

WEEK 1: 1ST JOHN: “THAT YOU MAY KNOW” BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

1ST John is an epistle written to believers describing a true believer that offers **assurance of eternity to one who has put their faith** in Jesus Christ.

I. AUTHOR

- A. Author is not given→ Early church fathers affirm Apostle John
- B. Last living apostle of Jesus Christ

II. WHO WRITTEN TO?

- A. Churches of Asia Minor
- B. Not recent converts according to 2:13, 14
- C. Thought to be Gentiles mostly as only a few real reference to OT traditions etc is given.
- D. **Some allusions to OT**
 - 1. “**Faithful and just**” describing God in 1:9 is a repeat from Song of Moses in Deut 32:4
 - 2. “**If we claim to be without sin**” 1:8 resembles Prov 28:13
 - 3. “His commands are not burdensome” in 5:3 resembles Moses instruction “Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach” Deut 30:11
- E. **Tone of document indicates that it is a personal letter from a wise and older and respected writer to recipient he knew well.**
 - 1. “Little children”, ‘brethren’, “beloved”
- F. Written during his ministry in Ephesus where he was a pastor or “elder”
 - 1. John would have been about 90 yrs
 - 2. 60 years after crucifixion of Jesus Christ,
- G. **Church at Ephesus had actually been started by Paul** and he stayed for 2 years teaching the gospel message of Jesus Christ.
- H. **Paul’s warning to the church leaders on his departure, was that:**
 - 1. **Ac 20:28** Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. **29** I know that after my departure **fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves** will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.
- I. **John writes to the churches in Asia Minor where Ephesus would have been the center to counter false teaching and to cease the confusion and give assurance to those professing Christ.**

III. THE JOHN STYLE

- A. **John speaks in a straight up style**
 - 1. **No introduction of himself**
 - 2. **No greeting to his readers**

B. John does not back down from black & white terms

1. Liar → 1:10, 2:4, 22; 4:20, 5:10
2. Antichrists → name for his opponents → 2:18, 22, 43
3. Children of God vs children of devil 3:10
4. False prophets → 4:1, 6
5. He has nothing to say good about these men.

C. Opens with a validation of Jesus Christ the man and the gospel message He preached.

D. Believer to not be deceived with the heretical teaching of the false teachers.

E. Gives the truth of what it means to be a true disciple of Christ so as to give assurance

IV. HERESIES OF THE TIME

A. Can detect specific issues in the church from John's statement made in the letter

1. Antichrists have already come— some actually were members of church, not affirming the deity of Jesus Christ
2. People leaving for doctrinal issues “they went out from us” 2:19
3. Becoming false prophets leading others astray
4. Much spiritual deception, “test the spirits” 4:1, as there is much evil in the world

B. Gnosticism - prominent false teaching later in 2nd and 3rd centuries,.

1. Gnosis –GK → knowledge
2. High level of knowledge or special knowledge for the “**enlightened**” ones
3. **Dualism** became a central philosophy that grew from this teaching

C. Dualism Heresies & Resultant Fallout

1. Physical body is evil, spirit is good → separate and don't effect the other
2. **All matter is evil** therefore **NO incarnation of God ever occurred**
 - a. Jesus NOT God no the awaited Messiah → human could not be Son of God as physical body was evil;
3. **Spirit is good**— believed they **were without sin spiritually**.
4. Fellowship with God does NOT require obedience.
5. No need to follow example of Jesus → He was just a man.
6. **Supreme God did NOT create earth** – all physical is evil
7. OT God was inferior and evil power → not the Supreme God.
8. No Brotherly love → hated those that stood for true teachings of Jesus Christ
9. Denied help to anyone who did not follow their teaching and stood on real truth.
10. Higher knowledge exalted and therefore must pursue it.
11. Division among the brethren as some “uninitiated Christians” do NOT have this knowledge.
12. Denied any personal relationship with God

13. No resurrection of the body→ spirit is liberated from impure body at death

14. Christ was a spirit that descended upon Jesus at His baptism but not IN Him

D. Much confusion erupted in the churches as these false teachers who once were followers of Christ and the teaching of the apostles had gone out into the world and were luring others to follow them.

1. Perfect setting for “**fierce wolves coming in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them**

E. **John writes to correct the false teaching**

1. Giving truth Jesus Himself had taught
2. Speaking under the authority of one called out by the Lord Jesus to go into the world to make disciples.
3. John wrote to give assurance to the True Believer of their salvation

V. JOHN - THE MAN

A. Fisherman with father, Zebedee, and brother James

1. **Mt 4:21** And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. **22** Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

B. In Cana, Jesus would do His first miracle at a wedding feast, water into wine.

1. John being there, was one of those that believed in Him
2. Meaning that he believed that Jesus was the Messiah, Son of God!
3. **John 2:11** This, the first of his signs, Jesus did at Cana in Galilee, and manifested his glory. And his disciples believed in him.

C. Luke 6, Jesus chooses 12 of many disciples to be apostles, and John was one of the 12.

1. **Lu 6:12 ¶** In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. **13** And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: **14** Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and **John**, and Philip, and Bartholomew,

2. Apostle – apostolos *ap-os'-tol-os-* one sent forth with orders, a delegate, messenger

D. Luke 9, Jesus took Peter, James and John up into a mountain to pray.

1. John was in the inner circle of the apostles with Peter and James.
2. John witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus Christ
3. **Lu 9:29** And as he was praying, the appearance of his face was altered, and his clothing became dazzling white. . . .**32** Now Peter and those who were with him were heavy with sleep, but when they became fully awake they saw his glory and the two men who stood with him.

- E. John 13, John was with Jesus as the Passover feast the night before His crucifixion
 - 1. [John 13:23](#) One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side, [25](#) So that disciple, leaning back against Jesus, . . ."
- F. Mark 14, Mat 26, Jesus takes Peter, James and John to Gethsemane
 - 1. John hears Jesus confess to them His soul was troubled
 - 2. He would hear the prayer conversation between Jesus and Father
 - 3. Witnesses Jesus as a human man pour His heart to God.
 - 4. [Mr 14:34](#) And he said to them, "My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch."
 - 5. [Mr 14:36](#) And he said, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."
- G. John 20, all the apostles had abandoned Jesus on Calvary except – John
 - 1. [John 19:26](#) When Jesus saw his mother and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" [27](#) Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.
- H. John would have witness the life leave Jesus as He gave up His spirit and said, "it is finished"
 - 1. [John 19:30](#) When Jesus had received the sour wine, he said, "It is finished," and he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.
- I. John likely overheard the conversion of the thief.
 - 1. [Lu 23:42](#) And he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." [43](#) And he said to him, "Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."
- J. John was the first of the apostles to visit the empty tomb the next morning
 - 1. [John 20:2](#) So she ran and went to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved, and said to them, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him." [4](#) Both of them were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. [5](#) And stooping to look in, he saw the linen cloths lying there, but he did not go in.
- K. John was the closet apostle to Jesus from the beginning to the end of Jesus's ministry.
- L. John became "the elder" of the church at Ephesus-- likely most successful church of its day.

VI. **John writes to provide multiple verifications or tests of a True Believer**

- A. **Book Theme verse:** [1Jo 5:13](#) I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.
- B. John states it is possible to know, and all believers should know whether they are true or not. No reason to live with doubts.

- C. He states these tests of a truly saved or born again person in a positive sense, but in doing so counters the teaching of the false teachers.
 1. 1Jo 2:3 ¶ And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments.
 2. But the converse is true, ‘if we do not keep his commandments, we DO NOT know Him.’”

VII. Emphasized Words & Phrases

- A. Know – 40x
- B. Abides - 20x
- C. Love - 46x
- D. “I write these things” – 8x

VIII. John writes of Christ’s life

- A. Ch 1 & 2 --Reminds us that God is light—ie He is absolutely holy and He demands holiness from those who desire to enter into the abundant life.
- B. Ch 3 & 4 – significance of love, that “God is love” and that we too are responsible to love
- C. Ch 5 – Jesus was obedient to the very end – “Not my will but thine, be done.” John gives the implications of the obedience of Christ to the child of God who desires fullness of life
- D. Describes the teaching of Christ and sets them up as tests for those claiming to be part of His family

IX. Christology

A. Affirms humanity and divinity of Jesus Christ

1. 1Jo 1:1 ¶ That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— 1Jo 1:2 the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—
2. 1Jo 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,
3. 1Jo 5:5 Who is it that overcomes the world except the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God? 6 ¶ This is he who came by water and blood— Jesus Christ; not by the water only but by the water and the blood. And the Spirit is the one who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.

B. Exhorts believers to stand firm in the message, the truth of Jesus’ life they had heard from the beginning.

- C. 1Jo 2:24 Let what you heard from the beginning **abide in you**. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, **then you too will abide in the Son and in the Father**.