

NOTES: 1 John

05/07/2017

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Interesting Facts About 1 John

AUTHOR: John

TIME WRITTEN: Probably about A.D. 90 from Ephesus

POSITION IN THE BIBLE: 62nd Book in the Bible
23rd Book in the New Testament
18th of 21 Epistle Books
(Romans - Jude)
4 Books to follow it.



CHAPTERS: 5

VERSES: 105

WORDS: 2,523

OBSERVATIONS ABOUT 1 JOHN:

1 JOHN

■ **Peter:**

Was one of the original 12 apostles.

Was one of the inner circle of the apostles (Peter, James, & John).

Was the disciple whom Jesus loved. John 13:23

Was one of the first two disciples called by Jesus.

Was one of the pillars of the church at Jerusalem.
Galatians 2:9

Near the end of his life, John lived in Ephesus.

Near the end of the 1st century, John was exiled to the island of Patmos.

■ **John authored five books of the New Testament.**

John

1 John

2 John

3 John

Revelation

■ **Only Paul authored more New Testament books than John.**

■ **A number of reasons were involved in writing 1 John.**

To add to their joy. 1:4

To help them guard against sin. 2:1

To confirm the truth that the faithful have overcome the evil one. 2:12-14

To strengthen their faith in Christ and assure them of eternal life. 5:13

■ **John teaches that:**

God is light.

God is love.

God is life.

■ **John teaches about:**

Love

Fellowship

Forgiveness

Confession

Blood of Christ

Sin



But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:7

Barnes Bible Charts

FIRST JOHN

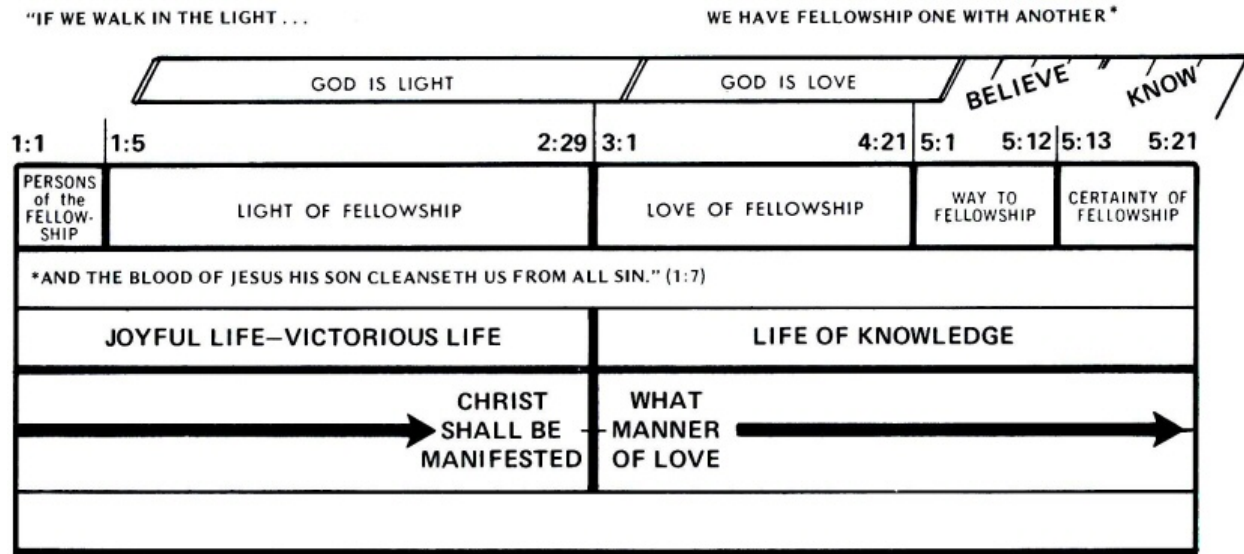
Prologue (1:1–4)	Walking with the God of Light		Responding to the God of Love			
	Living in the Light	Staying in the Light	Practicing the Righteousness and Love of God	Testing the Spirits	Loving Others as God Loved Us	Believing in Jesus
	CHAPTERS 1:5–2:11	CHAPTER 2:12–27	CHAPTERS 2:28–3:23	CHAPTERS 3:24–4:6	CHAPTER 4:7–21	CHAPTER 5
Fellowship with God Produces a . . .	Clean life	Discerning life	Loving life			Confident life
Emphasis	Light	Truth	Love			Knowledge
Means	Obedying	Perceiving	Sacrificing			Believing
Christ	Advocate (2:1)	Holy One (2:20)	Son of God (3:8)		Savior of the world (4:14)	
Purposes	That we may have fellowship and joy (1:3–4)	That we may not sin (2:1)	That we may not be deceived (2:26)		That we may know that we have eternal life (5:13)	
Theme	Living in fellowship with God, who is light and love					
Key Verses	1:5–7	4:10–16			5:11–13	
Christ in 1 John	Jesus is the Word of Life, who is God come in the flesh to bring eternal life to those who believe (1:1; 4:2; 5:20).					

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Why is First John so important?

The parallelisms in 1 John are striking for their simplicity: Christ vs. antichrists, light vs. darkness, truth vs. falsehood, righteousness vs. sin, love of the Father vs. love of the world, and the Spirit of God vs. the spirit of the Antichrist. While this is not a complete list, it reveals a letter that presents the world in an uncomplicated way—there is right and there is wrong, period. This emphasis by John, while striking, is not without love. It's quite the opposite, in fact. John recognized that love comes from God, and he encouraged the believers to love one another (1 John 4:7). John's first epistle teaches that while it is important to recognize the lines between truth and error, it must always be done in a spirit of love.

<https://www.insight.org/resources/bible/the-general-epistles/first-john>



http://www.preceptaustin.org/1_john_commentaries

Chart Outline of 1 John

A. The Creation of God's People	B. The Confirmation of God's People
1 John 1:1-2:2	1 John 2:3-17
The entrance into His fellowship.	The evidence of our Christian fellowship.
Entrance & Enlightenment Our views on God's purity (Light) significantly shape our salvation and sanctification.	Assurance of our Faith We need to look beyond a simple confession to strengthen the assurance of our salvation.
C. The Characteristics of God's People	D. The Charge to God's People
1 John 2:18-3:24	1 John 4-5
The definition of our Christian fellowship.	The authority of our fellowship
Critical Doctrines God places a boundary around God's people called truths or doctrines.	Facing a Tough World We overcome by demonstrating true beliefs, good relationships and righteous behavior.

http://wwwFOUNDATIONSforFREEDOM.net/References/NT/Johanine/1John0_Introduction/1John0_0Introduction.html

OUTLINE OF 1 JOHN

<u>Prologue:</u>	The Word of Life.	1:1-4
I.	<u>God is Light.</u>	1:5-3:10
A.	Walk in the Light.	1:5-2:2
1.	God is Light.	1:5-1:7
2.	Resist sin.	1:8-2:2
B.	Obey the command to love.	2:3-11
1.	Know God and keep His commands.	2:3-6
2.	Learn the New Command and love others.	2:7-11
C.	Know your spiritual status.	2:12-14
D.	Be warned of enemies of the faith.	2:15-28
1.	Beware of the world.	2:15-17
2.	Beware of the antichrists.	2:18-28
E.	Live like children of God.	2:28-3:10
1.	Be confident and ready for His coming.	2:28-3:3
2.	Be righteous and do not sin.	3:4-10
II.	<u>God is Love.</u>	3:11-5:12
A.	Love one another: part one.	3:11-24
1.	Love in action.	3:11-18
2.	Live in confidence.	3:19-24
B.	Test the spirits.	4:1-6
C.	Love one another: part two.	4:7-21
1.	Love others because God loves you.	4:7-10
2.	Love others because God lives in you.	4:11-21
D.	Obey God and experience the victory of faith.	5:1-5
E.	Believe in the Son and enjoy eternal life.	5:6-12
<u>Conclusion:</u>	The Confidence and Characteristics of the Child of God.	5:13-21
A.	Know you have eternal life.	5:13
B.	Be confident in prayer.	5:14-17
C.	Do not continue in sin.	5:18-20
D.	Keep yourself from idols.	5:20-21

Comparisons of John 1, 2 and 3

1-3 JOHN

1 JOHN • WALKING IN LIGHT

CHAPTER	1	2	3	4	5
FOCUS	Walking in Light		Abiding in Truth & Love		
BREAKDOWN	1:1-4 Eyewitnesses to Truth 1:5-2:27 Evidences of a Lie: Hypocrisy • 1:6 Say We Have Fellowship, But Walk in Darkness • 1:8 Say We Don't Sin When We Do • 2:4 Say We Know Him, But Don't Keep Commands • 2:6 Say We Abide, But Don't Walk as He Walked • 2:9 Say We're in the Light, But Hate Our Brother • 2:15 Say We Love the Father, But Really Love the World • 2:23 Say We Have the Father, But Deny His Son	2:26-3:10 Abide in Righteousness 3:11-24 Abide in Love (Part 1)	4:1-6 How to Discern False Teachers 4:7-5:5 Abide in Love (Part 2)	5:6-12 Three Witnesses: • Spirit • Water • Blood 5:13-21 Final Exhortations	
PURPOSES	1:3 That We May Have Fellowship 1:4 That We May Have Joy	2:1 That We May Not Sin 2:26 That We May Not Be Deceived			5:13 That We May Know We Have Eternal Life
EMPHASIS	Light	Truth	Love		Knowledge
FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD PRODUCES	A Cleansed Life	A Discerning Life	A Loving Life		A Confident Life
KEY VERSES	1:5-7			4:10-18	5:11-23
JESUS	1:1 Word of Life	2:1 Advocate 2:20 Holy One	3:8 Son of God	4:14 Savior of the World	5:1 The Christ

2 JOHN • WALK IN TRUTH & LOVE

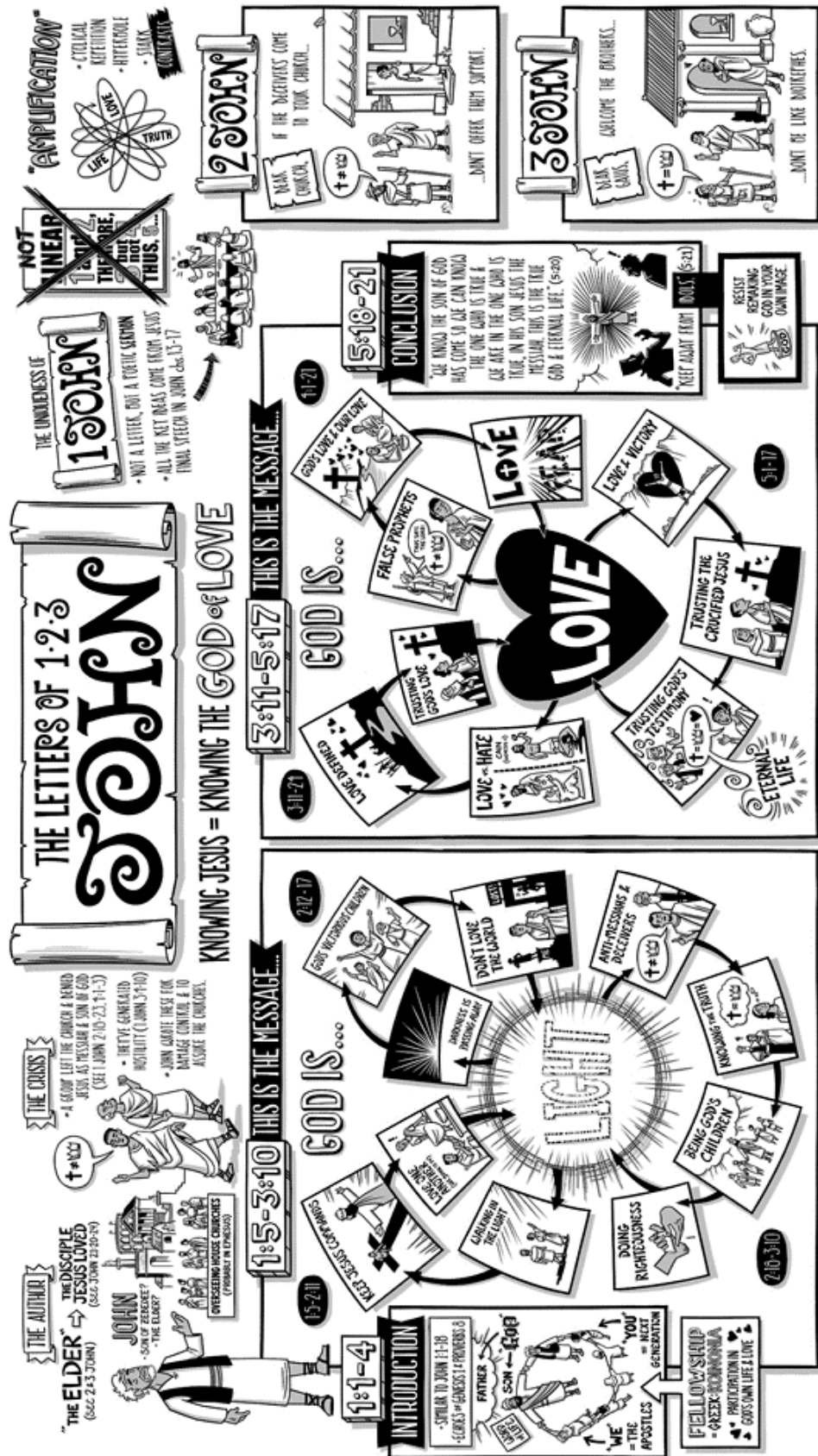
DIVISIONS	VERSES 1-6	VERSES 7-13
FOCUS	The Command: Walk in Truth & Love	The Caution: Avoid Error
BREAKDOWN	1:1-3 Introduction • 1:4 Walk in Truth • 1:5-6 Walk in Love	1:7 Attributes of a False Teacher 1:8-11 Avoidance of False Teachers • 1:12-13 Conclusion
EMPHASIS	Encouragement to Love • Practice the Truth • Walk in Commandments	Exhortation to Discern • Protect the Truth • Watch for Counterfeits

3 JOHN • IMITATE WHAT IS GOOD

DIVISIONS	VERSES 1-8	VERSES 9-10	VERSE 11	VERSES 12-15
FOCUS	Commendation of Gaius	Condemnation of Diotrephes	Command to the Beloved	Commendation of Demetrius
BREAKDOWN	3-4 For Walking in Truth 5-6 For Being Hospitable & Loving 7-8 For Being Generous	9 For Pride & Insubordination 10 For Evil Slander 10 For Being Inhospitable	11 Imitate What Is Good	12-13 For Good Testimony & Truth
EMPHASIS	Generosity	Pride	Godliness	Praise



See Expanded View on Next Page...



Approaches to the Structure of 1 John

Anyone attempting to work on the structure of 1 John would do well to stop for a moment and reflect on just how different this “letter” is, especially in comparison with contemporary examples of letters and with 2 and 3 John (both of which exhibit almost all the characteristics of first century a.d. letters). There is no greeting or other introduction, no health wish or thanksgiving, and no final greetings. No author’s name is included anywhere (not just at the beginning). Most of the sentences in Greek have a very simple syntactical structure and the lack of connective conjunctions is often striking. Added to all this is an extremely convoluted internal structure which has plagued interpreters for centuries. Regarding the problem of the structure and argument of 1 John, F. F. Bruce stated (1970),

Attempts to trace a consecutive argument throughout 1 John have never succeeded. For the convenience of a commentator and his readers, it is possible to present such an analysis of the epistle as is given on pp. 31 f., but this does not imply that the author himself worked to an organized plan. At best we can distinguish three main courses of thought: the first (1.5-2.27), which has two main themes, ethical (walking in light) and Christological (confessing Jesus as the Christ); the second (2.28-4.6), which repeats the ethical and Christological themes with variations; the third (4.7-5.12) where the same two essential themes are presented as love and faith and shown to be inseparable and indispensable products of life in Christ.

Although Bruce has analyzed the epistle in terms of three major sections, it is important to note that the two main themes of walking in light and confessing Jesus as the Christ are repeated throughout *all* the sections.

This difficulty in understanding the structure and organization of 1 John is not limited to modern biblical scholarship. Brown has pointed out that interpreters as diverse as Augustine, Calvin, and Operinus all acknowledged the lack of a discernable sequence of thought, though some basic patterns were evident – it was fairly clear to these earlier scholars that the letter contained an extended treatment of love. By the time of the Reformation, the lack of a clear scheme of organization was seen as either the product of the Spirit’s inspiration or the advanced age of the apostolic author.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/4-structure-and-purpose-1-john>

See also related material of which the above is part of:

[1, 2, 3 John Comfort and Counsel for a Church in Crisis](#)

NOTES ON 1 JOHN – DR. THOMAS CONSTABLE

Introduction

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

This epistle, like Hebrews, does not contain the name of its writer, but from its very early history the church believed the Apostle John wrote it. Several ancient writers referred to this book as John's writing.^[1] Though modern critics have challenged this view, they have not destroyed it.^[2]

Neither is there any reference to who the first recipients of this epistle were, or where they lived, other than that they were Christians (2:12-14, 21; 5:13). They may have been the leaders of churches (2:20, 27). According to early church tradition, John ministered in Ephesus, the capital of the Roman province of Asia, for many years after he left Palestine. We know from Revelation 2 and 3 that he knew the churches and Christians in that Roman province well. Perhaps his readers lived in that province.^[3] By way of contrast, John's second and third epistles contain the name of the writer, the recipient, and greetings.

The false teachers and teachings to which he alluded suggest that John wrote about conditions that existed in Asia: Judaism, Gnosticism, Docetism, the teachings of Cerinthus (a prominent Gnostic), and others. Explanations of these will follow in the exposition. These philosophies extended beyond Asia, but they were present there during John's lifetime.

This is one of the most difficult of all the New Testament books to date. One of the few references in the book that may help us date it is 2:19. If John meant that the false teachers had departed *from among the apostles*, a date in the 60s seems possible. This could place it about A.D. 60-65, before the Jewish revolts of A.D. 66-70 scattered the Jews from Judea. In this case, John may have written from Jerusalem.^[4] However, many conservative scholars believe John wrote this epistle much later, between about A.D. 85 and 97, when he evidently wrote the Gospel of John (ca. A.D. 85-95) and the Book of Revelation (ca. A.D. 95-96).^[5] I prefer a date in the 90s, following the writing of John's Gospel, that 1 John seems to assume.^[6]

"Indeed the Epistle throughout has the Gospel as its background and is hardly intelligible without it."^[7]

In view of the nature and the conclusion of the Book of Revelation, which seems to be God's final revelatory word to humankind, I think John probably composed his epistles before that book. So a date for 1 John in the early 90s, A.D. 90-95, seems most probable to me.^[8]

Since John ministered in and around Ephesus later in his life, Ephesus seems to be the most probable place from which he wrote this epistle.^[9]

"The writer of 1 John was thus addressing a community, made up of a number of house-churches in and around Ephesus . . . , which was split in three ways. It consisted of the following: (a) Johannine Christians who were committed to the apostolic gospel of Jesus as they had received it; (b) heretically inclined members from a Jewish background; (c) heterodox followers from a Hellenistic (and/or pagan) background. The problems relating to the two 'heretical' groups, (b) and (c), were primarily theological and (by extension) ethical; although related difficulties concerning eschatology and pneumatology may have been present also (see on 2:18 and 4:1 . . .). . . .

"To complete the picture, it should be noted that the life of the Johannine community was marked by the presence of a fourth group of people: the secessionists. Whereas the members of the first three groups could be found within John's circle, the anti-Christian secessionists had begun to break away from it. These were heretically inclined adherents of the Johannine community. In some cases they may have been genuine, if uninformed, believers. But in other instances they perhaps never properly belonged to John's church (although they thought they did), because they never really belonged to God (see on 1 John 2:18-19; cf. also 2:22-23)."^[10]

CHARACTERISTICS

"The Epistle is not a polemic primarily, but a letter for the edification of the readers in the truth and the life in Christ. And yet the errors of the Gnostics are constantly before John's mind."^[11]

"John is contemplative rather than argumentative. He presents truths as they come by intuitive perception rather than by reasoned conclusion. He is mystical rather than logical. He sees the confirmation of truth in one's *experience* of it rather than in demonstration by argument."^[12]

"John's pen is a surgeon's knife, not a philosopher's quill."^[13]

"St. John has no liking for progress along an unending straight road; he loves a circling flight, like his symbol, the eagle."^[14]

OUTLINE

John's style of writing makes it difficult to outline this book. He flows from one subject to another so smoothly that it is often difficult to see clear breaks in his thought. In contrast, Paul typically identified changes in his subject matter clearly. Consequently, in the outline

below, some divisions occur at unusual places in the text: not necessarily chapter divisions or even verse divisions. The following outline reflects the structure of a typical deliberative oration that was common in John's world.[\[15\]](#)

- I. Introduction: the purpose of the epistle 1:1-4
- II. Living in the light of fellowship with God 1:5—2:11
 - A. Staying on the path by walking in God's light 1:5—2:2
 - B. Reaching the goal by knowing the God of light 2:3-11
- III. Resisting enemies 2:12-27
 - A. Appreciating spiritual advances 2:12-14
 - B. Recognizing spiritual adversaries 2:15-27
 - 1. Overcoming the world 2:15-17
 - 2. Resisting the antichrists 2:18-27
- IV. Living in anticipation of Christ's judgment seat 2:28—4:19
 - A. Abiding to face Christ confidently 2:28
 - B. Learning to recognize God's children 2:29—3:10a
 - C. Learning to recognize Christian love 3:10b-23
 - 1. What love is not 3:10b-15
 - 2. What love is 3:16-18
 - 3. What love does for believers 3:19-23
 - D. Learning to recognize the God of love 3:24—4:16
 - 1. God's indwelling affirmed 3:24
 - 2. God's Spirit recognized 4:1-6
 - 3. God's indwelling recognized 4:7-16
 - E. Having boldness at Christ's judgment seat 4:17-19
- V. Learning how to live obediently 4:20—5:17
 - A. The meaning of brotherly love 4:20—5:3a
 - B. The empowerment of brotherly love 5:3b-15
 - C. The consequences of brotherly love 5:16-17
- VI. Christian certainties 5:18-21

Ron Bigalke saw the structure of 1 John as being chiastic:

- "A Prologue: Eternal Life (1:1-4)
- B Three Witnesses (1:5—2:2) (*to deny sin is to make God a liar*) (*walk*)
- C The love of God and the believer (2:3-17)
- D False christs (2:18-27)
- E Believer's confidence (2:28—3:10) (*do not sin*)
- F Love proves abiding (3:11-18)
- E' Believer's confidence (3:19-24) (*do keep God's commands*)
- D' False prophets (4:1-6)
- C' The love of God and the believer (4:7-21)
- B' Three Witnesses (5:1-12) (*to deny Jesus is to make God a liar*) (*testimony*)
- A' Epilogue: Eternal life (5:13-21)"[\[16\]](#)

MESSAGE

If I were to boil down the message of this epistle into one sentence, it would be this: "Fellowship with God is the essence of eternal life." Paul wrote in Philippians 3:7-14 that his relationship with God was the most important thing in his life—by far. John wrote this epistle to enable believers to appreciate their "fellowship with God," and he wrote to deepen that fellowship.

"It would not be inappropriate to write over this epistle as a whole, THE GATEWAY TO FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD."[\[17\]](#)

Both the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John deal with the subject of eternal life.[\[18\]](#) John wrote his Gospel so that his readers might "believe that Jesus is the Christ, and that believing they might have life through His name" (John 20:31). John wrote this epistle to Christians so that they could "have fellowship" with the apostles, with God the Father, and with Jesus Christ (1 John 1:3). He wrote it so that we might enter into the *fullness* of the eternal life that we possess (cf. John 10:10). However, the subject of this epistle is not eternal life, but fellowship with God. *Fellowship with God* is the essence of eternal life (cf. John 17:3).

This epistle grew out of Jesus' Upper Room Discourse (John 14—17). Similarly, James' epistle grew out of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5—7), Peter's first epistle grew out of Jesus' Discipleship Discourse (Matt. 10), and the Book of Revelation grew out of the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24—25). In the Upper Room Discourse, Jesus explained what the apostles' relationship to God would be after He sent the Holy Spirit to indwell them (John 14:16-17). John expounded that revelation in this letter.

There are several terms in this epistle that John used as synonyms: "fellowship with God," "knowing God," "abiding in God," and "seeing God." These terms all describe the experience of Christians. They all describe our relationship with God in varying degrees of intimacy.

Our relationships with people vary. Some are more, some less, intimate. Fellowship with God is also a matter of greater or lesser intimacy. When we speak of being "in fellowship" or "out of fellowship," we are oversimplifying our relationship to God. For example, a child's fellowship with his or her parents is rarely either perfect or non-existent; it is usually somewhere between these extremes, and it may vary from day to day.

John's purpose in writing was to motivate his readers to cultivate greater intimacy with God. The greater the intimacy, the greater our "fellowship," the better we "know" God experientially, and the closer we "abide" in Him (cf. John 14:21-24). The greater our intimacy with God, the more we will experience the life that is eternal. All Christians *possess* eternal life, but not all *experience* that life as God intended us to enjoy it (John 10:10). Similarly, all living human beings *have* life, but not all live an *abundant* life.

This letter reveals two things about the life of fellowship. First, it reveals the resources of this life. There are two resources:

The first resource is objective. God has provided a *pattern* for the life of fellowship, and that pattern is Jesus Christ. In Christ, we have personified two qualities that are characteristics of God—that should also characterize us as the children of God.

The first of these qualities is "light." Jesus Christ constantly walked in the light of God's holiness (1:5-6; 2:6). He never hid from God. He also conformed to the light of God's will perfectly. He was submissive, sinless, clean, and consecrated. The second of these qualities is "love." Jesus also constantly manifested the love of God (cf. 4:10). In His attitudes and activities, Jesus always demonstrated perfect love. His words and His deeds were a revelation of God's love. Jesus put others before Himself. He was selfless as well as holy.

The second resource of the life of fellowship is, according to this epistle, subjective. God has not only provided a pattern for the life of fellowship, He has also provided the *power*. Jesus Christ is not only an external example for us to imitate. More helpfully, He is an internal power whom God has placed within us (the Holy Spirit), who is at work in our lives. With eternal life we get Jesus (5:11-12). And with Him come two things.

First, we get "light." We see spiritual things that we never saw before (2:20). We see how we ought to walk (2:27). We become sensitive to sin. Second, we get "love." We see the need of other people who are groping in darkness, and we desire to reach out to them in service, and to bring them into the light (4:7). As soon as we share God's life, we begin to love with God's love. We can quench love, but every person who has eternal life has love within him or her.

To review, this letter reveals two things about the life of fellowship: first the resources of this life, which are an external pattern and internal power. Both of these come from Jesus Christ.

This letter also reveals the results of a life of intimate fellowship with God. These are two also:

First, there is *value for the Christian*. This value is that we realize life as God intended people to live it. We can experience life as God meant it to be when He first made man. We achieve our potential as human beings to the degree to which we walk in fellowship with God (i.e., abide in Him). Our intimacy with God perfects our personalities.

Second, there is also *value for God*. God enjoys fellowship with man. God's purpose in creation and redemption was to have fellowship with man. God finds in every person, who walks with Him in intimate fellowship, a person through whom He can manifest Himself, an instrument through whom He can accomplish His purposes. The *abiding* believer reveals God to those around him or her. God does not have to work on abiding believers with chastening, but He can work through them in blessing others and themselves.

John also called on his readers to fulfill their responsibilities in the life of fellowship. Regarding the light, we have two responsibilities:

First, we must *obey the light* (1:7). That means responding positively to the knowledge of God's will that we gain. We can become calloused to the truth. This is a special danger when one spends a lot of time dealing with spiritual matters. Believers need to cultivate their relationship with God daily. We all need to keep weeding the gardens of our spiritual lives.

Second, we must *seek the light* (1:9). We need to forsake the darkness of sin and keep walking in the light. The circle of God's light may move. We may gain new understanding of His will. When that happens, we need to move into that light in obedience (cf. Ps. 119:105).

Regarding love, we also have two responsibilities:

First, we must *yield to its impulse*. We can destroy our capacity to love by not expressing love when God moves us to do so. We can lose our passion for the lost by resisting the Holy Spirit's promptings to reach out in love. We need to be ready to sacrifice rather than to put self first. However, if we yield to the impulse of love, to serve others, our love will deepen and intensify. We must not quench the Spirit if He is prompting us to reach out to someone with love.

Second, we must also *guard love's purity*. We need to watch out for false charity. True love never sacrifices principle. God never loved at the expense of light. Love never justifies sin.

In conclusion, I would like to suggest two applications of the message of this epistle, one to the individual and one to the church.

First, let me make one application to us as individual Christians. We can easily test whether we are living in close fellowship with God. Check the light and the love that is in your life. Is the light of holiness shining clearly, or are you walking in darkness? Is your love still burning brightly, or has your life deteriorated to the level of only learning God's Word? "Learning" is only one means to the end of living—living in intimate fellowship with God. What do you want people to remember you for, your knowledge or your love? In view of 1 Corinthians 13, I want to be remembered for my love more than for my knowledge.

Second, let me make one application to us as the church of Jesus Christ. We need to keep our priorities in line with God's. Intimacy is His goal for us. God prefers a few committed disciples to a multitude of compromising disciples (cf. Jesus' 12 disciples). A pure church is more important to Him than a large church. Pastors should not draw back from urging people to walk in the light, and to walk in love, just to increase the size of their congregation. They need to make as broad an appeal as possible without "pulling their punches" in ministry. I am referring here to the church's ministry of equipping the saints. In presenting the gospel, we should make as broad an appeal as possible.[\[19\]](#)

Exposition (Excerpts)

v1:9 This verse is the converse of verse 8. Acknowledging the sins of which we are aware is opposite to saying we are not guilty for sinning. The Greek word translated "confess" (*homologeō*) literally means to say the same thing. Confessing, therefore, means saying about our sins what God says about them, namely, that they are indeed sins, offenses against Him, and not just mistakes, blunders, or errors. One scholar wrote that this is public confession.[\[67\]](#) But there does not seem to be good reason to read that into the text.

"He who confesses and condemns his sins," says Augustine, "already acts with God. God condemns thy sins: if thou also dost condemn them, thou art linked on to God."[\[68\]](#)

"If we confess our sins," God will then "forgive" the sins we confess and will, in addition, "cleanse us from *all* unrighteousness" (emphasis added). Consequently we do not need to worry that He might have failed to forgive us for sins of which we are unaware! Sin incurs a debt to God, but forgiveness (Gr. *aphiemi*) cancels the debt and dismisses the charge. Sin also pollutes the sinner, but God's cleansing (*katharizo*) removes the stain

so we can be holy again. God absolutely promises forgiveness that is consistent with His justice (because Jesus Christ paid the penalty for *all* our sins).

Some expositors teach that this verse cannot apply to Christians, since God has already forgiven Christians, and therefore we do not need to ask for what we already have.[69] This viewpoint fails to distinguish between *forensic* forgiveness, that we receive at conversion, and *family* forgiveness, that we need after conversion. For example, a judge could pay his own son's fine in court, but still discipline him when he got home. Jesus instructed His believing disciples to ask the Father for forgiveness (Matt. 6:12; Luke 11:4).

The fact that God has removed the penalty for our sins at conversion (1 Cor. 6:11; Eph. 1:7; 4:32; Col. 2:13) does not remove the necessity of confessing our sins frequently. Again, the issue is not *acceptance by* God, but *fellowship with* God. *Conversion* (forensic, positional) *forgiveness* makes us acceptable as members of God's family. *Continual* (family, practical) *forgiveness* enables us to experience intimate fellowship as sons within God's family.

"Sin interrupts fellowship but cannot change relationship."[70]

"The status just described is analogous to God's full acceptance of Israel, as expressed in Balaam's inspired utterance: 'He has not observed iniquity in Jacob, nor has He seen wickedness in Israel' (Numbers 23:21). Yet, on a *practical* level, Israel was full of failures!"[71]

Must confession include turning away from sin (repentance) in order to be true confession? Since true confession involves saying the same thing about our sin that God does, it must include repentance. God not only said that sin is wrong, but He also said that we should turn from it. If we only label a particular act of sin as sin, we are not really saying the same thing about it as God says. We must be willing to say that we will turn from it if we want to say about our sin what God says about it.

"Confession of sin to God and to one another (James 5:16) is urged throughout the N.T. from John the Baptist (Mark 1:5) on."[72]

"Keep short accounts with God. Do not wait until Sunday morning to confess a sin."[73]

Another view is that this verse explains how to distinguish a teacher of the truth from a false teacher. Thus this verse is not a promise as much as it is a test. True teachers

confess their sins, but false teachers do not.[74] This interpretation arises out of the conviction that the main purposes of the epistle were to identify reliable teachers (2:26), and to confirm believers in their faith (5:13).

v1:10 The false claim here is that the sin we have committed is *not really sin*. This is the third and most serious charge (cf. vv. 6, 8). It puts God's revelation of sin aside, and makes man the authority for what is and what is not sin. This claim says God is wrong in His judgment of man, and is therefore "a liar." The claimant dismisses His Word as invalid (e.g., Ps. 14:3; Isa. 53:6; John 2:24-25; Rom. 3:23).

Each of these three false claims in verses 6, 8, and 10 is a denial of the truth that immediately precedes it in verses 5, 7, and 9—respectively. The corrective to each of the first two false claims follows in the verse immediately after each claim.

Truth	False claim
God is light (v. 5).	We have fellowship with Him (v. 6).
Walking in the light is necessary for fellowship with God (v. 7).	We have no guilt for sin (v. 8).
Confession is necessary to restore fellowship with God (v. 9).	We have not sinned (v. 10).

"It would be difficult to find any single passage of Scripture more crucial and fundamental to daily Christian living than 1 John 1:5-10. For here, in a few brief verses, the 'disciple whom Jesus loved' has laid down for us the basic principles which underlie a vital walk with God." [75]

"What then is the principle of fellowship with God? Succinctly stated, it is openness to God and full integrity in the light of His Word." [76]

"The Christian religion is the religion of sinners. The Christian life is a life of continued repentance, of continual faith in, thankfulness for, and love to the Redeemer." [77]

v2:4 The profession in view, in the light of the context (1:6, 8, 10), is evidently another claim to having a close relationship with God, not a claim to being saved.^[96] If a person says he knows God intimately but is not obedient to the revealed will of God, he is a liar; he does not know God intimately, and does not have a close relationship with God. Furthermore, God's truth does not have a controlling influence over his life (cf. 1:8, 10).

"We may not like John's verbal style [i.e., his hateful-sounding denunciation; e.g., 4:20], but he may simply be stating a fact in God's sight as a pastoral messenger to God's people who need a wakeup call."^[97]

Jesus used similar language in Matt. 23:13-33 and John 8:55, and John was one of two "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17).

". . . who is not keeping God's commands does not know God experientially no matter what he claims verbally."^[98]

"St. John never uses the word *nomos* ["law"] for the rule of Christian obedience: this word is reserved for the Mosaic law, John i. 17, 46, and in all fifteen times in the Gospel: but almost always *entolai* ["commandment"] . . ."^[99]

Verses 4, 6, and 9 contain three more claims (cf. 1:6, 8, 10).

Claim	Condition
"I have come to know Him" (v. 4; cf. John 17:3)	He "keeps His word" (v. 5)
"[I abide] in him" (v. 6; cf. John 15:4)	He "walk[s] . . . as He walked" (v. 6)
"[I am] in the light" (v. 9; cf. John 12:46)	He "loves his brother" (v. 10)

"The three assertions about knowing God, abiding in him, and being in the light (as he himself is in the light, v 7), are parallel versions of a single claim to be in a right relationship with the Father through the Son."

1. Overcoming the World 2:15-17

"'Love the Father' (v. 5), 'love the brethren' (vers. 9-11), is the sum of St John's exhortations; 'love not the world' is the key-note of his warnings and dehortations."[\[127\]](#)

John warned his readers of worldly dangers that face the Christian as he or she seeks to get to know God better. He did this to enable them to prepare for and overcome these obstacles with God's help.

"As often in 1 John, a section of parenesis [reminders of what the readers already knew or were doing or of what they knew they should avoid] follows a series of dogmatic statements."[\[128\]](#)

The New Testament uses the term "world" (Gr. *kosmos*) in at least three ways. Sometimes "the world" refers to planet earth, the physical world (e.g., Acts 17:24). Sometimes it refers to humankind, the human world (e.g., John 3:16), and sometimes it refers to human culture as influenced by Satan, the world system (here).

John again presented three pairs, as he did in verses 12-14.

V. 15	The love of the world	The love of the Father
V. 16	comes from the world	comes from the Father
V. 17	The world passes away	The one who obeys God remains forever

v2:15 The Greek negative prohibition *me*, occurring with the present active imperative verb, means either *stop* doing something, or *do not have* the habit of doing it. The "world" (*kosmos*) represents the system of values, priorities, and beliefs that unbelievers hold that excludes God (cf. John 14:30; Gal. 6:14; Eph. 2:2; 2 Pet. 2:20). In this context, it does not refer to the world of creation or the world of humanity in general, which God loves (John 3:16).

"The *cosmos* means to him [John] the prevailing spiritual and moral order of human affairs; and this system of things is hostile to God and alien from His love, and therefore radically evil and doomed to perish."[\[129\]](#)

"The world is that organized system which acts as a rival to God."[\[130\]](#)

It is a moral and spiritual system designed to draw people away from God. It is a seductive system that appeals to all people, believers as well as unbelievers, and calls for our affection, participation, and loyalty (cf. John 3:16-17, 18-19; James 4:4). Satan controls this system, and believers should shun it (cf. 5:19; John 12:31; 14:30). Here *kosmos* does not refer primarily to the created order, though that order is also passing away (1 Cor. 7:31; 2 Pet. 3:7-13; Rev. 21:1-4).^[131]

"It is the *Father* who is in opposition to the *world* (I John 2:15). . . . It is the *Spirit* who is in opposition to the *flesh* (Gal. 5:16, 25; Rom. 8:12, 13). It is *Christ* who is in opposition to *Satan*, or antichrist (I John 3:8; Heb. 2:14, 15; I John 4:2, 3)."^[132]

"If" assumes that some Christians will love the world (third class condition in Greek), which is unfortunately often true to reality. One writer responded to the question of many, "What's so bad about the world?"^[133] "The love of the Father" is probably the believers' love for the Father (objective genitive), not His love for us (subjective genitive).^[134] "In him" again reflects a controlling influence (cf. 1:8; 2:4).

v2:16 John summarized the appeal of the world system as three-fold. Here is a picture of the infernal trinity, the three faces of the world, three sources of worldly temptation (cf. Gen. 3; Matt. 4). *Lusts* are cravings or desires, and in the context they are *evil* because they are not in harmony with God's will.

The "lust of the flesh" is the desire to *do* something apart from the will of God. It includes all corrupt bodily desires and every sinful activity that appeals to the sinful hearts of people. The "lust of the eyes" is the desire to *have* something apart from the will of God. Whatever is appealing to our senses, but is not properly ours to desire or obtain, falls under this category. The "pride of life" is the desire to *be* something apart from the will of God. It refers to boastful pretension in earthly matters.

The first desire appeals mainly to the body, the second appeals to the soul (mind or intellect), and the third to the spirit. Perhaps the most common manifestation of the "lust of the flesh" in modern western civilization is illicit sex (hedonism, idolizing pleasure). Perhaps the most common manifestation of the "lust of the eyes" is excessive buying (materialism, idolizing possessions). Perhaps the most common manifestation of the "pride of life" is trying to control people, circumstances, history, or even God (egoism, idolizing power).

Matthew Henry called the lust of the flesh "luxury," the lust of the eyes "covetousness," and the pride of life "ambition."[\[135\]](#)

"The 'wants' which man feels can be divided into two great classes. Some things he desires to appropriate personally: some things he desires to enjoy without appropriation. The desire of the flesh embraces the one class (e.g. gratification of appetites); the desire of the eyes the other (e.g. pursuit of art as an end)."[\[136\]](#)

"'Pride of life' will be reflected in whatever status symbol is important to me or seems to define my identity. When I define myself to others in terms of my honorary [or earned] degrees, the reputation of the church I serve, my annual income, the size of my library, my expensive car or house, and if in doing this I misrepresent the truth and in my boasting show myself to be only a pompous fool who has deceived no one, then I have succumbed to what John calls the pride of life."[\[137\]](#)

"The 'vainglory of life' that St John ascribes to 'the world,' is therefore an ostentation of worldly possessions or advantages, the disposition to 'show off' and to make other people look small."[\[138\]](#)

"The same three foes appear in the three classes of soil on which the divine seed falls: the wayside hearers, the *devil*; the thorns, *the world*; the rock undersoil, *the flesh*."[\[139\]](#)

These three basic desires come "from the world" system, not "from the Father," and the believer should separate from them. The *Father* desires our welfare, but the *world* will destroy us (v. 17).

"Morality is not the *grounds* for assurance [of salvation], but the *fruit* of it."[\[140\]](#)

THE CHRISTIAN'S THREE-FOLD ENEMY	
<u>Problem</u>	<u>Solution</u>
The World 1 John 2:15-17 <i>Lust of the Flesh</i> <i>Lust of the Eyes</i> <i>Pride of Life</i>	Flee 1 Timothy 6:11 2 Timothy 2:22
The Flesh Romans 7:18-24	Deny Romans 6:12-13; 8:13; Titus 2:12
The Devil 1 Peter 5:8	Resist 1 Peter 5:9

John not only helped us identify the "infernal trinity" (in Revelation), but he also gave much revelation (in this epistle) about "how each Person of the Godhead works with and through the others to accomplish God's plan of salvation for us."[\[141\]](#)

THE TRINITY IN 1 JOHN		
"God the Father	God the Son	God the Holy Spirit
Through Christ, we have fellowship with the Father (1:3).	Jesus is called 'the Word of life' (1:1).	The Spirit indwells us and gives assurance of salvation (3:24).
God is light (1:5).	Jesus' blood cleanses us from sin (1:7).	The Spirit causes us to confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh (4:2).
The Father has great love for His children (3:1).	Jesus is our Advocate with the Father (2:1).	The Spirit is the gift of God to all believers (4:13).
God is 'greater than our heart, and knows all things' (3:20).	Jesus is the propitiation for our sin (2:2).	The Spirit bears witness to the truth and to Jesus Christ (5:6).
God is love (4:8).	Jesus is sinless (3:5).	The Spirit is one with the Father and the Son (5:7, 8).
God 'sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (4:10).	The Son of God destroyed the works of the devil (3:8).	
God abides in believers, and they in Him (4:15).	Jesus has come in the flesh (4:2).	
God is the Giver of eternal life through Jesus Christ (5:11).	The Son is the Savior of the world (4:14).	
	The Son is the source of eternal life (5:11).	
	Believing in the Son of God is necessary for us to inherit eternal life (5:13)." [142]	

v2:17 Another reason we should not pursue the lusts of the world is that this system, along with its desires, is in the process of "passing" out of existence. Actually we are living in what John called the "last hour" of the world's existence (v. 18). The world is only temporary and ephemeral (cf. 1 Peter).

In spite of this, those who do God's "will" *abide* (*continue and endure*, "live") "forever." Since *all* Christians will "live forever" (John 10:28), John was not saying we *attain* eternal life by our obedience. However, we also *abide* (i.e., *enjoy* an intimate relationship with God and abundantly experience God's eternal life) *now*, not just after death, when we obey God.

"Just as Abraham through obedience to God obtained the title 'the friend of God' (cf. James 2:21-23), by which he is known today in three world religions and will be known forever, so too the obedient Christian can attain this same identity by obedience (John 15:14-15). Likewise, it would be reasonable to conclude that the Christian's identity in eternity will be determined by obedience to God in time. And since all lives of obedience are unique in their particulars, each eternal 'identity' will be as unique as the snowflakes that fall from heaven."[\[143\]](#)

Resisting the appeal of the world is difficult for every believer. John urged his readers—in view of its attractiveness—to understand the avenues of its temptation, and to remember four things: (1) Love for the world indicates lack of love for God (v. 15). (2) It results in consequences that are not what our loving heavenly Father desires for our welfare (v. 17). (3) It lasts only a short time (v. 17), and (4) it precludes intimate fellowship with God (v. 15).

Summary of The Book of 1 John

Purpose. The purpose of the first book of John was to encourage Christians to "love one another" because "God is love". The other purpose was to combat various forms of heresies which had crept into the church. False teachers had gone out from the church and had begun to teach another doctrine. John refers to these false teachers as "Antichrist" and "false prophets." John went so far as to say that there was a spirit of error and the only way to detect the spirit of error was if the person denied that Jesus was Jehovah come in the flesh. John also addresses the Christian attitude, that the original enthusiasm of the believers needed to be renewed, and that they should not yield to the pleasures of the world. He also continually encourages them to love Christ and one another.

Audience. John clearly wrote to all Christians throughout the world to encourage them to love one another, and to guard against the Gnostic heresies which denied that Jesus was Jehovah come in the flesh.

Author. Although the book does not name the author, most scholars agree that the apostle John was the writer of 1 John, and early Christian writers often quoted from 1 John as having come from the apostle John.

Date. Many scholars believe that John the apostle had stayed in Jerusalem to care for Mary as Jesus had commanded him, and after the destruction of Jerusalem he went to Ephesus. Most Bible teachers believe that 1 John was written after the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD, although there is no evidence of this.

Place. According to church tradition John spent the last years of his life in Ephesus, as a center point to write to the churches. He lived to a very old age having written the gospel of John, the three epistles, and the book of Revelation.

<http://www.bible-history.com/new-testament/bookof1john.html>

Excerpt from 1 John Study Guide by Copeland

Introduction

When Jesus to earth, He came not only to **live** a life, but to **give** life:

"I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly." - Jn 10:10

The Gospel of John was designed to produce faith so that we might have life (**Jn 20:30-31**). However, it is **The First Epistle of John** which describes the nature of that life in greater detail (e.g., **1Jn 3:14**). That we might be sure to live the sort of life God offers through His Son Jesus Christ, a careful study of The First Epistle Of John is in order.

Author

It is assumed in this study that the author is **John**, the beloved disciple of Jesus (**Jn 13:23; 19:26-27; 20:2; 21:7,20**). Similarities in style, vocabulary, and themes in both this epistle and the Gospel of John certainly offer **internal evidence** for this conclusion.

There is also **external evidence** that John is the author. Polycarp, a close associate of John, appears to make reference to this epistle in a letter to the Philippians at the beginning of the second century. Irenaeus, a student of Polycarp, quoted from the epistle and attributed it to John.

http://executableoutlines.com/1jn_sg.htm

Excerpt from Inductive Bible Study – 1 John

AUTHOR: The author is John son of Zebedee (Mk 1:19-20) - the apostle and the author of the Gospel and Revelation. He was a fisherman, one of Jesus' inner circle (together with James and Peter), and "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (Jn 13:23). He may have been a first cousin of Jesus (his mother may have been Salome, possibly a sister of Mary; cf. Mt 27:56; Mk 15:40; 16:1; Jn 19:25 - this view assumes that "his mother's sister" in Jn 19:25 refers to Salome; some further assume that "Mary the wife of Clopas" there stands in opposition to "his mother's sister," which would mean that this Mary and Salome were one and the same person).

Unlike most NT letters, 1 John does not tell us who its author is. The earliest identification of him come from the church fathers: Irenaeus (c. A.D. 140-203), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215), Tertullian (c. 155-222) and Origen (c. 185-253) all designated the writer as the apostle John. As far as we know, no one else was suggested by the early church.

This traditional identification is confirmed by evidence in the letter itself:

1. The style of the Gospel of John is markedly similar to that of this letter. Both are written in simple Greek and use contrasting figures, such as light and darkness, life and death, truth and lies, love and hate.

2. Similar phrases and expressions, such as those found in the following passages, are striking:

1 John	Gospel of John
1:1	1:1, 14
1:4	16:24
1:6-7	3:19-21
2:7	13:34-35
3:8	8:44
3:14	5:24
4:6	8:47
4:9	1:14, 18; 3:16
5:9	5:32, 37
5:12	3:36

3. The mention of eyewitness testimony (1:1-4) harmonizes with the fact that John was a follower of Christ from the earliest days of his ministry.

4. The authoritative manner that pervades the letter (seen in its commands, 2:15,24,28; 4:1; 5:21; its firm assertions, 2:6; 3:14; 4:12; and its pointed identification of error, 1:6,8; 2:4,22) is what would be expected from an apostle.

5. The suggestions of advanced age (addressing his readers as "children," 2:1,28; 3:7) agree with early church tradition concerning John's age when he wrote the books known to be his.

6. The description of the heretics as Antichrists (2:22) and children of the devil (3:10) is consistent with Jesus' characterization of John as a son of thunder (Mk 3:17).

7. The indications of a close relationship with the Lord (1:1; 2:5-6:24,27-28) fit the descriptions of "the disciple whom Jesus loved" and the one who reclined "next to him" (Jn 13:23).

<http://inductive.indubiblia.org/1-john-1>

NET Bible Introduction

1 John

This apostolic letter speaks authoritatively about the truth of the incarnation—a message John's doubting readers needed after hearing false teachers deny the full divinity and humanity of Christ. It reaffirms the core of Christianity, saying that either we exhibit the sound doctrine, obedience, and love that characterize all Christians, or else we are not true Christians. When all the basics of faith are in operation, we not only know joy but can live a holy life and be assured of salvation (3:19,24)—even though we are still far from perfect (1:9). This assurance comes especially as we find ourselves learning to "love one another" as brothers and sisters in Christ (4:7-8). This general letter to congregations across Asia Minor (now Turkey) was probably written by the apostle John in the late first century A.D.

Top 1 John Verses (by ranking):

<http://topverses.com/Bible/1John>

Note: Every verse in the Bible sorted by how often it is referenced across the internet

TOP 6 Most Popular Verses

1 John 1:9

Bible Rank: 41

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. NIV

1 John 4:1

Bible Rank: 148

Dear friends, 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. NIV

1 John 4:5

Bible Rank: 171

They are from the world and therefore speak from the viewpoint of the world, and the world listens to them. NIV

1 John 1:7

Bible Rank: 194

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. NIV

1 John 4:7

Bible Rank: 232

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. NIV

1 John 2:15

Bible Rank: 234

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If you love the world, love for the Father is not in you. NIV

Most Popular Verses in 1 John

1 John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out ...

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forg...

1 John 5:8 And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spi...

1 John 4:8 He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love....

1 John 5:14 And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, i...

<http://www.godvine.com/bible/1-john>

Additional Study References:

1, 2, 3 John Comfort and Counsel for a Church in Crisis

<https://bible.org/series/1-2-3-john-comfort-and-counsel-church-crisis>

Structure and Purpose of 1 John

<https://bible.org/seriespage/4-structure-and-purpose-1-john>

1 John Commentaries and Sermons

http://www.preceptaustin.org/1_john_commentaries

1 John – A Study Guide (Copeland)

http://executableoutlines.com/pdf/1jn_sg.pdf [PDF]

Notes on 1 John (Dr. Thomas Constable)

<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/pdf/1john.pdf> [PDF]

<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/notes/htm/NT/1%20John/1John.htm>

also check out: Talking to God: What the Bible Teaches about Prayer

<http://www.soniclight.com/constable/prayer/prayer.pdf>

1 Peter - Inductive Bible Study

<http://inductive.indubiblia.org/1-john-1>

A Study of the Epistles of John (Taylor)

<http://padfield.com/acrobat/taylor/john-epistles.pdf> [PDF]

John and Jude (1 & 2 & 3 John and Jude) (Padfield)

<http://padfield.com/acrobat/nt/johnjude.pdf> [PDF]

1 John – IVP Bible Background Commentary, 2nd Ed. [BBC2]

[Intro \(JFB\)](#) [Intro \(NBC\)](#) [Intro \(HBH\)](#)

Chapters [1](#) – [2](#) – [3](#) – [4](#) – [5](#) – [Conclusion](#)

INTRODUCTION (from BBC2)

Introduction

Authorship. The style of 1 John is so close to that of the author of the Gospel of John that no one questioned that they were written by the same person until the twentieth century. Some writers have pointed to minor stylistic differences and have proposed that 1 John was written by a different member of the "Johannine school." Sometimes disciples of famous teachers would seek to imitate their teachers' works (often even their style), so this proposal cannot be ruled out on a priori literary grounds.

One can account for the minor stylistic differences, however, simply by recognizing the difference between an epistle and a Gospel; the latter genre is literarily related to ancient biography, which went through several stages in the writing process before it was complete. Conversely, this epistle probably does not represent a major literary production (although literary epistles did exist).

One can explain the purported differences in theology and outlook by the different situation each addressed; by the standards used to suggest that the same person did not write both, different sermons of the average preacher today would often have to be attributed to different authors as well! Most important, the author claims to be an eyewitness (1:1) but does not claim to write in another's name (he provides no pseudepigraphic preface).

Genre. The form is generally more like a homily than a letter (except 2:12-14). That the epistolary prescript (opening) and conclusion are missing need not surprise us; they were sometimes removed when letters were incorporated into collections (although 2 and 3 John retain standard elements of letters). But the document as a whole flows more like a sermon, albeit one not structured by the rhetorical conventions of the day. It thus resembles the form of letter known as a "letter-essay," although it nevertheless addresses the specific situation of the readers.

Situation. If the setting of 1 John is the same as that of the Fourth Gospel, it is meant to encourage Christians expelled from the synagogues, some of whose colleagues have returned to the synagogue by denying Jesus' messiah ship (2:19,22; 4:2-3). The letter can be read in this way and makes sense on these terms.

But John was concerned about situations in cities other than those addressed in his Gospel. While Christians apparently were expelled from synagogues and betrayed by the Jewish community in Smyrna (Rev 2:9-10) and Philadelphia (Rev 3:7-9), they were tempted with the heresy of compromise elsewhere, including compromise with idolatry advocated by false prophets (Rev 2:14-15,20-23; cf. 1Jn 4:1; 5:21). One form of idolatry of particular concern may have been the imperial cult, to which people in the East needed to show their loyalty or, in some cities, pay serious consequences (cf. Rev 13:14-15), possibly including death (1Jn 3:16). First John could address a community like Ephesus, where the church had expelled the false teachers but needed love for one another (Rev 2:2-4).

On the one hand, the issue in view might be simply some false prophets (1Jn 4:1-6) advocating compromises, perhaps even with the imperial cult to save one's life. On the other hand, the issue might

be one of the movements of false teaching that was developing toward full-blown second-century Gnosticism. Docetists believed that Christ was divine but only seemed to become human (cf. 4:2); Cerinthians (followers of Cerinthus) believed that the Christ-Spirit merely came on Jesus, but denied that he was actually the one and only Christ (cf. 2:22). Gnostics also tended to define sin in various ways, hence some Gnostics believed that they were incapable of committing real sins, although their bodies could engage in behavior non-Gnostic Christians considered sinful. Any of the above backgrounds fits the letter itself; thus the commentary mentions all of them at relevant points below. But one point is beyond dispute: the primary troublemakers are clearly "secessionists," people who had been part of the Christian community John addresses but who had withdrawn from that community. John advocates testing the spirits by two main tests: a moral-ethical test (keeping the commandments, especially love of the Christian community) and a faith test (the right view of Jesus).

Commentaries. Among those useful for background are I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978); Stephen S. Smalley, *1, 2, 3 John*, WBC 51 (Waco, TX: Word, 1984); D. Moody Smith, *First, Second and Third John*, Interpretation (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1991); and Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008). The most detailed commentary is Raymond E. Brown, *The Epistles of John*, AB 30 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), although its reconstruction of the situation overreaches the evidence. A sample of my primary source material appears in Craig Keener, "Transformation Through Divine Vision in 1 John 3:2-6," *Faith & Mission* 23, no. 1 (2005): 13-22.

INTRODUCTION (from JFB Commentary)

Authorship — **Polycarp**, the disciple of John [*Epistle to the Philippians*, 7], quotes 1Jn 4:3. **Eusebius** [*Ecclesiastical History*, 3.39] says of **Papias**, a hearer of John, and a friend of **Polycarp**, "He used testimonies from the First Epistle of John." **Irenæus**, according to **Eusebius** [*Ecclesiastical History*, 5.8], often quoted this Epistle. So in his work *Against Heresies* [3.15; 5, 8] he quotes from John by name, 1Jn 2:18, &c.; and in [3 . 16,7], he quotes 1Jn 4:1-3; 5:1, and 2Jn 7,8. **Clement of Alexandria** [*Miscellanies*, 2 . 66 , p. 464] refers to 1Jn 5:16, as in John's *larger Epistle*. See other quotations [*Miscellanies*, 3 . 32,42 ; 4.102]. **Tertullian** [*Against Marcion*, 5.16] refers to 1Jn 4:1, &c.; [*Against Praxeas*, 15], to 1Jn 1:1. See his other quotations [*Against Praxeas*, 28 ; *Against the Gnostics*, 12]. **Cyprian** [*Epistles*, 28 (24)], quotes as John's, 1Jn 2:3,4; and [*On the Lord's Prayer*, 5] quotes 1Jn 2:15-17; and [*On Works and Alms*, 3], 1Jn 1:8; and [*On the Advantage of Patience*, 2] quotes 1Jn 2:6. **Muratorius** *Fragment on the Canon of Scripture* states, "There are two of John (the Gospel and Epistle?) esteemed Catholic," and quotes 1Jn 1:3. The *Peschito Syriac* contains it. **Origen** (in **Eusebius** [*Ecclesiastical History*, 6.25]) speaks of the First Epistle as genuine, and "probably the second and third, though all do not recognize the latter two"; on the Gospel of John, [*Commentary on John*, 13.2], he quotes 1Jn 1:5. **Dionysius of Alexandria**, **Origen's** scholar, cites the words of this Epistle as those of the Evangelist John. **Eusebius** [*Ecclesiastical History*, 3.24], says, John's first Epistle and Gospel are *acknowledged without question* by those of the present day, as well as by the ancients. So also **Jerome** [*On Illustrious Men*]. The opposition of **Cosmas Indicopleustes**, in the sixth century, and that of **Marcion** because our Epistle was inconsistent with his views, are of no weight against such irrefragable testimony.

The internal evidence is equally strong. Neither the Gospel, nor this Epistle, can be pronounced an imitation; yet both, in style and modes of thought, are evidently of the same mind. The *individual* notices are not so numerous or obvious as in Paul's writings, as was to be expected in a *Catholic* Epistle; but such as there are accord with John's position. He implies his apostleship, and perhaps alludes to his Gospel, and the affectionate tie which bound him as an *aged* pastor to his spiritual "children"; and in 1Jn 2:18,19; 4:1-3, he alludes to the false teachers as known to his readers; and in 1Jn 5:21 he warns them against the idols of the surrounding world. It is no objection against its authenticity that the doctrine of the *Word*, or divine second Person, existing from everlasting, and in due time made flesh, appears in it, as also in the Gospel, as opposed to

the heresy of the Docetæ *in the second century*, who denied that our Lord *is come in the flesh*, and maintained He came only in outward *semblance*; for the same doctrine appears in Col 1:15-18; 1Ti 3:16; Heb 1:1-3; and the germs of Docetism, though not fully developed till the second century, were in existence in the first. The Spirit, presciently through John, puts the Church beforehand on its guard against the coming heresy.

To whom addressed .— **Augustine** [*The Question of the Gospels*, 2.39], says this Epistle was written to the *Parthians*. **Bede** , in a prologue to the seven Catholic Epistles, says that **Athanasius** attests the same. By the *Parthians* may be meant the Christians living beyond the Euphrates in the Parthian territory, outside the Roman empire, "the Church at Babylon elected together with (you)," the churches in the Ephesian region, the quarter to which Peter addressed his Epistles (1Pe 5:12). As Peter addressed the flock which John subsequently tended (and in which Paul had formerly ministered), so John, Peter's close companion after the ascension, addresses the flock among whom Peter had been when he wrote. Thus "the elect lady" (2Jn 1) answers "to the Church elected together" (1Pe 5:13). See further confirmation of this view in *Introduction to Second John*. It is not necessarily an objection to this view that John never is known to have personally ministered in the Parthian territory. For neither did Peter personally minister to the churches in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, Bithynia, though he wrote his Epistles to them. Moreover, in John's prolonged life, we cannot dogmatically assert that he did not visit the Parthian Christians, after Peter had ceased to minister to them, on the mere ground of absence of extant testimony to that effect. This is as probable a view as **Alford's** , that in the passage of **Augustine** , "to the Parthians," is to be altered by conjectural emendation; and that the Epistle is addressed to the churches at and around Ephesus, on the ground of the fatherly tone of affectionate address in it, implying his personal ministry among his readers. But his position, as probably the only surviving apostle, accords very well with his addressing, in a Catholic Epistle, a cycle of churches which he may not have specially ministered to in person, with affectionate fatherly counsel, by virtue of his general apostolic superintendence of all the churches.

Time and place of writing .—This Epistle seems to have been written subsequently to his Gospel as it assumes the reader's acquaintance with the Gospel facts and Christ's speeches, and also with the special aspect of the incarnate Word, as God *manifest in the flesh* (1Ti 3:16), set forth more fully in his Gospel. The tone of address, as a father addressing his " *little children* " (the continually recurring term, 1Jn 2:1,12,13,18,28; 3:7,18; 4:4; 5:21), accords with the view that this Epistle was written in John's old age, perhaps about **A.D.** 90 . In 1Jn 2:18, "it is the last time," probably does not refer to any particular event (as the destruction of Jerusalem, which was now many years past) but refers to the nearness of the Lord's coming as proved by the rise of *Antichristian teachers*, the mark of *the last time*. It was the Spirit's purpose to keep the Church always expecting Christ as ready to come at any moment. The whole Christian age is *the last time* in the sense that no other dispensation is to arise till Christ comes. Compare "these last days," Heb 1:2. Ephesus may be conjectured to be the *place* whence it was written. The controversial allusion to the germs of Gnostic heresy accord with Asia Minor being the place, and the last part of the apostolic age the *time*, of writing this Epistle.

Contents .—The leading subject of the whole is, *fellowship with the Father and the Son* (1Jn 1:3). Two principal divisions may be noted: (1) 1Jn 1:5-2:28: the theme of this portion is stated at the outset, " *God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all* "; consequently, in order to have fellowship with Him, we must *walk in light* (1Jn 1:7); connected with which in the *confession* and subsequent *forgiveness of our sins* through *Christ's propitiation* and *advocacy*, without which forgiveness there could be no light or fellowship with God: a farther step in thus walking in the light is, positively *keeping God's commandments*, the sum of which is *love*, as opposed to *hatred*, the acme of disobedience to God's word: negatively, he exhorts them according to their several stages of spiritual growth, *children, fathers, young men*, in consonance with their privileges as *forgiven, knowing the Father*, and *having overcome the wicked one, not to love the world*, which is incompatible with the indwelling of *the love of the Father*, and to be on their guard against the

Antichristian teachers already in the world, who were not of the Church, but of the world, against whom the true defense is, that his believing readers who have the *anointing* of God, should *continue to abide in the Son and in the Father*. (2) The second division (1Jn 2:29-5:5) discusses the theme with which it opens, *He is righteous*; consequently (as in the first division), " *every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him*. " *Sonship* in us involves our purifying ourselves as He is pure, even as we *hope to see, and therefore to be made like our Lord when He shall appear*; in this second, as in the first division, both a positive and a negative side are presented of "doing righteousness as He is righteous," involving a contrast between the children of God and the children of the devil. *Hatred* marks the latter; *love*, the former: this love gives assurance of acceptance with God for ourselves and our prayers, accompanied as they are (1Jn 3:23) with obedience to His great commandment, to "believe on Jesus, and love one another"; the seal (1Jn 3:24) of His dwelling in us and assuring our hearts, is the Spirit which He hath given us. In contrast to this (as in the first division), he warns against false spirits, the notes of which are, *denial of Christ*, and *adherence to the world*. *Sonship*, or birth of God, is then more fully described: its essential feature is unslavish, free *love to God, because God first loved us*, and *gave His Son to die for us*, and consequent *love to the brethren*, grounded on their being sons of God also like ourselves, and so *victory over the world*; this victory being gained only by the man who *believes in Jesus as the Son of God*. (3) *The conclusion* establishes this last central truth, on which rests our fellowship with God, *Christ's having come by the water* of baptism, *the blood* of atonement, and *the witnessing Spirit*, which is *truth*. As in the opening he rested this cardinal truth on the apostles' witness of the eye, the ear, and the touch, so now at the close he rests it on *God's witness*, which is accepted by the believer, in contrast with the unbeliever, who *makes God a liar*. Then follows his closing statement of his *reason for writing* (1Jn 5:13; compare the corresponding 1Jn 1:4, at the beginning), namely, that *believers in Christ the Son of God may know that they have* (now already) *eternal life* (the source of "joy," 1Jn 1:4; compare similarly his object in writing the Gospel, Jn 20:31), and so have confidence as to their prayers being answered (corresponding to 1Jn 3:22 in the second part); for instance, their intercessions for a *sinning brother* (unless his sin be a *sin unto death*). He closes with a brief summing up of the instruction of the Epistle, the high dignity, sanctity, and safety from evil of the children of God in contrast to the sinful world, and a warning against *idolatry*, literal and spiritual: "Keep yourselves from idols."

Though the Epistle is not directly polemical, the *occasion* which suggested his writing was probably the rise of Antichristian teachers; and, *because* he knew the spiritual character of the several classes whom he addresses, *children, youths, fathers*, he feels it necessary to write to confirm them in the faith and joyful fellowship of the Father and Son, and to assure them of the reality of the things they believe, that so they may have the full privileges of believing.

Style .—His peculiarity is fondness for aphorism and repetition. His tendency to repeat his own phrase, arises partly from the affectionate, hortatory character of the Epistle; partly, also, from its Hebraistic forms abounding in parallel clauses, as distinguished from the Grecian and more logical style of Paul; also, from his childlike simplicity of spirit, which, full of his one grand theme, repeats, and dwells on it with fond delight and enthusiasm. Moreover as **Alford** well says, the appearance of uniformity is often produced by want of deep enough exegesis to discover the real differences in passages which seem to express the same. Contemplative, rather than argumentative, he dwells more on the general, than on the particular, on the inner, than on the outer, Christian life. Certain fundamental truths he recurs to again and again, at one time enlarging on, and applying them, at another time repeating them in their condensed simplicity. The thoughts do not march onward by successive steps, as in the logical style of Paul, but rather in circle drawn round one central thought which he reiterates, ever reverting to it, and viewing it, now under its positive, now under its negative, aspect. Many terms which in the Gospel are given as Christ's, in the Epistle appear as the favorite expressions of John, naturally adopted from the Lord. Thus the contrasted terms, "flesh" and "spirit," "light" and "darkness," "life" and "death," "abide in Him": fellowship with the Father and Son, and with one another," is a favorite phrase also, not found in the Gospel, but in Acts and Paul's Epistles. In him appears the harmonious

union of opposites, adapting him for his high functions in the kingdom of God, contemplative repose of character, and at the same time ardent zeal, combined with burning, all-absorbing love: less adapted for active outward work, such as Paul's, than for spiritual service. He handles Christian verities not as abstract dogmas, but as living realities, personally enjoyed in fellowship with God in Christ, and with the brethren. Simple, and at the same time profound, his writing is in consonance with his spirit, unrheterical and undialectic, gentle, consolatory, and loving: the reflection of the Spirit of Him on whose breast he lay at the last supper, and whose beloved disciple he was. **Ewald in Alford**, speaking of the "unruffled and heavenly repose" which characterizes this Epistle, says, "It appears to be the tone, not so much of a father talking with his beloved children, as of a glorified saint addressing mankind from a higher world. Never in any writing has the doctrine of heavenly love—a love working in stillness, ever unwearied, never exhausted—so thoroughly approved itself as in this Epistle."

John's place in the building up of the church .—As Peter founded and Paul propagated, so John completed the spiritual building. As the Old Testament puts prominently forward the *fear of God*, so John, the last writer of the New Testament, gives prominence to the *love of God*. Yet, as the Old Testament is not all limited to presenting the fear of God, but sets forth also His *love*, so John, as a representative of the New Testament, while breathing so continually the spirit of love, gives also the plainest and most awful warnings against sin, in accordance with his original character as Boanerges, "son of thunder." His mother was Salome, mother of the sons of Zebedee, probably sister to Jesus' mother (compare Jn 19:25, "His mother's sister," with Mt 27:56; Mk 15:40), so that he was cousin to our Lord; to his mother, under God, he may have owed his first serious impressions. Expecting as she did the Messianic kingdom in glory, as appears from her petition (Mt 20:20-23), she doubtless tried to fill his young and ardent mind with the same hope. **Neander** distinguishes three leading tendencies in the development of the Christian doctrine, the Pauline, the Jacobean (between which the Petrine forms an intermediate link), and the Johannean. John, in common with James, was less disposed to the intellectual and dialectic cast of thought which distinguishes Paul. He had not, like the apostle of the Gentiles, been brought to faith and peace through severe conflict; but, like James, had reached his Christian individuality through a quiet development: James, however, had passed through a moulding in Judaism previously, which, under the Spirit, caused him to present Christian truth in connection with the law, in so far as the latter in its spirit, though not letter, is permanent, and not abolished, but established under the Gospel. But John, from the first, had drawn his whole spiritual development from the personal view of Christ, the model man, and from intercourse with Him. Hence, in his writings, everything turns on one simple contrast: divine *life* in communion with Christ; death in separation from Him, as appears from his characteristic phrases, "*life, light, truth; death, darkness, lie*." "As James and Peter mark the gradual transition from spiritualized Judaism to the independent development of Christianity, and as Paul represents the independent development of Christianity in opposition to the Jewish standpoint, so the contemplative element of John reconciles the two, and forms the closing point in the training of the apostolic Church" [**Neander**]. **A.R. Faussett, JFB Commentary**

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INTRODUCTION (from the NBC (New Bible Commentary))

This writing is usually called an 'epistle' or letter, but it has neither address nor signature. Indeed, it lacks so many characteristics of a letter that some scholars take 'epistle' as no more than a courtesy title; they see it as a written sermon rather than a letter. Against this, however, now and then there appear passages which justify us in seeing it as a real letter (e.g. 2:1, 26), although a letter with some unusual features. Perhaps the explanation is that it was originally meant for more than one community.

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Authorship

The traditional view is that the author was John the apostle and the marked tone of authority throughout the letter agrees with this. No other author was suggested in antiquity and perhaps only an apostolic figure could have sent out such a letter without putting his name to it. The writer was evidently an eyewitness of at least some of the things Jesus did (1:1-3; the views that 'we' means 'all Christians', or that it is simply a literary device seem untenable). The style and thought-forms resemble those of the fourth gospel, and all agree that there must be some connection. It has usually been thought that the one author wrote both, in which case everything hinges on the authorship of that gospel. Some critics, however, hold that the author of one of these writings was a disciple of the author of the other; it is not uncommon for people to think of a 'school' of Christians of a Johannine type, one of whom wrote this letter. Such critics hold that there are differences of style (e.g. fewer compound words in the letter) and of theology (e.g. a different view of the significance of the death of Jesus). While such differences should not be minimized, they do not seem great enough to demand diversity of authorship. They may be accounted for by the different purposes of the two writings and their different forms. 'The similarity between Gospel and letter is considerably greater than that between the third Gospel and the Acts, which are known to have come from the same pen' (J. R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John*, TNTC [IVP 1988], p. 28). Raymond E. Brown, who thinks it probable that there were different authors, agrees that the evidence is such that the gospel and the letters may have been written at different times by the same man (*The Epistles of John* [Doubleday, 1982], pp. 14-30). No conclusive argument for different authors seems to have been produced.

Some critics see 'John the elder' (cf. 2Jn 1; 3Jn 1) as the author of the gospel or of the letter (or 2 and 3 John, or Revelation), some of both. This rather shadowy figure, however, is not a likely candidate. It cannot be demonstrated that a John the elder, as distinct from John the apostle, ever existed. And if he did, the reasons for connecting him with this writing are not convincing, not nearly as convincing as the ancient tradition which ascribes it to the apostle.

While, then, the letter makes no claim about its authorship, and while the case cannot be proved beyond doubt, the most reasonable hypothesis is that it came from the pen of the apostle John.

Occasion

It is clear from the letter that its readers were being confronted with a form of false teaching which denied the incarnation. This error was evidently held by people who had been in the church but who had now seceded, for John speaks of them as 'going out' (2:19; 4:1). In the second century there appeared systems of thought now called Gnosticism, systems which took over both Christian and pagan ideas. They emphasized knowledge (Gk. *gnōsis*), and taught a way of salvation known only to the initiates. This included release from the material prison of the body, and an upward rise to God. There is dispute about how early Gnosticism appeared. It is very probable that it was much later than the time when this letter was written, but it did not spring out of empty air. Many of the teachings later included in the fully developed Gnostic systems were in circulation in the first century.

John was opposing some such system, a system that included the idea that matter is inherently evil. God, being good, can have nothing to do with evil matter it was claimed. Therefore, he could not have been incarnate in Jesus Christ. Some held that Christ only *seemed* to live in the flesh (they were called 'Docetists' from the Gk. *dokein* , 'to seem'). But it is probably too much to affirm that John is confronting Docetists, for there is nothing in this letter about a phantom body or the like. What he opposed seems to have been an early stage of the heresy that was to develop into Docetism. People were denying the incarnation and John took this as very serious. Its effect was to take the heart out of Christianity, for if Christ did not really become a man and did not really die for us, then no atonement has been made for our sins. So John emphasized the reality of the incarnation. He also stressed the importance of upright living, and it appears that in their

emphasis on knowledge some of the heretics held that conduct did not matter much. John made it clear that conduct is very important.

It would be wrong, however, to think that this letter is no more than a refutation of heresy. There is a very positive aim, as John tells us himself. He writes 'so that you also may have fellowship with us...to make our joy complete' (1:3-4). He makes this more specific when he says, 'I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life' (5:13). We may contrast this with the aim of the gospel: 'these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name' (Jn 20:31). Whereas the gospel has an evangelistic aim, the letter is thus directed rather at bringing believers assurance and a true knowledge of what the faith implies. 'The Gospel contains "signs" to evoke faith (20:30-31), and the letter tests by which to judge it' (J. R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John*, TNTC [IVP, 1988], p. 26). John wrote to take away his readers' anxieties as they came to realize what it meant to be a Christian. 'In the first Epistle, John sets forth three marks of a true knowledge of God and of fellowship with God...These marks are, first, righteousness of life, second, brotherly love, and third, faith in Jesus as God incarnate' (*Search the Scriptures* , 1967, p. 289). These three themes recur constantly.

The letter is dominated by two great thoughts: God is light (1:5), and God is love (4:8,16). God is the source of light to the minds and of warmth to the hearts of his children. These children should accordingly live up to the highest standard; there is constant emphasis on this (e.g. 2:1-6; 3:3, 6, 9; 5:1-3). But the letter contains no harsh admonition. Rather, the writer addressed his readers with fatherly care and tender concern: 'little children'; 'beloved'; 'little children, let no one deceive you'; 'little children, keep yourselves from idols'.

Date

There is very little by which to date the writing. The relation to the gospel is not definitive, for scholars differ as to whether it was written before or after the gospel. In any case the date of the gospel is uncertain. Many date 1 John towards the end of the first century, but J. A. T. Robinson argues for AD 60-65 (*Redating the New Testament* [SCM, 1976]). This may be right, but we cannot be sure.

See also the article Reading the Letters .

Further reading

D. Jackman, *The Message of John's Letters* , BST (IVP, 1988).

M. M. Thompson, *1-3 John* , IVPNTC (IVP, 1992).

J. R. W. Stott, *The Letters of John* , TNTC (IVP/UK/Eerdmans, 1988).

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NBC (New Bible Commentary Introduction to 1John)

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Introduction – Halley's Bible Handbook

John

According to a very ancient tradition, John made Jerusalem his headquarters. There he cared for Jesus' mother, Mary, until her death, and after the destruction of Jerusalem, he moved to Ephesus (see Image 508), which by the end of the apostolic generation had become the geographic and numerical center of the Christian church. Here John lived to a very old age, and here he wrote his Gospel and his three letters. John is also the author of the book of Revelation (he received the vision recorded in Revelation while on Patmos). Among his pupils were Polycarp, Papias, and Ignatius, who became bishops of Smyrna, Hierapolis, and Antioch, respectively. We still have writings from all three; they are among the earliest of the so-called church fathers (see The Church Fathers).

The Background of the Letter

When John wrote this letter, Christianity had been in existence some 60 or 70 years, and in many parts of the Roman Empire it had become an important religion and a powerful influence. Naturally, all sorts of efforts were made to combine the Gospel with prevailing philosophies and systems of thought.

One such effort was the blending of Christianity and the philosophy known as Gnosticism. The form of Gnosticism that was disrupting the churches in John's day taught that human nature consists of two separate, irreconcilable entities: body and spirit. Sin resides in the body (or "flesh") only. The human spirit occupied itself with the things of God, while at the same time the body could do as it pleased. One could transcend from the mundane to a spiritual realm by acquiring knowledge, or "gnosis." Thus a lofty mental, mystical piety was entirely consistent with a voluptuous, sensual lifestyle!

The Gnostics also denied the Incarnation: God had in Christ not actually become flesh — Christ was a phantom, a man in appearance only. This theory was called Docetism. Another gnostic theory was Cerinthianism, which suggested that the divine Christ joined the man Jesus at baptism and left him before he died. A man named Cerinthus was the leader of this cult in Ephesus. He claimed for himself inner mystic experiences and an exalted knowledge of God, but his life centered around the gratification of sensual appetites. Throughout this letter John appears to have had these heretics in mind: he insists that Jesus was the actual, material, authentic manifestation of God in the flesh who died on the cross for our sins and was resurrected, and that genuine knowledge of God must result in moral transformation.

1 John 1:1-4**The Basis for True Fellowship**

The basis for fellowship as Christians (1:3) is precisely what divided John's readers from those who had withdrawn from the community. If (as many scholars think) 1:1 alludes back to the opening of the Fourth Gospel, John speaks of God's Word that had always been (see comment on Jn 1:1-18). Although philosophers and Jewish teachers alike spoke of the divine Word, none of them spoke of the Word's becoming human. By saying that Jesus' witnesses had touched and felt him, John indicates that Jesus had been fully human; he was not simply a divine apparition like the current "manifestations" of the gods in which the Greeks believed (though merely "testifying" what one saw "with one's eyes" could be used more broadly, e.g., 2Ma 3:36).

1 John 1:5-10**The Reality of Sin**

It is possible that the secessionists believe, like some later Gnostics, that they have achieved a state of sinlessness. Given the emphasis on God's holiness in this passage and later statements about the secessionists, however (3:6,9), it is perhaps more likely that they believe, like some later Gnostics, that they are sinless in a different sense—they do not regard the sins they commit as sinful. (On the sins they are especially committing, see comment on 3:6,9.)

1Jn 1:5. Other Jewish texts (especially the Dead Sea Scrolls, e.g., 1QM 1.1, 11) also used the light-darkness image to contrast the followers of righteousness with those of sin, regarding God as wholly righteous. The Old Testament also affirmed that God was wholly righteous (e.g., Ps 92:15).

1Jn 1:6. The Old Testament often described "obeying" God's commands as "walking" in them—so often that Jewish teachers called their view of the way Jewish people should behave *halakhah*, "walking." The image of walking about in darkness connoted the danger of stumbling (2:10-11). The Old Testament condemned mixing up light and darkness, right and wrong (Isa 5:20; cf. 2:5).

1Jn 1:7. Although water, not blood, cleansed in a physical sense, blood also purified in an Old Testament ritual sense (see comment on Heb 9:21-22). Sacrificial blood set apart what was sacred for God, purifying from sin by making atonement (Lev 16:30).

1Jn 1:8-10. The Old Testament prophets had often condemned false protestations of innocence as self-deception (e.g., Je 2:35; Ho 8:2; cf. Pr 30:12); God required instead both admission of the sin and repentance (cf. Lev 5:5; 16:21; Ps 32:1-5; Pr 28:13; Je 3:13). (Some synagogue prayers for forgiveness were also preceded by confessions of sin, indicating that Jewish people in the first few centuries A.D. generally recognized the idea; cf. also *Psalms of Solomon* 9:6, etc.) On cleansing, see 1Jn 1:7. On the sins of the secessionists, see comment on 3:6,9.

1 John 2:1-11**The Moral Test**

Jesus' followers were new people, and while they might not be living absolutely sinless lives yet (1:8-10), the newness of their life in Christ would affect their lifestyles; because sin was real (1:5-10), moral behavior was a valid way of testing real commitment to Christ. This moral examination especially

emphasizes the test of love (2:5,9-11). For paradox, cf. 2:7-8. Judaism also stressed that true participants in God's covenant obeyed his commandments.

1Jn 2:1. Philosophers and Jewish teachers sometimes addressed their disciples as "children." "Advocate" often meant "intercessor" or sometimes "defending attorney." In the Old Testament , God could plead his people's case before the nations (Je 50:34; 51:36); in ancient Judaism, such advocates as God's mercy or Israel's merit pleaded Israel's case before God. Jesus is naturally the advocate, as elsewhere in the New Testament (cf. Ro 8:34), because of his position, his righteousness and his work (see 1Jn 2:2).

1Jn 2:2. A "propitiation" (KJV, NASB) was an atonement , a way to appease or satisfy the wrath of a God whose standard had been violated; it alludes to the sacrifices offered for atonement in the Old Testament. In Judaism, the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement was for Israel alone; but Jesus' sacrifice was offered not only for Christians but even for those who chose to remain God's enemies, leaving them without excuse.

1Jn 2:3-4. In the Old Testament, Israel "knew" God—were in covenant relationship with him—when they obeyed his commandments (e.g., Je 22:16; 31:33-34).

1Jn 2:5. One was to demonstrate love for God by obeying his commandments (Dt 6:5-6); this idea was understood throughout ancient Judaism.

1Jn 2:6. Moralists commonly appealed to imitation of God or of a famous teacher in ancient moral exhortation. John here alludes to Jesus' example of sacrificial love to the point of death (Jn 13:34-35).

1Jn 2:7-8. In antiquity, paradox was one graphic way of forcing an audience to think through the meaning of one's words; John uses it here ("old, not new," "but new"). The love commandment was old, always part of God's word (Dt 6:5 and Lev 19:18, cited by Jesus— Mk 12:30-31), but also new, based on a new and ultimate example (Jn 13:34). Jewish sources that used the light-darkness imagery for good and evil portrayed the present age as ruled mainly by darkness but the age to come in terms of the triumph of the children of light (e.g., 1QM 14.17 in the Dead Sea Scrolls .

1Jn 2:9-11. Part of John's application may be that the secessionists who have withdrawn from the Christian community that John addresses have broken fellowship with true Christians, thus showing that they "hate" rather than "love" them. The Old Testament and Judaism forbade "hatred of brothers and sisters" (Lev 19:17); in a Jewish context, this language referred to fellow Jews (though cf. also 19:34); in a Christian context, it refers to fellow Christians.

1 John 2:12-14

Exhortations to Different Groups

"I am writing" is probably not intended to convey a sense different from "I wrote"; it was common to vary style to make one's writing more interesting. One could write "I have written" in a letter one was presently writing; grammarians call this convention an "epistolary aorist."

Some argue that "fathers," "young men" and "children" (John does not exclude women from consideration here but employs the language categories of his day, which used masculine forms for mixed groups) could refer to different stages of progress in the Christian faith; see comment on 2:1. More likely is that John offers age-appropriate instruction; in antiquity, some writers addressed different kinds of moral

instruction to different age groups to which particular points were most relevant (e.g., Isocrates, *Ad demonicum* 44 ; the Greek philosopher Epicurus in Diogenes Laertius 10.122; cf. Pr 20:29; 2Ti 2:22).

Fathers (a title often accorded older persons) held positions of honor and authority, and were respected for their wisdom (e.g., Diodorus Siculus 1.1.4; Tosefta *Avodah Zarah* 1:19). Children were in positions of learning and lacked status and authority. Young men were generally associated with strength and vigor (cf. Jn 20:4; 21:7-8; Job 33:25; Pr 20:29); here they had overcome the evil one by participating in Christ's victory (1Jn 4:4; 5:4) over sin (3:10-12). Although some ancient writers often considered young men more vulnerable to particular temptations (passions such as anger and especially sexual immorality), John expresses his confidence in them.

1 John 2:15-17 **Do Not Love the World**

1Jn 2:15. "The world" could refer to everything but God; here it means the world system in competition with God. Just as Israel in the Old Testament repeatedly had to decide between allegiance to God and allegiance to the values of the pagan nations around them, the Christians scattered among the nations had to choose Christ above whatever in their cultures conflicted with his demands. In the case of John's hearers, refusal to compromise might be a costly proposition (3:16).

1Jn 2:16. The Old Testament often related the eyes to desire, especially sexual desire, and pride. Both Judaism and philosophers (e.g., Aristotle , Epictetus) condemned arrogant boastfulness. By listing the three vices together, it is not impossible that John alludes, as some commentators have suggested, to Ge 3:6, although the language here is more general.

1Jn 2:17. Judaism spoke of the world passing away but of God's word remaining forever (cf. also Isa 40:6-8). John's words here could encourage those who preferred death for the sake of Christ over the survival that the world offered (cf. 1Jn 3:16).

1 John 2:18-27 **Discerning the Spirits: The Theological Test**

John needs to assure his readers that they, not the secessionists, are true followers of God. To the ethical test (2:1-11) John now adds a theological test: they must hold the proper view of Christ. John carries on the thought of the end time (v. 18) from 2:17.

1Jn 2:18. It was a common Jewish belief that evil would multiply in the end time; the duration of this period immediately preceding the end of the age was often left indeterminate (as here), although some Jewish writers assigned a specific duration to it (e.g., forty years, four hundred years). Some Jewish people also appear to have envisioned a particularly evil figure as a high priest or ruler oppressing God's people, an idea that became much more prevalent in Christian circles (e.g., 2Th 2:3-4). John argues that by definition there are many "antichrists" already. (John is the only New Testament writer to use this term. "Anti-" could mean "instead of," though John might call a substitute Christ a "false Christ," like "false prophets" in 4:1. Cf. Paul's argument that the "mystery of lawlessness is already at work"— 2Th 2:7.)

1Jn 2:19. The Old Testament was clear that the righteous could become wicked (e.g., Eze 18:24-26) but also that one's deeds could reveal the sincerity or falsehood of one's heart (e.g., 2Ch 12:14). Both Greek and Jewish teachers condemned disciples who proved unfaithful or unable to endure the tests of discipleship, frequently assuming that their initial commitment had been inadequate. Judaism recognized

that many converts were false, although they regarded even more severely Jewish apostates who had once embraced but now rejected the law .

Some New Testament texts (e.g., Jn 6:70-71; 1Jn 2:19) may view the issue from the standpoint of God's foreknowledge, and other texts from the standpoint of the believer's experience (e.g., Ga 5:4; 1Ti 4:1-2). But unlike many modern interpreters, ancient Jewish interpreters would not see a contradiction between these two perspectives.

1Jn 2:20-21. In the Old Testament people were literally anointed with oil to perform a specific task, especially for the priesthood (e.g., Ex 29:29; 40:15) or kingship (e.g., 1Sa 10:1; 2Ki 9:6); the term translated "anointed" is used figuratively for those ordained by God to particular tasks. Christians had been appointed to discernment (see 1Jn 2:27).

1Jn 2:22-23. By themselves, these verses would counter equally well a non-Christian Jewish opposition and a Cerinthian opposition to Christian faith. Compromising the absolute uniqueness of Jesus as the Christ and the only way to the Father would probably permit Jewish believers to remain in the synagogues , thus protecting them from direct challenges from the imperial cult and threat of persecution. That false prophets would advocate such compromise (cf. 4:1-6) is by no means difficult to conceive (see the introduction to Revelation). Cerinthus, who may have taught around A.D. 100, believed that the Christ-Spirit came on Jesus but was not identical to him; the late-second-century Christian writer Irenaeus also attributed this view to many later Gnostics .

1Jn 2:24-27. Many commentators hold that the "anointing" (v. 27) is the Spirit (cf. Jn 14:17,26; Ac 10:38); others suggest that it refers in context to the word, the message of the gospel ; in either case it alludes to the Old Testament practice of God setting particular people apart for his calling, which here applies to all believers. The Old Testament used anointing oil symbolically to consecrate or separate people (such as kings) or objects (such as the tabernacle) for sacred use. The ultimate consecration for such use arose when the Spirit came on people (Isa 61:1; cf. 1Sa 10:1,9; 16:13).

1 John 2:28-3:3 **Readiness for His Coming**

As the readers have been abiding in Jesus (v. 27), so they are to continue to do (v. 28); on abiding (dwelling, remaining), see comment on Jn 15:1-8.

1Jn 2:28. In Jewish tradition, the coming of God to judge the world would be a fearful day for those who were disobedient to his will (cf. Am 5:18-20).

1Jn 2:29. It was an ancient commonplace that children inherited the natures of their fathers. (So thoroughly was this belief held that many writers even warned that adulterers would give themselves away, because their image would be stamped on the children of the union.)

1Jn 3:1. No one who agreed with John that Christians were God's children would have disputed his point here. A younger but roughly contemporary Jewish teacher, Rabbi Akiba , celebrated, "Beloved is humanity, since they were created in God's image; greater still is the love, that God made it known to humanity that they were created in the image" (Mishnah Avot 3:15). Rabbi Meir, later in the second century, proclaimed, "Beloved is Israel, for . . . they are God's children."

1Jn 3:2-3. In some Greek thought, one's nature was transformed toward that of the divine by contemplating the divine; philosophers like Plato believed that they accomplished this transformation through the vision of the mind rather than through knowledge derived through the senses. Philo agreed that one attained the vision of God mystically, because he affirmed that God was transcendent; he believed that God endowed Israel and especially the prophets with this vision, that this vision was preceded by virtue and purity of soul, and that the vision would be made complete when one was perfected. The idea also occurs in some Palestinian Jewish texts, especially in Jewish mysticism (cf. transformation through vision of the divine in *1 Enoch* 71:10-11). Perhaps more to the point, this vision of God was often associated with the end time, and some Jewish apocalyptic thought seems to have envisioned transformation through beholding God's glory.

John may derive most of the image of transformation by beholding glory from the Old Testament (Ex 34:29-35; see comment on Jn 1:14-18). For him, one who knows God's character purifies himself or herself accordingly, and the final and ultimate purifying will take place when one knows God perfectly at the end.

1 John 3:4-24 Which Side Are You On?

In traditional Jewish fashion, John contrasts sin and righteousness, along with those aligned with either side (3:4-9). He then explains why the unrighteous oppose the righteous, appealing to a stock Jewish illustration for this principle: the righteous love one another, but the wicked, like Cain, hate the righteous (3:10-18). This was the test that would make clear who would ultimately triumph in the day of judgment (3:19-24).

1Jn 3:4. Greeks could view sin as imperfection; the Old Testament and Judaism saw it more concretely as transgression of God's law .

1Jn 3:5. Here John may use sacrificial language; cf. Jn 1:29. The point is that those who are in Jesus have their sins taken away, so they no longer live in them.

1Jn 3:6-7. This verse again alludes to the transformative power of beholding God (cf. 3:2-3). Some commentators think that the claim to sinlessness here is ideal, "to the extent that" one abides in Christ. (In this way Plato argued that to the extent one was a craftsman, one's craftsmanship would be perfect; but where one's craftsmanship failed, it was because one was not acting as a true craftsman at that point.) Others think it is potential: one is capable of living sinlessly (cf. Jn 8:31-36). But verse 9 is worded too strongly for either of these options.

More likely, John is turning the claims of the false teachers and their followers (1:8-10) against them: unlike those errorists who merely claim to be sinless, true believers do not live in sin. (Many commentators suggest that the present continuous tense of "sin" suggests "living in" sin, sinning as a natural way of life. This is different from one who lives righteously but sometimes succumbs to temptation or deception and genuinely repents.)

Stoics , Essenes and Jewish wisdom literature divided humanity into ideal types: righteous and unrighteous, or wise and foolish. All of these sources, however, recognize the imperfection of the righteous or wise; they might not fit the ideal type in all respects, but their allegiance is clearly decided.

The particular sins that dominate John's portrayal of these secessionists are violations of the two basic precepts John stresses in this letter: the right attitude toward members of the Christian community and the right view about Jesus (3:24). Thus John may mean that they commit the sin that leads to death, i.e., leading out of eternal life (cf. 5:16-17).

1Jn 3:8. In the Dead Sea Scrolls , all sins were influenced by the spirit of error. Given the traditional Jewish view that the devil had introduced sin into the world (cf. Jn 8:44), all sins were ultimately the devil's works and reflected his character.

1Jn 3:9-10. On the claim to sinlessness, see comment on 3:6-7. Some scholars have suggested that John borrows the image of "seed" here from his opponents, since the idea is later attested among the Gnostics ; but the image was already widespread in Christian tradition (Jas 1:18,21; 1Pe 1:23; see comment on 1Pe 1:23). Some thought of divine seed in humans (e.g., Ovid, *Fasti* 6.5-6; Seneca , *Epistle to Lucilius* 73.16; Epictetus , *Discourses* 1.9.4-6), an idea Christians could adapt for those born from the Spirit . A child was believed to inherit his or her father's nature through the seed, hence John is able to use this image to make his point: those who are born from God through conversion reflect his character now in them, and those who are not reveal this by their nature as well. In the Old Testament one could overcome sin by the word written or dwelling in one's heart (e.g., Dt 30:14; Ps 119:11; Je 31:32-33).

1Jn 3:11-13. Cain's murder of Abel is often rehearsed with little adornment in Jewish tradition; at other times, Jewish tradition expounds on Cain's wickedness in great detail. He became a stereotypical prototype for wickedness (e.g., *Jubilees* and *1 Enoch* ; Pharisees sometimes associated Cain with the Sadducees and their denial of the life to come); one pre-Christian Jewish text calls him "the unrighteous one" (Wis 10:3). Philo used Cain repeatedly as a symbol of self-love and made him an illustration that "the worse attacks the better," as here (cf. Ga 4:29). Some later antinomian Gnostics took Cain as a hero.

Murder of a brother was considered one of the most hideous crimes possible in antiquity (so, e.g., Cicero , Horace); John applies "brother" or "sibling" to any member of the Christian community. A murderer was a child of the devil (3:10), for one of the devil's first works had been to bring death to Adam (see comment on Jn 8:44); some later rabbinic texts claim that Cain's father was a bad angel, even the devil himself. Sibling rivalry (Ge 37:8; 1Sa 17:28) was normally outgrown, but Cain's act did not allow that to happen.

1Jn 3:14-15. Murder was a capital offense under Old Testament law and thus merited Gehenna in post-Old Testament Jewish thought. Jesus included as murder the attitude that generated the literal act (cf. Mt 5:21-22).

1Jn 3:16. John's hearers might anticipate persecution and the possibility of death, although few had actually been martyred so far (Rev 2:13). Refusal to participate in the worship of the emperor would brand them as subversives, and their enemies would be more than happy to betray them to the government as such. Since non-citizen prisoners were sometimes tortured for information, especially if they were slaves, Christians might have to pay a tremendous price to avoid betraying their fellow Christians to death.

1Jn 3:17. In addition to being ready to sacrifice one's life for fellow believers (3:16), John also demands of them a practical commitment to love in the present. Their opponents, who had withdrawn from the community, perhaps to avoid persecution, are responsible for others' deaths as Cain was; but the true Christians are to live sacrificially on behalf of others daily. As in some Jewish thought, withholding goods from someone in need was equivalent to starving him or her (cf. Jas 2:15).

1Jn 3:18. Ancient literature often coupled "word" and "deed" (e.g., in Isocrates, Demosthenes, Quintilian , Seneca, Lucian , Wisdom of Solomon); one who did both was praised, but one who only spoke and did not act accordingly was viewed as a hypocrite.

1Jn 3:19. The Dead Sea Scrolls sometimes called the righteous "children of truth" or "the lot of God's truth" (1QS 4. 5 ; 1QM 13.12; 1QHa 17.35; 18.29; 19.14).

1Jn 3:20-21. Judaism repeatedly stressed that God knew the hearts of all people (cf. Je 29:23); some texts even call him "searcher of hearts." As one Jewish wisdom writer expressed it, "Happy is the one whose soul does not accuse him" (Sir 14:2).

1Jn 3:22-24. John's practical interest in this subject may be because these commandments are precisely those that the secessionists are violating: by leaving the Christian community they have demonstrated their lack of love for their supposed brothers and sisters, and by not believing Jesus as the only true Christ (2:22) they have failed the faith test as well. On the promise of answered prayer, see Jn 14:12-14. Most Jewish people did not believe that the Spirit (1Jn 3:24) was available to many in the present age (the Essenes , like the Christians, were apparently rare in this regard).

1 John 4:1-6

Testing the Spirits

1Jn 4:1. Judaism especially associated the Spirit of God with prophecy but acknowledged the existence of false prophets, who John says are moved by other spirits. His readers would understand his point; Jewish people were familiar with the idea of other spirits besides the Spirit of God (see especially comment on 4:6). There were many pagan ecstasies in Asia Minor, as well as Jewish mystics claiming special revelations; the need for discernment would be acute.

1Jn 4:2-3. The issue may be the secessionists' denial that Jesus has come as the Christ (if the opposition is Jewish); or it might be a Docetic denial that Jesus was actually human and actually died (see introduction), a heresy an eye-witness would be well positioned to refute. It may simply be a relativizing of Jesus' role to the position of a prophet like John the Baptist, which allows enough compromise to avoid persecution. Perhaps they deny the Jesus who is known from the eyewitness material in the Fourth Gospel. Whatever the error, the secessionists are claiming the authority of inspiration for it, as do some similar groups today. John does not deny the reality of the inspiration; he merely denies that the spirit working in them is God's Spirit.

1Jn 4:4-6. The Dead Sea Scrolls similarly distinguish between God's children and the rest of the world, though they go far beyond John in asserting that every act is determined by either the spirit of truth or the spirit of error. (The language of "two spirits" probably extended beyond the Dead Sea Scrolls, although the best attestation outside the Scrolls is in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* . These testaments contain a number of references to spirits of falsehood, but the closest to 1Jn 4:6 is *Testament of Judah* 20 , which, with the *Testament of Levi* , is one of the testaments most often suspected of harboring Christian interpolations. Thus the issue is not settled, although the *Testament of Judah* reference is *probably* not Christian, reflecting an idea similar to the general Jewish doctrine of the two impulses, which the rabbis especially developed and expounded; on this doctrine, see comment on Ro 7:15-22.) The promise that the one with them was greater than the one with the world (1Jn 4:4) recalls an Old Testament principle (2Ki 6:16; 2Ch 32:7-8).

1 John 4:7-21

The Test of Love

1Jn 4:7-10. Again (3:9-10) John argues that one's nature shows one's spiritual lineage; those who are like God are his children, and God's supreme characteristic is his love, revealed in the cross of Christ. The secessionists proved their lack of love by withdrawing from Christian fellowship. On propitiation, see comment on 2:2.

1Jn 4:11-12. Even true Christians' love had to be perfected, but unlike the secessionists, they had remained within the Christian community, thus maintaining a commitment to love one another. The false teachers may have been claiming to have had mystical visions of God (see comment on 3:2-3; 4:1), but John includes a corrective: God was unseen (Ex 33:20), and the sense in which believers could envision him is in his character of love fleshed out in the cross (4:9) and in Christians' sacrificial love (4:12).

1Jn 4:13-16. Although the Qumran community as a group claimed to possess the Spirit , most of ancient Judaism relegated the Spirit's most dramatic works to the distant past and future, or to very rare individuals. John could speak of the first witnesses, but for him also who prophetically endows them to testify the truth about Christ (see comment on 4:1).

1Jn 4:17. In the Old Testament (e.g., Am 5:18-20) and Judaism, "the day of judgment" was something to be feared by the disobedient (2:28). But those who continued in love could be confident of acquittal before God's tribunal in that day, for they are agents of his unselfish love.

1Jn 4:18. It was understood that sin often leads to fear (e.g., Ge 3:8; *Letter to Aristeas* 243). Although Stoic philosophers emphasized not fearing anything, because circumstances cannot ultimately destroy one's reason, in this context John's assurance that true believers need not fear is not explicitly directed toward all circumstances. His assurance applies specifically to punishment in the day of judgment (4:17).

1Jn 4:19. The Old Testament also recognized that God's people learned how to treat others from God's gracious treatment of them (Ex 13:8; 22:21; Lev 19:34; Dt 10:19), although the ultimate expression of the principle is the example of Christ (1Jn 4:10; cf. Jn 13:34).

1Jn 4:20-21. Principles like arguing on the basis of what was near at hand rather than from something related to the gods (e.g., Plutarch) and that a new friend would treat you as he had treated others (e.g., the fourth-century B.C. rhetorician Isocrates) were also recognized by others in antiquity. In the Old Testament, God accounted behavior toward those who could not repay it as if it were done to him (Pr 19:17; cf. Dt 15:9).

1 John 5:1-13

Triumph and Life Through Faith in Jesus

1Jn 5:1. Families were often viewed as a unit, hence one could not love one member of a family while despising other members. (This principle of group allegiance extended even to friendship networks.) This verse may also reflect the idea that children bear their parents' nature.

1Jn 5:2. On love being demonstrated actively, compare 3:18.

1Jn 5:3. God's commandments had never been too heavy for those in whose hearts they had been written (Dt 30:11-14). Many Jewish teachers regarded some parts of the law as "heavier" or "weightier" than others (as in Mt 23:23), but they meant that some were more crucial for daily life, not that any of them were too hard to keep.

1Jn 5:4-5. The image of achieving "victory" was used in military, athletic, debate and courtroom situations but always involved a conflict or test. John calls his readers to "overcome" or "triumph" in the face of opposition, persecution and possible martyrdom (perhaps including suffering for refusal to compromise with the imperial cult).

1Jn 5:6-13. Many scholars have suggested that the secessionists, like Cerinthus and some later Gnostics , said that the Christ-Spirit came on Jesus at his baptism but departed before his death; or that, like the

Docetists and some later Gnostics, the secessionists believed that Jesus was actually baptized but could not actually die, being eternal. It is also possible that some Docetists saw in the "water and blood" of Jn 19:34 the picture of a demigod: Olympian deities in Greek mythology had ichor, a watery substance, instead of blood. Thus they may have stressed his divinity at the expense of his humanity. The reference could also be more general than any of these suggestions.

In any case, ancient sale documents sometimes included the signatures of several witnesses attesting a sale, and the Old Testament and later Jewish courts always required a minimum of two dependable witnesses (Dt 17:6; 19:15). John cites three witnesses whose reliability could not be in dispute. (The trinitarian formula found in the KJV of 1Jn 5:7 is orthodox but not part of the text. It appears in only four manuscripts—of the twelfth, fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries [the last in a marginal note]—out of the thousands available, placed there by scribes who knew it from the Latin Vulgate, which took it from an early marginal note based on a popular early interpretation of the text. The KJV includes it only because that translation was based on a recension dependent on the third edition of Erasmus's Greek text; Erasmus included the verse to fulfill a wager, protested it in a note and withdrew it in subsequent editions of the text.)

1 John 5:14-21 Avoiding Sin

1Jn 5:14-15. For background applying to the general principle in these verses, see comment on Jn 14:12-14. But the specific issue emphasized here might be prayer for an erring brother or sister, undoubtedly including one attracted to the false prophets' ideas (4:1-6); see 5:16-17 (cf. Mt 18:15-20).

1Jn 5:16-17. Given the use of "life" for eternal life and "death" for its opposite in this epistle, a "sin unto death" (KJV) would seem to be a sin leading one away from eternal life (cf. Ge 2:17; 3:24). The two sins John would likely have most prominently in mind would be hating the brothers and sisters (the secessionists' rejection of the Christian community) and failing to believe in Jesus rightly (their false doctrine about his identity as the divine Lord and Christ in the flesh); see comment on 3:23.

The Old Testament and Judaism distinguished between willful rebellion against God, which could not be forgiven by normal means, and a lighter transgression. More relevant here, some ancient Jewish texts (e.g., Dead Sea Scrolls CD 9.6, 17; *Jubilees* 21:22; 26:34; 33:18; cf. the Hebrew of Dt 22:26) also spoke of a capital offense as "a matter of death," which was normally enforced by excommunication from the community rather than literal execution. Those who were sinned against could secure forgiveness for their opponents by prayer (Ge 20:7,17; Job 42:8), but a sin of willful apostasy from God's truth nullified the efficacy of secondhand prayers for forgiveness (1Sa 2:25; Je 7:16; 11:14; 14:11). John is presumably saying: God will forgive erring believers at your request, but those who have gone completely after this severely false teaching are outside the sphere of your prayers or (on another interpretation) simply must directly repent to receive forgiveness.

1Jn 5:18. Satan could not touch Job without God's permission (Job 1:11-12; 2:3-6). Judaism recognized that Satan needed God's permission to test God's people, and that God rejected Satan's accusations against God's own people.

1Jn 5:19-20. Judaism acknowledged that all the nations except themselves were under the dominion of Satan and his angels. The source of this idea is not hard to fathom; nearly all Gentiles worshiped idols, and most also practiced sexual immorality and other sins.

1Jn 5:21. "Idols" could refer to anything that led astray from proper worship of the true Lord (thus "idols of one's heart" might mean falsehoods or sins in 1QS 2. 11 in the Dead Sea Scrolls; cf. antichrist in 1Jn 4:3). A literal meaning (physical images of false gods) makes good sense to a congregation in Asia Minor.

It could include worshiping the image of the emperor, to which many Christians were eventually required to offer incense to show their loyalty to the state (Pliny, *Epistles* 10.96). It could also refer to compromise with idolatry in a broader sense—Asia Minor afforded plenty of temptation for former pagans, such as food offered to idols. Ancient Jewish texts often condemned idolatry as the worst sin—surely a capital offense or a "sin unto death" (5:16-17); if the false prophets in 4:1-6 are like other false prophets affecting Asian churches in this period (Rev 2:20), the idolatry may well be literal; see comment on Rev 2:14; 9:20; 13:12 and 15.

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MAPS and Charts

Map of the New Testament World



http://www.bible-history.com/maps/maps/map_new_testament_world.html

Map of New Testament Asia





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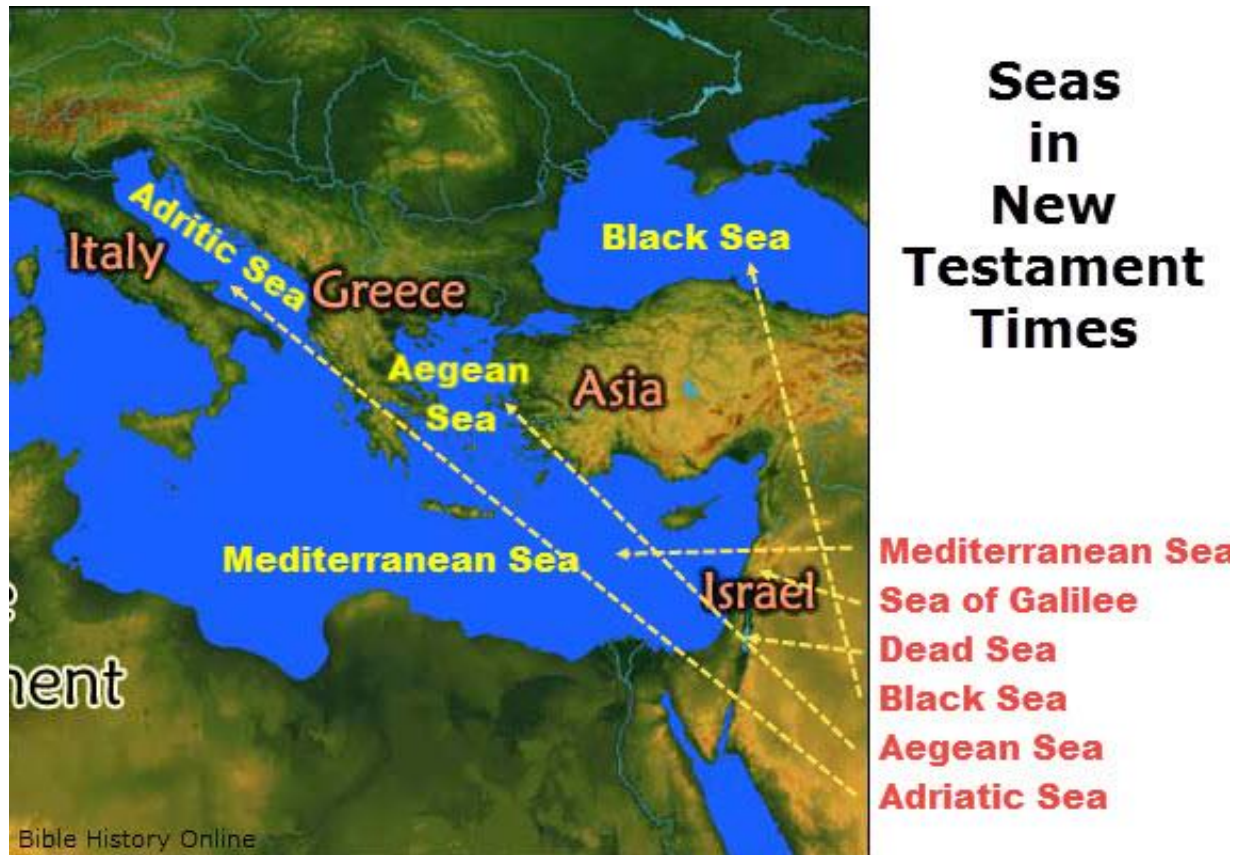


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Peter's Destination

Source: Halley's Bible Handbook



The Seas (6 Great Seas)

There were six important seas in the New Testament World, some are mentioned in the Gospels and the Book of Acts.

1. The Mediterranean Sea which bordered the land of Israel on the east as far as Italy on the east.
2. The Sea of Galilee, also called the Sea of Tiberias, mainly associated with the life of Jesus.
3. The Dead Sea, Although it was not mentioned in the New Testament it was in southern Israel.
4. The Black Sea, it was just north of Asia Minor.
5. The Aegean Sea, located between Asia Minor and Greece.
6. The Adriatic Sea, located between Greece and Italy.

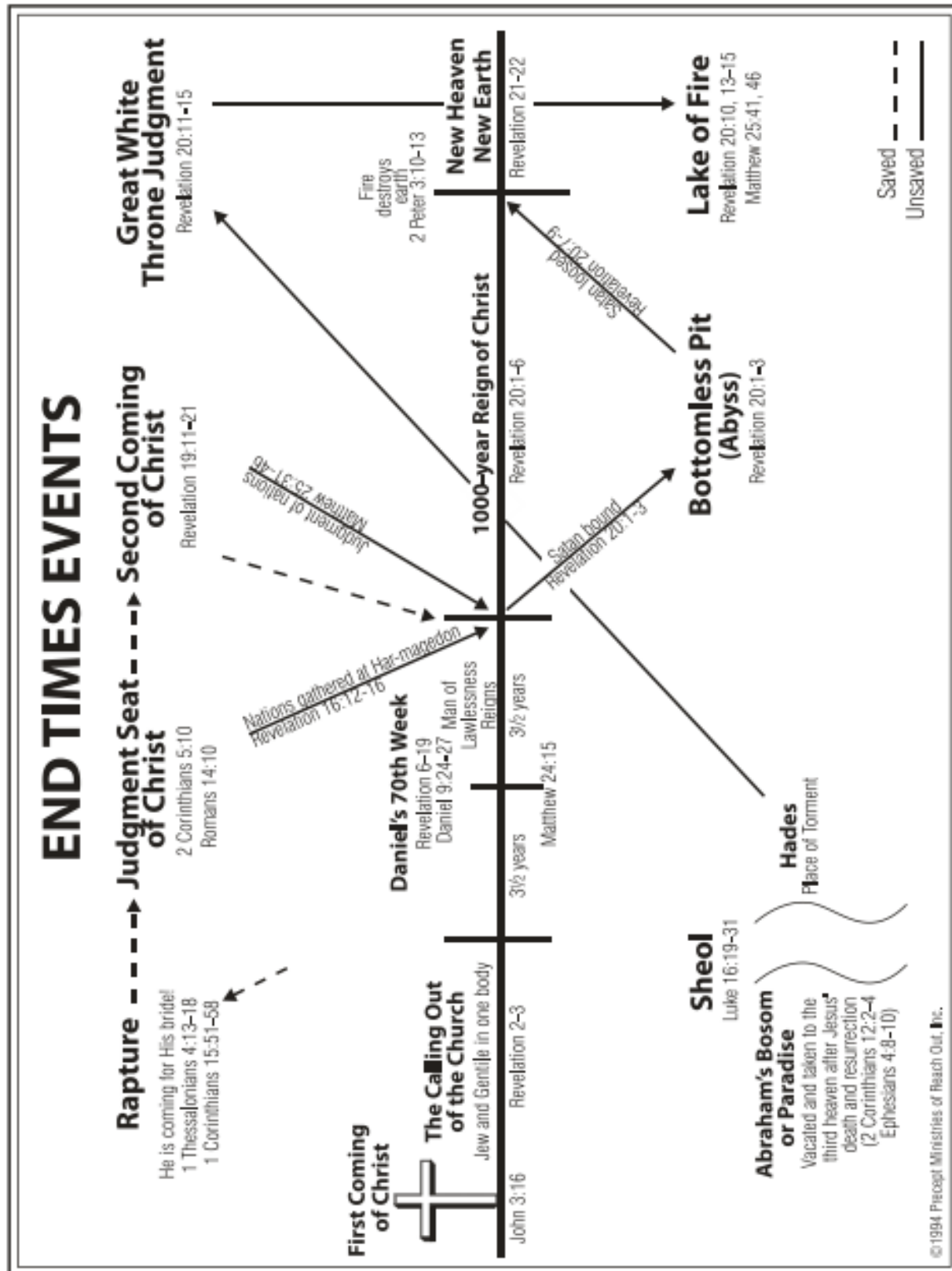


Roman Provinces in Europe (5 Provinces)

1. **Thrace** was the land bordering the southwest corner of the Black Sea.
2. **Macedonia** was the land at the northeast corner of the Aegean Sea, in-between Thrace, Illyricum, and Greece.
3. **Greece or Achaia** was the land southwest of Macedonia, bordering 3 seas.
4. **Illyricum** was the land north of Greece, northwest of Macedonia, and the eastern portion of the Adriatic Sea.
5. **Italy** was the country across the Adriatic Sea from Greece and Illyricum. Rome was the capital of Italy.



Precepts for Life Map



Precepts for Life – End Times Events Chart

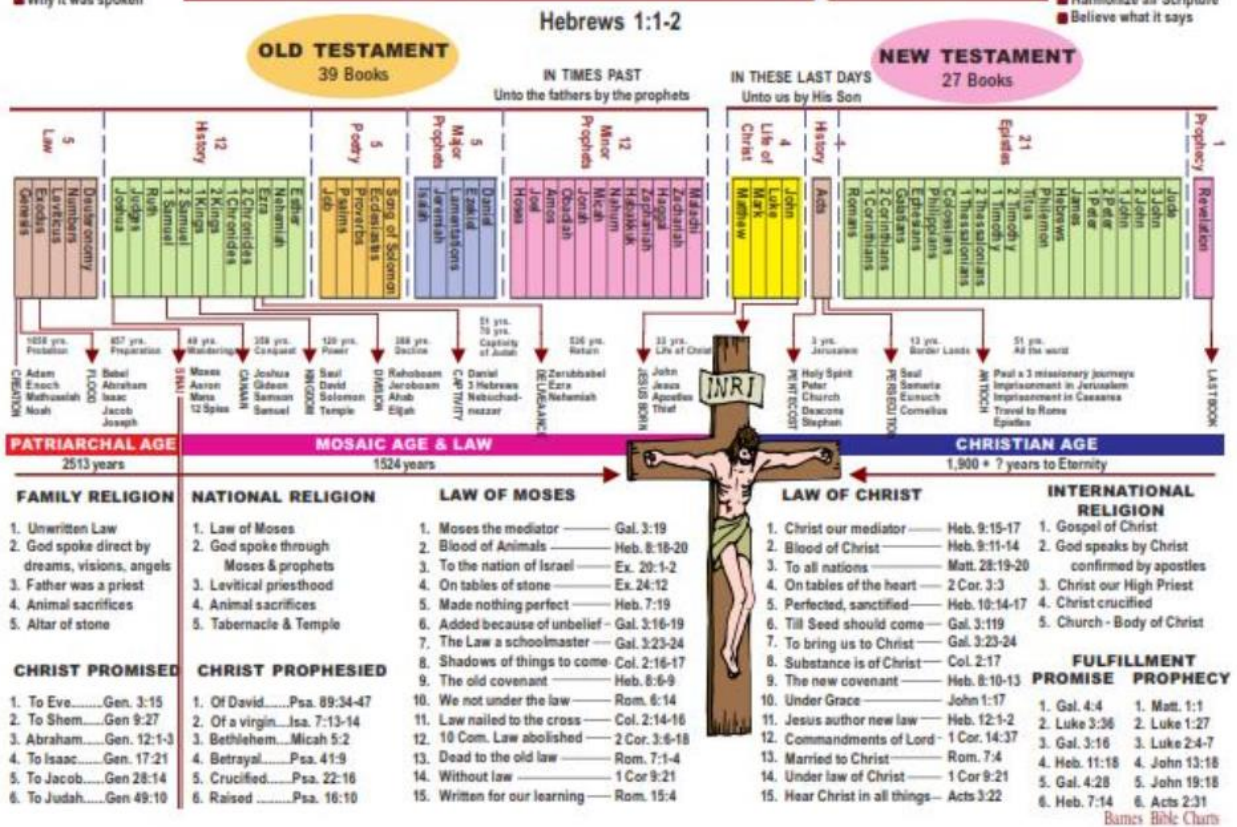
HOW TO STUDY

- Find out who spoke
- To whom they spoke
- In what age they spoke
- Why it was spoken

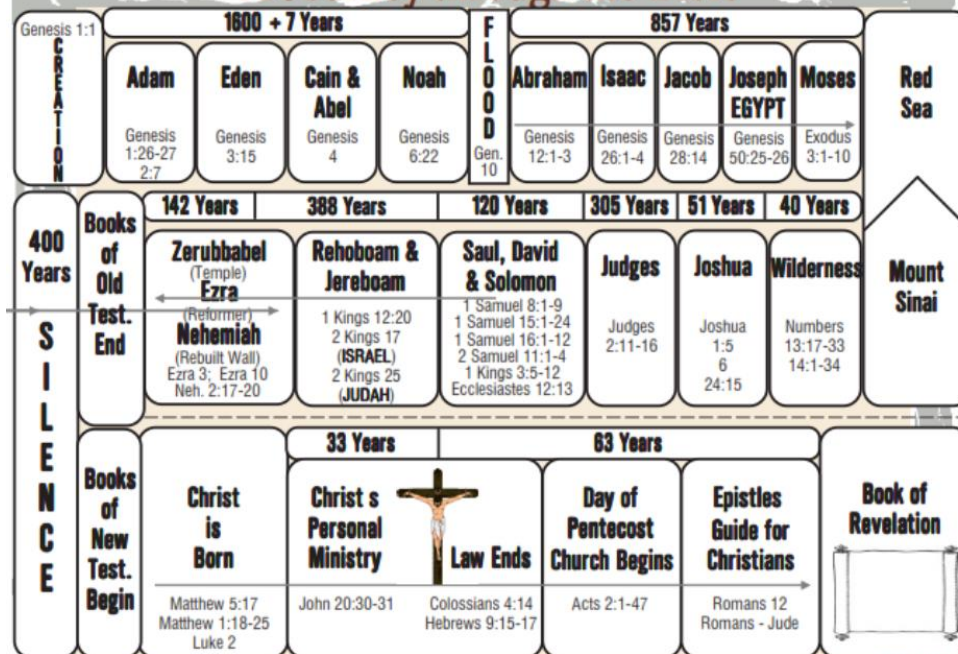
The Bible - God Has Spoken

HOW TO UNDERSTAND

- Study for yourself
- Read in context
- Harmonize all Scripture
- Believe what it says



A Journey through the Bible



History from Moses to Alexander the Great

BC 1445 Exodus/10 Plagues/Law Given

God raised up Moses to deliver the people from Egypt and through 10 plagues demonstrates his power and makes a name for himself. The last plague is the execution of the first born unless the house had the blood of a lamb (or goat) on their door posts. The Israelites were expelled after this last plague and made it through the Red Sea and then eventually to the Mountain of Sinai where God gave them the covenant.

BC 1405 Conquest of Canaan

Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness because when they reached the promised land, they refused to enter it. Now under Joshua, the successor of Moses, the people conquer the east side of the Jordan and then make their way into the land via Jericho. This is the first time Israel actually possesses the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

BC 1391-1050 Judges

The period of the Judges covers a few hundred years during which a cycle repeated itself over and again. (1) The people become oppressed by a foreign nation and call out to God in their despair. (2) God raises a Judge or Deliverer to obtain military victory. (3) The people become complacent and “everyone does what is right in his own eyes” which causes God’s protection to be forfeited.

BC 1050-930 United Kingdom

The first king of Israel was from the tribe of Benjamin, called Saul. The kingdom was taken from him and given to David of the tribe of Judah (though David did not rise to the throne until Saul died in battle). Then David’s son, Solomon was anointed above his brothers by David to be king over Israel. Each of these first three kings reigned for 40 years. This is called the “Golden Age” because during it Israel enjoyed peace, prosperity, and they worshiped God.

BC 966 First Temple Built

Shortly after the Law was given (BC 1445) Moses was given instruction on building the tabernacle (a tent meticulously designed by God to represent his presence among the people). The center piece of the tabernacle was the Ark of the Covenant containing the tablets of the Ten Commandments and some other items. David wanted to build a “house” for God but was refused because he was a man of war. Solomon used the materials David had laid up for the construction of the temple and dedicated it sacrificing thousands of animals. Then the glory of God visibly came into the temple.

BC 930 Kingdom Splits

Rehoboam, Solomon’s son, does not act wisely and instead of reaching out to the northern part of the kingdom alienates them. This causes a rift between the north and the south. Jeroboam is crowned king of the northern ten tribes (called hereafter Israel) and Rehoboam retains control (barely) of the southern two tribes (called hereafter Judah).

BC 930-721 Northern Kingdom of Israel

Jeroboam was the first king (the son of Nebat) and his first acts involved making two golden calves. One was to be installed in the south and one in the north. He appointed a new priesthood to offer sacrifices. The new capital was Samaria. The kings were not descended through one family line and there were often bloody assassinations to gain the throne. The last king was Hoshea the son of Elah. The Assyrians conquered Israel, deported its inhabitants and resettled other people in Samaria (later dubbed the Samaritans).

BC 930-586 Southern Kingdom of Judah

Under David's grandson, Rehoboam the kingdom split but God was merciful to the house of David and providentially saw to it that David's family line continued throughout all the kings of Judah. Jerusalem remained the capital. Hezekiah miraculously survived the vicious attack of Assyria when God sent two angels to defeat Sennacherib's army. The last kings of Judah were Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. At this point, the Babylonian empire conquered Jerusalem three times, the last of which resulted in the city's complete destruction.

BC 911-612 Assyrian Empire

Historians mark the beginning of the Assyrian empire with the accession of Adad-Nirari II to the throne. Before this Assyria existed but was not very powerful. When Tiglath-Pileser III (also known as Pulu) ascended to the throne, he defeated Babylonia, the Medes, Hittites, Syria, and Phoenicia. He occupied Philistia in BC 738 and subjected Israel to tribute. In BC 727 Tiglath-Pileser III's was succeeded by Shalmaneser V who died in BC 722 while laying siege to Samaria. Sargon II seized the throne and finished off Samaria and carried off 27,000 people into captivity in BC 721. Under Sennacherib (BC 705-681) an unsuccessful attack was made against Jerusalem and her king, Hezekiah. It really ended in BC 612 when the capital of Nineveh was defeated by the Babylonians.

BC 612-539 Babylonian Empire

Nabopolassar successfully rebelled and with the help of the Medes defeated Nineveh (the capital of Assyria) in BC 612. Under Nebuchadnezzar's 43 year reign Babylon was at the peak of its strength. He brought Judah under his control and imposed taxes on them. Judah rebelled, was conquered, then rebelled again, and this time it was destroyed and all the citizens were deported. Nebuchadnezzar was succeeded by Nabonidus who eventually was defeated by Cyrus the king of the Medo-Persian Empire in BC 539 at Opis. Cyrus entered the city of Babylon without fighting.

BC 605 Jerusalem Defeated (First Exile)

During the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim (king of Judah), Jerusalem was defeated and some of the vessels from the house of God were brought by Nebuchadnezzar into Shinar (another name for Babylon) (Daniel 1:1-2). Daniel, Mishaël, Hananiah, Azariah and others who showed promise are brought to Babylon and trained to be able to serve in the royal court there (Daniel 1:3-6). Judah was made to pay taxes to Babylon but soon stopped in defiance to their foreign conquerors.

BC 597 Jerusalem Defeated Again (Second Exile)

In the eighth year of king Jehoiachin, Nebuchadnezzar again defeated Jerusalem and carried away the rest of the treasures of the temple, and the treasures of the king's house, and led away into captivity all the captains, the warriors, the craftsmen, and the smiths (2nd Kings 24:8-16). Only the poorest people were left in the land. During the siege, Jehoiachin surrendered and went out to Nebuchadnezzar and was taken back to Babylon. Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah (also called Zedekiah), was put in charge by Nebuchadnezzar (2 Kings 24:17). Ezekiel may have been taken during this time. He prophesied extensively about the coming destruction of Jerusalem while living in Babylonia near the river Chebar (Ezekiel 1:1-3).

BC 586 Jerusalem Destroyed/Temple Destroyed (Third Exile)

Jerusalem again rebelled and the army of Babylon once again defeated it in the eleventh year of King Zedekiah (2nd Kings 25:1-2). Zedekiah fled but was captured; both of his sons were slaughtered before his eyes and then his eyes were put out and he was brought in bronze fetters to Babylon where he died. The temple was burned to the ground to such a degree that when it was rebuilt even a new foundation had to be made. The city walls were completely destroyed along with the prominent houses and the gates to the city (2nd Kings 25:1-21). Jeremiah was in the city when this happened and survived.

BC 586-516 Seventy Year Captivity

The land was to lie dormant for seventy years to make up for the Sabbaths that it had not enjoyed (the Israelites were supposed to rest from farming every seventh year, but they did not). There are multiple ways to date this event. Some start in 605 (or 606) and end it in 535 (or 536). Here I have indicated the time from when the temple was destroyed (586) to when it was finally rebuilt (516). However one counts it, the people were able to survive in the foreign regions in which they were transplanted, just as God had prophesied through Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25.1-14). Daniel's prayer undoubtedly ties in with the end of the captivity (Daniel 9).

BC 539-333 Achaemenid Empire (also called Medo-Persia)

Cyrus the Great (also called Cyrus II of Persia) successfully defeated the Median Empire, the Lydian Empire, and the Babylonian Empire between BC 559 and 539. His son, Cambyses II conquered Egypt. Cyrus was politically shrewd, modeling himself as the "savior" of conquered nations. To reinforce this image, he instituted policies of religious freedom, and abolished slavery in the newly acquired cities. Other kings in this empire include Darius I, Xerxes I (Ahasuerus), Artaxerxes I, etc. In BC 334 during the reign of Darius III, Alexander the Great successfully established the Greeks as the new empire.

BC 538 Cyrus Issues Decree to Return to Judea

In the first year that Cyrus was established as the king of the empire he issued a decree that the Jews living throughout his empire could return to Judah and rebuild the temple (Ezra 1.1-4). Zerubbabel & Joshua lead 49,897 people back to Jerusalem (Ezra 2.2, 64-65) and begin work on the temple in BC 536. Zerubbabel was the Persian approved governor and Joshua was the highpriest. Prophets Haggai and Zechariah urged the building of temple through their prophecies.

BC 516 Second Temple Built

The building of the temple was begun in BC 536 but stopped some time before BC 529. The people of the surrounding areas (outside of Judah) discouraged the people of Judah, and frightened them from building, and hired counselors against them to frustrate their work until Darius I became king (Ezra 4.4-5). Then God moved through the prophets Zechariah and Haggai to urge the work to begin again (without permission from the authorities) in BC 520. It was finally completed and dedicated in BC 516.

BC 484-475 Events of Queen Esther

In BC 484 King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I) gave a banquet and his queen (Vashti) publicly disobeyed him. The king sought after a new queen and chose Esther (Hadassah). During this time a man named Haman (who was the right hand man of the king) gained much power and wanted to annihilate the Jews because Mordecai (Esther's Uncle) would not bow to Haman as he passed. In a last minute effort to defend her people Esther succeeds in gaining Xerxes I's approval to reverse Haman's plot and the Jews throughout the Persian Empire were saved. The festival of Purim is celebrated annually (up to this day) as commemoration of this deliverance.

BC 457 Ezra Arrives in Jerusalem

In the seventh year of King Artaxerxes I (BC 464-425), Ezra the scribe was sent to establish Mosaic Law in Jerusalem. His mission was to teach the people how to live. He was given a good deal of silver and gold to get the sacrificial system going. BC 445 Nehemiah Arrives in Jerusalem and Builds Wall Governor Nehemiah was commissioned by Artaxerxes I to rebuild the wall in Jerusalem (Nehemiah 2.1). The work began and it was strongly opposed by Sanballat the Horonite, Tobiah the Ammonite official, and Geshem the Arab (Nehemiah 2.10, 19). Even so, the workers continued with incredible speed holding a weapon in one hand a tool in the other. The wall was finished in 52 days (Nehemiah 6.15).

BC 333 Alexander the Great's Empire

Alexander (son of Philip of Macedon) was king from BC 336 to 323 being only 20 years old. He was one of the most successful military commanders in history, and was undefeated in battle. He defeated Darius

III at the Battle of Issus in BC 333. By the time of his death (at only 33 years old), he had conquered most of the world known to the ancient Greeks pressing east into India. In the same year, Alexander took Jerusalem and now Judea was a Greek province instead of a Persian one. He founded Alexandria in Egypt (along with a number of other Alexandrias) which became a major city of trade, education, and culture. In BC 331, Alexander was welcomed as a liberator in Egypt and was pronounced the son of Zeus by Egyptian priests of the god Amun.

From then on, Alexander referred to the god Zeus-Ammon as his true father. Alexander was a brilliant and fearless military strategist (he was undefeated in battle) but was also well educated in general, having Aristotle as his personal tutor. Alexander wasn't just interested in conquering the world and submitting it to Greek rule; he wanted to make the world like Greece, civilizing it. He spread the Greek language, culture, religion, and philosophy to the lands he conquered and encouraged intermarriage. By the time of Jesus Greek was the common international language of the day. Alexander died in BC 323 of unknown causes (speculations include binge drinking, malaria, West Nile virus, typhoid, and viral encephalitis).

Audio Versions of the Book of 1 John

<http://www.audiotreasure.com/webindex.htm> (WEB - World English Bible)

<http://www.audiotreasure.com/> (numerous versions)

http://www.lightinside.org/light/free_audio_bible.htm (numerous versions)

<http://www.divinerevelations.info/bible/> (numerous versions)