

# Introducing - 1 John

Oct 30, 2016

## I. Titles:

- A. John = name means, gift of God
- B. The First Epistle of John
- C. The Book of Love

## 2. Author:

Written by the Apostle John, the author of the Gospel, three Epistles, and the Revelation. These three works complement each other and give to us a full picture of the Christian life.

The Gospel of John	The Epistles of John	The Revelation of John
Emphasis on salvation	Emphasis on sanctification	Emphasis on glorification
Past history	Present experience	Future hope
Christ died for us	Christ lives in us	Christ comes for us
The Word made flesh	The Word made real in us	The Word conquering

## 3. Date:

Probably written between 85 and 90 AD.

## 4. Key Words:

How many times used

A. Love (d, s)	46
B. Know (2 Greek words)	42
C. Sin (s, ed)	28
D. World (s)	23
E. Life	15
F. Abide (s, ing)	12

## 5. Key Verse:

1 Jn 4:16 We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

## 6. Purpose: John stated five purposes for the writing of this epistle:

**A. That we might overcome error;** to refute the heresy of Gnosticism (see **The false teachers** below).

**Definition of Gnosticism** = the thought and practice especially of various cults of late pre-Christian and early Christian centuries distinguished by the conviction that matter is evil and that emancipation comes through gnosis (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary)

John was facing the false teachings of his day, just as we must face false teachers today.

1Jn 2:21 I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

1Jn 2:26 These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.

These false teachers were claiming:

- 1) that matter was evil, therefore Christ did not come in the flesh;
- 2) that Christ only appeared to be a real man;
- 3) that knowledge of truth is more important than living the truth;
- 4) that only a "spiritual few" could understand spiritual truths.

As you read 1 John, you will see that John emphasizes:

- 1) that matter is not evil, but man's nature is sinful;
- 2) that Jesus Christ had a real body and experienced a real death;
- 3) that it is not enough "to say" what we believe, we must practice it;
- 4) that all Christians have an anointing from God and can know His truth.

**B. That we might have fellowship.**

"Fellowship" is the key theme of the first two chapters.

1Jn 1:3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1Jn 1:6-7 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Fellowship has to do with our communion with Christ, not our union with Christ, which is sonship. Our daily fellowship changes; our sonship remains the same.

**C. That we might have joy.**

The word "joy" is used only once, but the blessing of joy is seen throughout the entire letter. Joy is the result of a close fellowship with Christ.

1Jn 1:4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

**D. That we might not sin.**

The penalty of sin is taken care of when the sinner trusts Christ, but the power of sin over the daily life is another matter. First John explains how we may have victory over sin and how to get forgiveness when we do sin.

1Jn 2:1-2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; 2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

**E. That we might have assurance.**

In his Gospel, John tells us how to be saved. Now in his epistle, he tells us how to be sure we are saved.

1Jn 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (Jn 20:31)

**7. Message:**

The letter falls into two divisions.

Chapters 1-2 emphasize their fellowship;

Chapters 3-5 emphasize their sonship; on being born of God (3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18).

In each of these sections, John gives three basic "tests":

- 1) obedience (walking in the light);
- 2) love (walking in love);
- 3) truth (walking in the truth).

In other words, I can know I am in fellowship with God through Christ

- 1) if I have no known (unrepented) sin in my life;
- 2) if I have love for Him and His people;
- 3) if I believe and practice the truth and not some satanic lie.

I can know that I am a son of God in the same way:

- 1) if I am obeying His Word;
- 2) if I have love for Him and His people;
- 3) if I believe and live the truth.

John asks us to apply these tests, that we might enjoy the Christian life to the fullest.

## 8. Outline:

John is the most difficult of New Testament books to outline. Many argue that there is no outline, that John has no logical plan, but simply writes a very personal letter shifting themes as one thought leads him to another. Thus, three possible outlines are given to show various ways in which this letter might be analyzed.

### Theological Outline

- I. Light Chap. 1 & 2
- II. Love Chap. 3 & 4
- III. Faith Chap. 5

### The Nature of God Outline

- Prologue (1:1–4)
- I. God as Light (1:5–2:27)
    - A. Communion and Confession (1:5–2:2)
    - B. Communion and Obedience (2:3–17)
    - C. Warning: Antichrists (2:18–27)
  - II. God as Righteous (2:28–4:6)
    - A. Righteous Children (2:28–3:10)
    - B. Righteous Love (3:11–18)
    - C. Confidence before God (3:19–24)
    - D. Warning: The Spirit of Antichrist (4:1–6)
  - III. God as Love (4:7–5:12)
    - A. True Love (4:7–21)
    - B. Centrality of Faith in Christ (5:1–12)
- Epilogue (5:13–21)

### Outline based on the danger from false teachers

- Preface (1:1–4)
- I. Basic Realities False Teachers Deny (1:5–2:2)
    - A. Sin Breaks Fellowship with God (1:5–7)
    - B. Sin Exists in Our Nature (1:8–9)
    - C. Sin Expresses Itself in Our Conduct (1:10–2:2)
  - II. Tests of Relationship: Their First Application (2:3–27)
    - A. Obedience, the Moral Test (2:3–6)
    - B. Love, the Social Test (2:7–11)
    - C. Digression on the Church and the World (2:12–17)
    - D. Belief, the Doctrinal Test (2:18–27)
  - III. Tests of Relationship: Second Application (2:28–4:6)
    - A. More on the Moral Test: Righteousness (2:28–3:10)
    - B. More on the Social Test: Love (3:11–18)
    - C. Digression on Assurance (3:19–24)
    - D. More on the Doctrinal Test: Belief (4:1–6)
  - IV. Tests of Relationship: Third Application (4:7–5:5)
    - A. More on the Social Test: Love (4:7–12)
    - B. A Combination of Social and Doctrinal Tests (4:13–21)
    - C. A Combination of the Three Tests (5:1–5)
  - V. A Basis for Assurance (5:6–17)
    - A. Three Witnesses (5:6–12)
    - B. Assurance (5:13–17)
- Conclusion (5:18–21)

## 9. Summary:

This epistle was born out of John's intimate relations with and his personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus as seen in his Gospel. Converts from Judaism and Paganism sought to mingle the theories of their former beliefs with the truth of the Gospel. This eventually led to the rise and development of the deadly heresy of Gnosticism. While admitting the Deity of Jesus they denied His humanity and boasted that they alone as Gnostics ("knowing ones") had the true knowledge. They despised those who maintained true apostolic doctrine. Thus John writes to assure the believers that they are the "knowing ones" having the true knowledge of Christ. In chapters one and two he applies the truth that "God is light and in Him is no darkness at all" to the believer's walk. Chapters three and four show that if a believer has true knowledge of God he will walk in love toward God and the brethren. The key thought in chapter five is: "He that has the Son has life."

## 10. How Christ is seen:

Christ is seen as the Word, Son, Christ, Light, Love, Life, and as our Advocate, our Propitiation.

### The false teachers: Gnosticism

A. The two main characteristics of the false teachers are:

1. Their denial of the testimony about Jesus Christ that has been given from the beginning:

1Jn 2:7 I am writing to you (about) the old commandment, which you have had from the beginning; - the word which you have heard.

1Jn 2:22 - the liar - the antichrist, - the one who denies (the Father and the Son) that Jesus is the Christ.

1Jn 2:24 let what you heard from the beginning - abide in you; and you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.

1Jn 3:11 this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, - love one another;

1Jn 4:2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

1Jn 4:3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.

2Jn 1:7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

2Jn 1:9 Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son.

2. Their belief that it did not matter whether they did good or did evil.

B. In the Christian congregations of the first centuries there were many who denied the original testimony about Christ. Their teachings show a great diversity of form, but somehow all of them belong to one and the same system of thought, usually called "Gnostic" (from Greek *gnosis* "knowledge," especially religious knowledge for the initiated and enlightened).

This system started from a basic opposition between spirit, the good principle, ("light") and matter, the bad principle ("darkness"). To the former belonged the divine world, absolutely pure and not polluted by matter, and to the latter this earth and all that is in it.

1Jn 1:5 This is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is Light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.

The adherents of this view held that the deity and things divine could not be involved in the material world, since such involvement would mean the destruction of their purity and holiness. Therefore the incarnation, the unity of God and man in Jesus, was a detestable doctrine in their eyes. They drew a sharp distinction between the divine Christ, on the one hand, and the man Jesus, on the other. They taught that the two were only temporarily and externally connected; and that the Christ descended upon Jesus at some point in his life (for example, at the moment when he was baptized) and left him again before his death on the cross.

It is perhaps the latter point that the writer has specifically in mind in 5:6, where he states that Jesus Christ came "not with the water only but with the water and the blood." With this he may have meant to say that Jesus is not only Christ through his baptism, but also through his death.

These speculations have consequences that are utterly unacceptable in John's opinion. To him salvation, reconciliation, and forgiveness cannot have any reality, if Jesus and Christ were not the same, and if Christ himself was not nailed on the cross in the person of Jesus. John's main purpose is to refute these speculations as being incompatible with the original testimony about Christ. Therefore he refers to the fact that Christ, the Son of God, really "has come in the flesh";

1Jn 4:2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;

2Jn 7 For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist.

That the identity of Jesus and the Christ are the same;

1Jn 2:22 Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.

1Jn 4:15 Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

1Jn 5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God ...

To the reality of Jesus' suffering.

1Jn 5:6 This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

1Jn 3:16 We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

**C.** If this world and man's life in it have neither value nor meaning because they belong to the sphere of matter, it is unimportant how man acts and behaves in life. This view of the universe thus leads to ethical indifferentism. There are several allusions to this point of view in the Letter ... 'John's opponents seem to have boasted of a "spiritual" fellowship with God and his Son;

1Jn 1:7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1Jn 2:6 the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.

Of their being guided by the Spirit,

1Jn 4:1-6 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; 3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. 4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 5 They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. 6 We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

And of their spiritual knowledge of God.

1Jn 2:3-4 By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. 4 The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him;

And because of these "spiritual gifts" they felt no need for brotherly love, closely bound to earthly life as it is. On the contrary, they hated their brothers.

1Jn 2:9 The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now.

1Jn 2:11 But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

But the writer had more to criticize in the ethical views of his opponents. They held that he who already lives in the Spirit is lifted out of the earthly sphere. Therefore they claimed sinlessness in principle,

1Jn 1:8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.

And in practice.

1Jn 1:10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.

It is against these views that the writer takes his stand in such passages as 1:5-2:11; 3:4-24; 4:20-5:3. He knows that God is interested in and associates himself with this material world, and that his Son has gone so far in his love for the world as to let himself be crucified. Therefore he is convinced that a Christian cannot possibly keep aloof from this world, or shirk the claims of brotherly love. This world, its reality and claims, should be taken seriously. Speculation about the opposition of spirit and matter fails to do so. Therefore it is ineffective and cannot lead people on the way to salvation.

#### **Resources:**

New Testament Survey by Kevin Conner & Ken Malmin

Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament

A handbook on the letters of John; by United Bible Societies.

The Bible reader's companion