Jesus is the true revealer (Kummel, 230).

5. Theological Controversies: The Gospel of John engages in various theological debates and offers a unique understanding of the nature of Jesus' relationship with God the Father, his divinity, and his role as saviour. These theological claims may have been controversial at the time of the Gospel's composition and may have led to disagreements and debates within the early Christian community. The Gospel of John may have been written to provide a defense of these theological claims and explain their significance.

Although these proposed crises provide some potential reasons for the writing of the Gospel of John, it is essential to note that they are based on inferences and

interpretations of the text. However, scholars have suggested that the Gospel likely reflects the challenges and controversies faced by the early Christian community and was written to provide an explanation of the Christian faith and to provide comfort and encouragement to those facing these difficulties.

3.2.2 Crises of The Johannine Epistles

The Johannine Epistles, comprised of 1, 2, and 3 John, were written in response to a specific crisis within the Johannine community. While the exact nature of the crisis is not explicitly stated in the texts, scholars have proposed several possible scenarios based on the content of the letters. Here are a few potential crises that may have led to the writing of the Johannine Epistles:

1. Schism within the Community: Some scholars suggest that the Johannine community was experiencing a division or schism. The letters address the problem of false teachers or antichrists who had emerged within the community and were spreading false teachings. The author of the epistles, often identified as the Elder, writes to affirm the true faith and to warn against the divisive influence of these false teachers.

2. Doctrinal Controversies: Another crisis that may have influenced the Johannine Epistles is related to doctrinal disagreements within the community. The author

addresses issues of correct belief, emphasizing the importance of confessing the true identity of Jesus Christ and adhering to the teachings received from the beginning. There may have been competing claims and interpretations of Jesus and his teachings, leading to significant theological disputes.

3. Ethical Challenges: The Johannine Epistles also reflect concerns about ethical challenges or moral lapses within the community. The author emphasizes the need for love, truth, and righteous behavior among the members of the community. Some scholars suggest that certain members may have been tempted to compromise on ethical standards or were engaging in unloving behavior, necessitating the corrective teachings found in the letters.

4. Departure of Former Members: It is possible that the Johannine community had experienced a significant number of departures or defections by former members. The author addresses the departure of these individuals and seeks to encourage the remaining members to remain steadfast in their faith. The letters highlight the importance of remaining part of the community and warn against the dangers of leaving the fellowship.

5. Persecution: The Johannine community may have been facing persecution from outside forces, including the Roman Empire and/or the Jewish community. The

community may have been subject to social ostracism, economic hardship, and perhaps even physical violence. The Johannine Epistles may have been written to offer comfort and encouragement to the community in the face of these challenges. It's important to note that the exact nature and extent of the crisis leading to the writing of the Johannine Epistles remains speculative, as the letters do not provide explicit details. However, the issues discussed above are some of the main theories proposed by scholars based on the content and context of the epistles

3.2.3 The Book of Revelation and its Crises

The book of Revelation, or the Apocalypse, is the final book of the New Testament in the Bible. It is a complex and highly symbolic work that presents a vision of the future and addresses the crises and challenges faced by the early Christian community. Written by an author traditionally identified as John, the book of Revelation offers encouragement, hope, and warnings to believers in the midst of persecution, false teachings, cultural compromise, and internal divisions.

The book begins with an introduction (Revelation 1:1-3) that highlights its purpose: to reveal and make known the things that must soon take place. It is presented as a prophecy given to John by Jesus Christ, who instructs him to write to the seven churches in Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). These churches represent the

broader Christian community and symbolize the challenges faced by the contemporary believers. The book of Revelation then consists of a series of visions and heavenly encounters that sequentially unveil different aspects of God's plan for the future. These visions are full of rich symbolism, drawing heavily from the Old Testament scriptures, apocalyptic literature, and Hellenistic and Jewish imagery.

Throughout the book, the crises faced by the early Christian community are addressed. The book confronts the issue of intense persecution endured by believers, using powerful and vivid language to describe the cosmic battle raging between the forces of evil and the triumphant Christ. It portrays the rise of the Antichrist and the ultimate victory of God's kingdom over the oppressive powers of the world.

The book of Revelation also warns against false teachings, compromises with pagan practices, and internal divisions within the Christian community. It urges believers to remain faithful, reject idol worship, and endure hardships and persecution with hope and trust in God's ultimate plan for redemption and salvation. Koester asserts that while the book of Revelation can be challenging to interpret due to its symbolic nature, its overarching message is one of hope, perseverance, and assurance that God is sovereign, actively working to bring about

the ultimate defeat of evil and the establishment of a new heavens and new earth.(koester p.27)

The book of Revelation has been a subject of much debate and interpretation throughout history. Scholars have examined its historical context, theological themes, and the potential relevance of its visions to both the ancient Christian community and contemporary believers. These scholarly discussions contribute to a richer understanding of the book and its message of hope amidst crisis.

Meanwhile these crises can be categorized into several themes:

1. Persecution: The author of Revelation, traditionally identified as John, himself a persecuted Christian, writes to provide encouragement and support to believers facing intense religious persecution. The book depicts a great red dragon (representing Satan and imperial Rome) persecuting the faithful followers of Christ.
2. False Teaching and Heresy: The book of Revelation warns about false teaching and heresy that had infiltrated some Christian communities of the time. The author condemns the teachings of a group called the Nicolaitans and warns about the influence of the woman Jezebel, who represents false teachings and immorality.
3. Compromising with Pagan Practices: The book of Revelation addresses the issue of Christians compromising with the prevailing pagan practices of the Roman

Empire. The letters to the seven churches in chapters 2 and 3 highlight the need for faithfulness and separation from idolatry and participation in pagan rituals.

4. Disunity and Apostasy: The book of Revelation warns against internal divisions, apostasy, and the loss of faith within the Christian community. The author urges believers to remain faithful and not be led astray by false teachings, false prophets, or the allure of worldly power and wealth.

5. Eschatological Crisis: The book of Revelation also deals with the crisis of eschatology, or the understanding of the end times. The portrayal of intense cosmic battles, the coming of the Antichrist, and the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ over evil serve to reassure the early Christians that their suffering and persecution will be vindicated in the eschatological judgment.

It is important to note that the crises discussed in the book of Revelation are often symbolic and often have both historical and eschatological dimensions. The exact historical context and specific crises the author addresses can be a matter of debate among scholars.

3.3 Sociological View on the Crisis in Johanne community

The sociological view on the crises faced by the Johannine community, particularly as depicted in the book of Revelation, focuses on understanding the

social and communal dynamics that shaped the author's message and the responses of the early Christian community.

One sociological perspective is to view the crises in the Johannine community as stemming from both external and internal pressures. Externally, *According to Bruce J.* "the early Christians were likely subject to persecution and marginalization by the Roman Empire, which could have created a sense of fear, uncertainty, and divisiveness within the community".(Bruce p.7) This external pressure would have shaped the author's apocalyptic vision and the need to convey hope and encouragement to the believers.

Internally, the Johannine community might have experienced various challenges related to its identity and cohesiveness. For instance, internal divisions over theological beliefs, leadership conflicts, and competing interpretations of Jesus' teachings could have played a role in the crises addressed in the book of Revelation. The author may have aimed to address these internal divisions and encourage unity among the believers, advocating for a more unified and steadfast faith.

Another sociological perspective explores the role of cultural and religious context in the crises faced by the Johannine community. In the Greco-Roman world, there

was a wide range of religious beliefs and practices, often centered around the worship of various gods and goddesses. The early Christians faced pressures to conform to societal norms, which could have led to compromises and syncretism with pagan religious practices. The crises faced by the community could therefore include struggles with maintaining their distinct identity as followers of Christ while engaging with the broader cultural and religious environment.

Additionally, sociological analysis can consider the social and economic dimensions of the Johannine community's crises. Economic disparities, social stratification, and the challenges of living as a marginalized group within a broader society may have contributed to tensions and difficulties for the early Christians. (Dawes p.283) Their commitment to their faith and the implications of their religious beliefs may have created conflicts or difficulties in their daily lives.

The sociological view on the crises in the Johannine community emphasizes the social, cultural, and economic influences that shaped the challenges faced by the early Christians. By examining the broader social context, internal dynamics, and external pressures, this perspective contributes to a fuller understanding of the complexities of the crises and the author's message of hope and perseverance in the face of adversity. (Cook p.169)

3.4 Theological view on the Crises in Johanine community

The Johannine community, which includes the Gospel of John, the Johannine Epistles (1, 2, and 3 John), and the Book of Revelation, is believed to have faced various theological crises during the early Christian era. These crises were likely prompted by internal divisions, external pressures, and challenges to the community's understanding of Jesus and their identity as followers of Christ.

Brown asserts that one of the primary theological crises in the Johannine community was likely related to the nature and identity of Jesus. The Gospel of John presents Jesus as the divine Word made flesh, emphasizing his preexistence and equating him with God. This high Christology would have been radical and may have challenged the beliefs and traditions of some community members (Brown p.119)

Another theological crisis revolved around the community's relationship with the broader Jewish community. The Gospel of John reflects tensions between the Johannine community and the Jewish authorities, depicting a strained relationship. While the community maintained its Jewish roots, it also became increasingly open to Gentile believers. This tension between the Jewish and Gentile members and

their differing religious practices and beliefs could have posed challenges for the community's unity.

There were also theological challenges from external sources. The Johannine community likely faced opposition and persecution from both Jewish authorities and the Roman Empire. The community's distinctive beliefs, such as their emphasis on the divinity of Jesus, may have made them targets of intense scrutiny and hostility. (Keener p.29)

Additionally, the Johannine community may have experienced internal divisions over issues such as leadership, ethical practices, and doctrinal disputes. The Epistles of John address the presence of false teachers and warn against deceptive teachings that could undermine the community's unity and commitment to the truth. These theological crises in the Johannine community prompted the authors of the Gospel of John, the Johannine Epistles, and the Book of Revelation to address and provide theological responses to these challenges. The Johannine literature affirms the divinity of Jesus, the importance of love and unity within the community, the rejection of false teachings, and the hope for redemption and victory in the face of persecution and turmoil. By examining these theological crises in the Johannine community, scholars and readers gain insights into the challenges faced by early

Christian communities and the ways they worked through these theological struggles to shape their identity and beliefs.

The conclusion regarding the crises in the Johannine community is that it was a community of believers that was experiencing a crisis on the basis of theological issues. These issues included debates over the identity and nature of Jesus, the significance of the crucifixion and resurrection, and the role of the Holy Spirit in the beliefs and practices of the community. The Johannine community faced challenges from false teachers who held different theological beliefs (Keener p.1440) In response, the community developed a distinct identity based on its particular theological perspectives, and it began to exclude those who did not share those views. While the precise nature of the crises in the Johannine community remains the subject of scholarly debate, it is generally agreed that the community drew strength from its internal cohesion and its shared spiritual experiences, and that it ultimately persevered through the challenges it faced. The theological beliefs and practices that emerged from these crises have shaped the Christian tradition and continue to be studied and debated to this day.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE CRISES TO THE CHURCH IN NIGERIA

4.1 The Crises of the Nigerian Church in Relation to the Johannine community

The Nigerian church, like the ancient Johannine community, faces various crises and challenges that impact its theological understanding, unity, and effectiveness in fulfilling its mission. Just as the Johannine community experienced theological disputes, false teachings, and divisions, the Nigerian church grapples with similar issues in the modern context. Additionally, internal conflicts, power struggles, and cultural challenges also pose significant obstacles. This introduction will explore these crises seen in both contexts, drawing parallels between the Johannine community and the Nigerian church in recent times. By recognizing these similarities and understanding the complexities of these crises, the Nigerian

church can work towards addressing them and fostering a unified and impactful Christian witness in Nigeria.

Several crises seen in the Johannine community can also be observed in the Nigerian church in recent times. These include:

Theological disputes and divisions: The Nigerian church, like the Johannine community, experiences theological disputes and divisions. These disputes can arise due to differing interpretations of Scriptures, theological traditions, and cultural influences. For example, debates over doctrines such as the roles of women in ministry, the nature of the Holy Spirit, or the interpretation of certain biblical texts can lead to divisions within the church.

False teachings and controversies: Similar to the Johannine community, the Nigerian church has encountered false teachings and controversies. There have been instances of self-proclaimed prophets or pastors promoting teachings that deviate from biblical truth. These teachings can range from prosperity theology and the misuse of spiritual gifts to extreme practices associated with deliverance or healing. The presence of false teachings can lead to confusion and division among believers.

Doctrinal diversity and sectarianism: Just as the Johannine community had a distinct theological perspective; the Nigerian church exhibits a diverse range of theological views and denominations. This diversity is influenced by factors such as historical context, cultural traditions, and missionary influence. However, this can also contribute to divisions and sectarianism, as some groups prioritize their distinct denominational identity over unity in Christ.

Internal conflicts and power struggles: The Johannine community faced internal conflicts and power struggles, and the Nigerian church is not immune to these challenges. Internal conflicts can arise due to leadership disputes, financial mismanagement, differences in doctrinal emphasis, or disagreements over church governance. These conflicts can hinder the effectiveness of the church's mission and often require concerted efforts to seek reconciliation and unity.

Cultural challenges and integration: The Johannine community operated within a cultural context influenced by Greco-Roman philosophies and rituals. Similarly, the Nigerian church faces challenges in integrating Christian beliefs and practices within the diverse cultural landscape of Nigeria. Cultural challenges can include issues such as syncretism, where elements of traditional African religions are

mixed with Christianity, and the clash of cultural norms and Christian teachings, especially in areas such as family dynamics and interpersonal relationships.

love and Disunity: The issues of love and unity in the Johannine community can indeed be related to the Nigerian Church, as well as other Christian communities around the world. In the Johannine community, there were divisions and tensions among the members, which threatened their unity and fellowship with one another. Similarly, in the context of the Nigerian Church, there can be various challenges to love and unity among its members. These challenges may include ethnic or tribal divisions, socio-economic disparities, theological differences, political affiliations, and various forms of internal power struggles. These factors can sometimes lead to a lack of love, understanding, and unity within the Church.

Addressing these crises in the Nigerian church necessitates a multi-faceted approach. It requires promoting strong theological education and biblical literacy, fostering discernment among believers, and encouraging open dialogue and respectful engagement between different theological perspectives. Additionally, cultivating a culture of love, forgiveness, and unity within the Church is paramount. This includes addressing internal conflicts and power struggles through fair and transparent processes, ensuring responsible stewardship of resources, and fostering

a spirit of cooperation and shared vision. Finally, integrating Christian faith within the Nigerian cultural context requires careful contextualization and discernment, ensuring cultural practices align with biblical principles while preserving the richness and diversity of Nigerian culture.

4.2 John Role in Addressing the Crises

The Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles (consisting of 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John) were written during a time of crisis and challenges within the Johannine community. These writings were crafted to address and respond to the specific issues faced by this community. One of the major crises faced by the Johannine community was division and conflict, characterized by a split within the community where some members had separated to form their own group. This division threatened the unity and fellowship of the community. In addition to division, the Johannine community also faced the presence of false teachers who were spreading misleading and erroneous teachings. These false teachers posed a significant threat to the faith and well-being of the community, as they had the potential to lead believers astray from the truth. It is within this context of division and the presence of false teaching that the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles were written. Throughout these writings, the author, traditionally believed

to be the apostle John, addresses the crises and challenges by emphasizing key themes such as love, unity, truth, and the need for discernment. The author stresses the importance of love for one another within the community and the significance of unity among believers. The Johannine writings highlight the need to discern and test the teachings presented, ensuring they align with the truth of the gospel. By doing so, the Johannine community can solidify its faith, retain its unity, and counteract the impact of division and false teachings.

In essence, the Gospel of John and the Johannine Epistles seek to address and offer guidance to the Johannine community during a time of crisis. These writings provide encouragement, instruction, and a reminder of the central values required for Christian living, such as love, unity, and adherence to the truth of the gospel. By focusing on these foundational principles, the author aims to help the Johannine community heal from division, reject false teachings, and remain faithful to Christ amidst the challenges they face.

Some of this issue includes:

Division and Conflict: There were division and conflict within the Johannine community, with some members leaving to form their own group. John's Gospel and Epistles emphasize the importance of unity and love as critical to Christian

living. John's Gospel records Jesus' high priestly prayer for unity among believers (John 17:21-23), and in his Epistles, John writes, "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God" (1 John 4:7). John stresses that love should be demonstrated through actions and not merely in words (1 John 3:18) and that believers must be willing to forgive one another (1 John 4:11).

False Teachers: The Johannine community faced threats from false teaching, which had the potential to lead believers astray. John's writings address this issue by warning the community against such teaching and by emphasizing the importance of holding to the truth. John's Gospel highlights Jesus' statement that he is the way, the truth, and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him" (John 14:6). John writes that the false teachers are "antichrists," who deny that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (1 John 2:22). Believers are called to test the spirits to see if they are from God (1 John 4:1) and to hold firm to the truth that they have received from the beginning (1 John 2:24). The Johannine epistles is also very critical about the heretical teachings which has proliferated contemporary churchrd all around the world. In this epistle, John admonished the church on what manner of teaching they should listen to (Carson and moo, 685)

Persecution: The Johannine community faced persecution from the larger society because of their faith. John's writings encourage believers to remain steadfast in the face of persecution, reminding them of the promises of eternal life and the love of God. In John's Gospel, Jesus promises the gift of the Holy Spirit to empower believers to bear witness to Him even in the face of persecution (John 15:26-27). John reminds believers that they are children of God and that the world cannot understand them because they do not know God (1 John 3:1). Believers are encouraged to continue in the faith and to trust in the love of God, which endures forever (1 John 2:17-18).

Overall, John's writings address the crises facing the Johannine community by emphasizing the importance of love, unity, and truth. By holding to these values, believers are empowered to navigate the challenges they faced and to remain faithful to Christ in the face of persecution and false teaching.

4.2 The Solutions/Implications to the Church in Nigeria

While it may be challenging to directly draw implications from the specific crises facing the Johannine community to the Nigerian Church, there are valuable lessons and solutions that can be learned from John's writings. These lessons can be applied to address similar crises and challenges within the Nigerian church or

any faith community. The crises in the Johannine community, such as division, false teaching, and persecution, bring to light important issues that exist within faith communities, including the Nigerian Church. In the face of division and conflict, it is crucial for the Nigerian Church to prioritize unity and love within its congregations. John's emphasis on love as the foundation of Christian living can guide the Nigerian Church towards fostering a spirit of unity, reconciliation, and forgiveness among its members.

False teaching is another challenge faced by the Johannine community that plagues faith communities today, including the Nigerian Church. The spread of misleading doctrines and practices can undermine the faith of believers and lead them astray. To combat this, the Nigerian Church must prioritize sound teaching and equipping its members with the tools to discern truth from falsehood. Building a solid foundation of biblical knowledge, encouraging critical thinking, and providing opportunities for doctrinal education and spiritual development are essential to counter false teachings.

Persecution is a crisis faced by the Johannine community, and the Nigerian Church also faces its own share of persecution and discrimination in certain contexts. To navigate this challenge, the Nigerian Church can draw inspiration from John's

writings which remind believers of the promises of eternal life and the enduring love of God. Nurturing a strong faith, providing support networks, and enforcing a spirit of resilience can help believers withstand persecution and maintain their commitment to Christ.

Certainly, here are some possible solutions and implications that the Nigerian Church can draw from the crisis in the Johannine community:

Emphasis on love and unity: The Johannine writings place a significant emphasis on love and unity within the Christian community. The Nigerian church can draw from this example by encouraging believers to prioritize relationships and unity, even in the face of doctrinal or cultural differences. Encouraging a culture of love and acceptance can help to combat divisions and promote the overall health of the church.(Akinade and Akinpelu,33)

Foster a Culture of Inclusivity and Respect: The Nigerian Church can encourage a culture of inclusivity and respect where the diversity of its members is appreciated and celebrated. This can be achieved through pastoral programs that foster inter-ethnic and inter-denominational dialogue and initiatives that address the particular needs and challenges faced by different groups.

Promote Reconciliation and Understanding: The Nigerian Church can promote reconciliation and understanding among its members by providing platforms for dialogue and reconciliation. This includes opportunities for members to confess their sins and seek forgiveness, pastoral care programs that provide healing for individuals and groups affected by conflicts, and the development of a culture of forgiveness and grace. (1John1:6-7)

Develop Collaborative and Cooperative Structures: Just as the different parts of the human body work together harmoniously, the Nigerian Church can develop collaborative and cooperative structures that encourage its members to work together towards a common goal. This includes building relationships of trust and support among its members and enabling collaboration across different denominations, ethnic groups, and geographic regions. (1John1:7)

Encourage Servant Leadership: The Nigerian Church can encourage servant leadership at all levels, where leaders see themselves as servants of their congregants and are committed to serving their needs and promoting their welfare. This includes leaders who are humble, selfless, and compassionate in their interactions with others, and who set an example of servant leadership for others to follow.

Provide Effective Pastoral Care: The Nigerian Church can provide effective pastoral care that attends to the spiritual, emotional, and material needs of its members. This includes providing support for those who are marginalized or vulnerable and creating programs that address the challenges faced by different age groups, economic classes, and social groups. (1John3:18)

Promoting obedience to God's commands: The Johannine writings also place an emphasis on obedience to God's commands as a means of demonstrating love for God. The Nigerian church can apply this by highlighting the importance of obedience to God's commands in practical ways, such as by promoting ethical standards in business and personal behavior, supporting efforts to combat corruption and injustice, and promoting social welfare programs that benefit the less privileged.(Daramola and Adekeye,202)

Intentional teaching and disciple-making: The Johannine writings emphasize the importance of teaching and discipleship as a means of combating false teachings and promoting sound doctrine. The Nigerian church can apply this by ensuring that its leaders are properly trained and equipped to teach sound biblical doctrine(Adedeji,48) Additionally, churches may benefit from implementing

intentional discipleship programs that help to ground believers in the truths of the faith.

In summary, the Nigerian Church can draw on the historical example of the Johannine community to address its own needs and challenges. This involves placing a strong emphasis on the commandment of love, fostering a culture of inclusivity and respect, promoting reconciliation and understanding, developing collaborative and cooperative structures, encouraging servant leadership, and providing effective pastoral care. By doing so, the Nigerian Church can build a more vibrant and communal community that serves the needs of its members and promotes the values of the Gospel

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary

Chapter one of this research is the introductory part of the Johannine community and its Crises. In the statement of problems there was a little emphasis of the problems and crisis that the Johannine community encountered. The aim of this research was to show the Implications of the Crisis in John's community to Nigerian Church and offer solutions to the problems in the Nigerian Church in relating to the Crises in John's community. The significance of this study was to give the church a clarion call and to come into awareness errors and practices that

are extravagant in the Nigerian christian community using the the crises in the Johannine community as case study

In chapter two which is the literature review,there was review on the Johanine community what do they represent,their beliefs and practices and what was the books written by John to his community on how to remain steadfast in faith and in fellowship with one another in love.

Chapter Three which is the main body of the study has to deal majorly on the Crises in John's community and ,its effects on his writings.

Chapter Four which is also the main chapters of this research discuss majorly in the implications of the Crises in Johannine community to the Nigerian Church and the solution to the Crises in the Nigerian Church using the Johanine community as a case study

5.2 Conclusion

The crises faced by the Johannine community in the early Christian era offer valuable insights and implications for the church in Nigeria today. While there may not be a direct parallel between the specific situations, the lessons learned from the Johannine community's challenges can be applied to address similar crises faced by the Nigerian church.

Firstly, the focus on love and unity within the Johannine community can guide the Nigerian church to prioritize these values as well. In the face of division and conflict, fostering a spirit of unity, reconciliation, and forgiveness among congregations is crucial.

Secondly, the issue of false teaching, which was a challenge for the Johannine community, is also relevant for the Nigerian church. Combating misleading doctrines and practices can be achieved by prioritizing sound teaching, equipping believers with the tools to discern truth from falsehood, and providing opportunities for doctrinal education and spiritual development.

Lastly, persecution, though experienced differently, is another crisis faced by both the Johannine community and the Nigerian church. Drawing inspiration from John's teachings on the promises of eternal life and the enduring love of God can help believers in Nigeria withstand persecution and maintain their commitment to Christ. Nurturing a strong faith, providing support networks, and fostering resilience can bring strength to believers facing persecution.

Finally, while the specific crises faced by the Johannine community may differ from those faced by the Nigerian church today, the lessons and solutions derived from the Johannine writings can provide valuable guidance. Prioritizing love, unity,

and truth, and addressing challenges related to division, false teaching, and persecution can help the Nigerian church thrive and effectively exhibit the love and teachings of Christ to the world. By applying these lessons, the Nigerian church can navigate crises more effectively and be a beacon of hope and strength in a challenging world

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the crises faced by the Johannine community and its implications on the church in Nigeria, the following recommendations can be made:

1. Promoting Love and Unity: The church in Nigeria should prioritize fostering a spirit of love, unity, and reconciliation among believers. This can be achieved through intentional efforts to build relationships, encourage dialogue, and address conflicts effectively. Emphasizing the importance of love, forgiveness, and unity within the church will help mitigate crises and strengthen the overall faith community.

2. Ensuring Sound Teaching: The Nigerian church should prioritize sound teaching and equip believers with the knowledge and skills to discern truth from falsehood. This can be accomplished through robust theological education, training programs, and regular opportunities for discipleship. By emphasizing biblical literacy and

doctrine, the church can help prevent the spread of false teaching and equip believers to defend their faith.

3. **Developing Resilience in the Face of Persecution:** Given the presence of persecution in Nigeria, the church should focus on nurturing resilience among believers. This can be done through providing support networks, mentorship programs, and teaching on the promises of eternal life and God's faithfulness. Empowering believers to withstand persecution while continuing to live out their faith will enable the church to thrive in challenging circumstances.

4. **Encouraging Interdenominational Cooperation:** Just as the Johannine community faced internal divisions, the Nigerian church can work towards greater interdenominational cooperation and unity. This can involve creating platforms for dialogue, collaboration, and joint initiatives among various denominations. By focusing on shared goals and building bridges across denominational lines, the church can strengthen its witness and address crises more effectively.

5. **Promoting Social Engagement and Justice:** The Nigerian church should actively engage with social issues and advocate for justice and reconciliation. This can involve addressing poverty, corruption, and other societal challenges. By

demonstrating the transformative power of the Gospel in practical ways, the church can make a significant impact on the broader community and contribute to the resolution of larger crises.

In conclusion, addressing the crises faced by the Johannine community and their implications on the church in Nigeria requires a multifaceted approach. By prioritizing love, unity, sound teaching, resilience, interdenominational cooperation, and social engagement, the church can navigate crises more effectively and make a positive impact on both the faith community and society at large.

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