

1John

Summer, 2013 - Auditorium

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Introduction

Before the first class, read the entire letter in one sitting. It is only five chapters and should not take long.

We will note word and thought phrases throughout the class. Copies of the text are available on the front pew if you would like to use a highlighter to mark these.

Attestation and Authorship

“The epistle has early and strong external attestation. Polycarp [c. 55-155 A.D.-EOC, p102] has an almost verbal reproduction 4:2,3 in his *Epistle to the Philippians* (ch. vii). Papias [“separated from the apostles by only a single generation” EOC, p99] is described by Iraenaues [born 120-135 A.D.-EOC p84] as a “hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp”; he is said by Eusebius to have “used some testimony from John’s former Epistle.” The *Epistle to Diognetus* seems to allude to the ideas in 4:19 (ch. x). The Muratorian Fragment [not later than 170 A.D.-EOC p74] recognizes two Epistles of John, but does not name them; undoubtedly 1John was one of them. It was in the Old Syriac. There are linguistic resemblances to it in the *Epistle of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons*. Irenaeus quotes 4:1,2, although not exactly as we have those verses in our text, and 5:1 almost verbally. He says, ‘John the disciple of the Lord’ testifies in his Epistle, and then quotes 2:18, 19 somewhat loosely. Clement of Alexandria [c. 165-220 A.D.-EOC p69] says, ‘John ... in his larger Epistle’ teaches in these words, and then quotes almost verbally 5:16,17; he also introduces his quotation from 1:6,7 with the words, ‘John says in his epistle.’ He quotes the epistle frequently. Tertullian [160-240 A.D.-EOC p71] gives the substance of 4:1-3 and assigns it to the ‘Apostle John’ in *Against Marcion* (V. xvi); he quotes 1:1 as by John, in *Ad Praxeus* (ch. xv); he combines the ideas in 2:22; 4:2,3; 5:1, in the same work (ch. xxvii). He, too, frequently quotes from 1 John. Cyprian [died 258 A.D.], Origen [c185-254 A.D.], and Dionysius of Alexandria all quote it, but it is not necessary to list the examples. Eusebius [270-340 A.D.-EOC, p63] placed it among the *homologoumena* [“The Homologouma are books which once they were accepted into the canon were not subsequently questioned or disputed.” GIB, p162. “The Homologoumena are those books which have been universally acclaimed as canonical from their beginning. They have appeared in virtually every ancient version and and orthodox canonical list, as well as having been widely quoted as Scripture.” GIB, p195] . After his day it was generally received.” *Introduction to the New Testament*, Henry Clarence Thiessen (Eerdmans, 1973) pp. 306,307. EOC - *Evidences of Christianity*, J. W. McGarvey (Gospel Advocate, 1956); GIB - *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Norman L. Geisler and William E. Nix (Moody Press, Chicago, 1979. [brackets mine, srf]

Evidence that John the apostle wrote 1John:

- Ancient and unbroken testimony of first–fourth century authors (see above)
- Author an eyewitness of Christ, **1:1-4**
- Similarity in words and writing style with the Gospel of John “There is practically unanimity of opinion that the one who wrote the Gospel also wrote the Epistle” Thiessen, INT, p307.

John does not identify himself by name, but it is clear he has a special relationship to the readers. He calls them “beloved” six times **2:7** (NASB), **3:2,21**; **4:1,7,11**, “children” (*teknia*) seven times, **2:1,12,28**; **3:7,18**; **4:4**; **5:21**, and “children” (*paidia*) twice (**2:13,18**). There is no indication in the book that John was responsible for his readers learning the gospel, therefore, these terms indicate a fatherly relationship from the standpoint of teaching. They may point to John's age is well.

“Gnosticism”

Gnosticism emphasized *knowledge* (“gnosticism” > *gnOsis* Strong’s #1108, “knowledge”; verb form = *ginOskO*, Strong’s #1097—this is the word throughout 1John). Knowledge was elevated over everything else, and the gnostics claimed they had a secret knowledge only the initiated shared—a knowledge not found in the revelation given by the Apostles (note **1Jn 1:1-3**, “we”; **4:5,6**; **2Jn9**). We will note the continuing thread of “know” words when we get to chapter two. Gnosticism developed a contempt for others do not have their secret knowledge. Also, they had the concept of “dualism” These two—spiritual and material—were completely separated. Spiritual is good; material is evil.

Applying this philosophy to Jesus Christ, the Son of God, his being a man presented a problem because flesh, material, is evil. So Jesus could not be *both* God and man. Therefore, some said Jesus never was really a man. He was just an illusion, a spirit made visible—never materializes. Others said he was only a man, but at his baptism the “Christ”—the spiritual—came on him. Then before the cross, the “Christ” leaves him. Against this background 1John argues both human and divine nature of Jesus, **1Jn 2:22**; **4:2,3**.

Relative to man, gnosticism went two directions. Ascetic gnosticism argued that since the flesh is evil, one should deny the flesh, e.g., not get married, or eat certain foods—see **Col 2:20-23**; **1Tim 4:1-5**. The other alternative, antinomian Gnosticism, argued that it made no difference what the flesh did as long as spirit was elevated by knowledge. It could even justify sexual immorality—see **1Co 6:12-20**. One could claim to “know” God but not keep his commandments, **1Jn 2:3,4**; to be a child of God but not practice righteousness, **1Jn 3:7-10**.

Gnosticism embraced loveless intellectualism—see **1Co 8:1-3**. Ignatius (1st century) said, “They give no heed to love, caring not for the widow, the orphan or the afflicted, neither for those who are in bonds, nor for those who are released from bond, neither for the hungry nor the thirsty.” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, “Gnosticism.” In contrast to this loveless system, John that those who love God also loves God’s children, **3:14**; **4:20-5:1**.

Purpose

- Read **1:3,4** — What is the purpose of this letter? See also **2:1,12,13,14,21,26**; **5:13**. (Suggestion: mark the “write/writing/written” family of words)
- Compare **1:6,7...2:24...4:12...5:13**. These verses discuss conditions for this purpose to be enjoyed. We will discuss the purpose more in the next lesson.

Relation to the Gospel of John and Revelation

All three letters were written by the apostle John.

The **Gospel of John** presents the evidence that *Jesus is The Divine Victor*.

Read **Jn 1:4,5** - note the marginal note on “comprehend” in NASB, or compare the ESV.
See **vv10-12,14**; **20:30-31**.

1John encourages believers to follow the God appointed *Means to Victory* and not be deceived by “lies.”

Read **1Jn 1:6**; **2:4,22**; **3:7**; **4:20**; **5:4-5**.

Revelation is designed to reassure believers that the *Victory is Assured!*

- The setting is one of trial and persecution, **1:9**; **2:2-3**, **9-10**, **13**, **19**; **3:8-10**.
- Note the recurring assurance of victory: **2:7,11,17,26**; **3:5,12,21**; **12:10-11**.
- Such victory can be assured because it is secured by the living, reigning Victor! **1:17,18**;
17:14

Overview

Purpose

What did John say was his purpose in writing this letter? **1:3,4** (answered in last lesson)

Who is this fellowship with, **vv3b,6**? (Note interpret **vv3a,7** in the light of **vv3b,6**.)

Note the phrase that is used throughout the letter to connote the same idea as fellowship.

Suggestion: use one color for the word “fellowship” and for this synonymous word family and mark them throughout the letter (copies of the text are available on the front pew if you would rather mark on these than in your Bible). **2:6,10,14,17,24,27,28; 3:6,9,14,17,24; 4:12,13,15,16**

What word does John use to connote what this fellowship gives the believer? Suggestion: use another color and mark this family of words throughout the letter. **1:1,2; 2:25; 3:14,15; 5:11,12,13,16,20**

Three cycles

This fellowship, or relationship with God, is conditional. Throughout the book these conditions are discussed in recurring cycles. They might be called “tests” of fellowship. We will use these cycles and their subdivisions as the framework of our outline and study. Note as you read each section (see below) the focus on either 1) righteousness, keeping God’s commandments, 2) love of God and brethren, 3) faith in the truth about Jesus Christ. Thus we see the tests of whether one enjoys fellowship with God is conditioned on 1) right conduct (righteousness), 2) right attitude (love), and right belief (faith in the true gospel of Christ). *All three* are essential for this relationship with God (note all three linked together in **3:23-24**). Suggestion: in the margin of your text (either the copies provided or your Bible if there is room in the margin), note where each section begins. For example, you might do something like this...

1:5 “This is the message we have heard from him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.”	1:5-2:6, Tested by Righteousness
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1:1-4, Prologue

1st cycle

1:5-2:6, Tested by Righteousness

2:7-17, Tested by Love

2:18-28, Tested by Faith

2nd cycle

2:29-3:10a, Tested by Righteousness

3:10b-22, Tested by Love

3:23-4:6, Tested by Faith

3rd cycle

4:7--5:3, Tested by Love

5:4-15, Tested by Faith

5:16-21, Tested by Righteousness

1John 1:1-10

1:1-4, Prologue

Note the pronouns in these versus. Suggestion: using a different color from your fellowship markings, highlight them. Note: in **v4** that some translations have “our” and some “your.” It is based on which manuscript evidence is favored. It is not critical—*both* are true.

- Based on what is said about the “we,” *who* are they? (Note what they *experienced* in the past.)
- What do they *do* (at the time of the writing of this letter)?
- *Why* do they do it? This highlights the importance of their work to our faith.
- Did the “you” experience what the “we” did, or do what the “we” do?

1:5-10, Fellowship tested by righteousness

Who would argue you could have fellowship with God while living in sin? Those influenced by *gnosticism*. See the “Overview” lesson for what *gnosticism* is.

Present tense

What does “present tense” connote in the original language?

“The main idea of tense is ‘*kind of action*’ the state of action ... Continued action, or a state of incompleteness, is denoted by the present tense,—this kind of action is called *durative* or *linear*. The action of the verb is shown in progress, as *going on*.” William Hersey Davis, *Beginner’s Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (Harper & Brothers Pub., New York, 1923), p. 25.

The following bold words in bold are in “present tense” in the original language. They are not the only words in this section in present tense, but we note these due to their significance. Beside each word write some descriptive phrase to show what the word connotes. The first is given as an example.

- **1:6,7 “walk”** - continue to walk, or, habitually live, or, pursue a course of conduct, or ...?
Compare **2:6**. What words carry this synonymous idea in **3:9,10**?
- **1:6,7,8 “have”** -
- **1:7 “cleanses”** (note the “es” on the end; compare the “eth” in the KJV, ASV—the translators are telling us these are present tense words) -
- **1:8 “are deceiving”** (“deceive” in KJV, NKJV, ASV; “are deceiving” helps us to see the present tense) -
- **1:9 “confess”** (pair this with “cleanses” in **v7**... *that* requires *this*) -

What is “sin”? **3:4; 5:17**

Read **Lev 16:21**. When the high priest was instructed to “**confess** over it **all** the iniquities of the sons of Israel and **all** their transgressions in regard to **all** their sins,” was he expected to know every single individual sin of all the nation of Israel (over 600,00 soldiers at this time) and confess every single one of them in this one day? If not, what can this possibly mean?

Compare **Psa 19:12,13**. Read **1Jn 1:9** in the light of these Scriptures.

Gnosticism had a mistaken and blinded concept of fellowship with God. How is this thinking reflected at times among those who present themselves as God’s people today?

1John 2:1-17

Suggested marking for chapter two (use different colors from previous markings):

- “writing/written” family of words (go back and include in same color **1:4**)
- “know”

2:1-6, Fellowship tested by righteousness

This is a continuation of the section that started at 1:5.

Suggested marking for this section (different colors for each):

- “keep His commandments” family—note parallel phrase in **v6** (include **2:17**)
- “love” (of whom?)

Define:

- “advocate” (contextually, how does he do this?—see next word)
- “propitiation” (Compare **Lev 4:20,26,31,35; Isa 53:4,11-12; Lev 16:27** with **Heb 13:11-12**)

What philosophy or theology in the first century grant assurance that one could “know” and “love” God while not keeping his commandments (see lesson one)? How did they justify this way of thinking?

Sometimes those who present themselves as God’s people today seem to believe the same thing. For thought and discussion—how do they (we...?!) justify it?

2:7-17, Fellowship tested by love

Suggested marking for this section (different colors for each):

- “love/hate” family of words (use same color used for “love” in **2:5**)
- “Light/darkness” family of words (include **1:5**)
- “world”

Note all the “because” words in this section.

Who “abides in the Light”? (**vv7-10**)

Who “walks in darkness”? (**vv7-10**)

In this section, what is love of the “world” (**v15f**) contrasted with (**v10**)?

“World” is used in various ways 1John: of men, **2:2; 4:14**; of unbelievers, **3:1,13; 4:1,3-5; 5:19**; of things, **3:17**; of the earth and its inhabitants, **4:9,17**; and of the “world” of unbelievers WITH ITS ASSOCIATED views, desires, priorities, practices, etc. **5:4,5**, i.e. hatred and persecution of true believers, **3:13**, false doctrine, **4:4-6**, worldly desires and pride, **2:15-17**. (Note on **v15**: “nor” [μηδε] often serves to qualify what preceded it and followed “not” [μη].)

For thought: Who we “love” may be *affected* and *reflected* by our views, desires, priorities, and practices!

1John 2:18-28

2:18-28, Fellowship tested by faith

Suggested marking for this section:

- “it is the last hour”
- “anointing”—underline in the same color what this “anointing” does for them

If you haven’t already marked these, you may find it helpful to do so now:

- “abide” (marked in the “Overview” lesson)
- “know” (marked in the **2:1-17** lesson)
- “write/writing/written” family of words (noted in the “Introduction” lesson)

What does the word “antichrist” mean?

Based on *the context*, who is John applying this term to? (note esp. **vv22,23**)

2:19

- Grammatical note: In last part of the verse, KJV has “**were** not all of us.” NKJV, “**were** of us.” I do not know why they used “were” when the verb is present indicative (confirmed Analytical Greek NT, OB, GWHS). ASV, NASB, ESV, YLT has “**are**.” NRSV has “belongs.” NET has “belong to us.” KJV, NKJV seems to favor Calvinism.
- Albert Barnes comments: “There could not be a more positive affirmation than that which is implied here, that those who are true Christians will continue to be such; or that the saints will not fall away from grace.” Do you agree or disagree? Why?

What philosophy or theology would challenge the sufficiency of the knowledge of God and Christ based on the revelation they had received from the apostles? (See Introduction lesson)

The “anointing” from the Holy One

“Anointing” was used in the Old Testament to identify those chosen of God, prophets, priest, and kings. Who was challenging John’s readers as to whether they really “knew” God and “abide” in Him?

Protestantism and Roman Catholicism teach that the “anointing” in this text is the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit personally indwells each individual granting them *subjective* insight/knowledge. Does the *text* say the anointing is the Holy Spirit?

Parallel **v24** and **v27**—What “abides in you” according to **v24**? What “abides in you” according to **v27**?

According to **v27**, the “anointing” is “true”; what is the “lie” according to **vv21-23**?

Is the confidence John wants his readers to have regarding the gospel and their fellowship with God based on *subjective* or *objective* evidence? What is that evidence that assures them they are God’s chosen people, the ones who “abide” in Him? **1:1-4; 5:13**. Compare **Jn 20:30-31; Eph 3:3-6**. Their fellowship with God is tested by *faith*—what they *believe*.

1John 2:29-3:22

Suggested marking for both these sections (use the same colors you used previously for these markings):

- “abide”
- “know”

2:29-10a, Fellowship tested by righteousness

Suggested marking for this section: “practice righteousness” or “practices sin” family of words (include “purifies himself,” v3; “sins,” v6; “cannot sin,” v9). Include “keep his commandments” in v22.

Present tense

Go back and read what was said about the present tense in the lesson on 1:1-10. The following bold words in bold are in “present tense” in the original language. They are not the only words in this section in present tense, but we note these due to their significance.

v3, “**purifies**”; v4, “**practices...practices**”; v6, “**sins...sins**”; v7, “**practices**”, v8, “**practices**”; v9, “**practices**”; v9, “**sin**”; v10, “**practice**”

Are these phrases talking about doing a righteous deed or an evil deed—or—are they talking about continued, repetitive practice of a righteous lifestyle or a sinful lifestyle? For thought: Is a wicked man who does a righteous deed “practicing righteousness”? Is a God-fearing person who is striving to “keep His commandments” (2:3) guilty of “practicing sin” if he commits a sin? Do both these men need the blood of Christ (1:7; 2:2)?

Who would try to deceive (v7) John’s readers on this subject?

Can you think of *current* philosophies or theologies that deceive people on this subject?

3:10b-22, Fellowship tested by love

Suggested marking for this section: “love/hate” family of words (use same color used for “love” markings previously)

- *Why* did Cain kill his brother? (v12)
- Applying that to John’s statement that “the world hates you,” *what reason* is John looking at that accounts for the world’s hatred? (v13) Note how this relates to the previous section. Compare **Heb 11:7**.
- Again applying what John wrote in v12, *why* should we “love the brethren”? (v14)
- For thought: Do Christians today ever suffer for doing what is right? (Note **1Pt 3:14-17**.)

What is the evidence one loves his/her brother? (vv16-18)

Did John write vv19-22 to give *assurance* and *confidence*, or to instill *fear* and *doubt*? How do you know? (Any interpretation must accord with this purpose.)

- Why might our heart (conscience—see **Rom 2:15**) condemn us? See **1:7-10**.
- But, what is the test of this section whereby we “know...we are of the truth” (v19)? (On “of the truth,” compare **1:6,8; 2:4,21,27**.)
- For thought: should *feelings*, or the *evidence of our conduct*, be the basis of our position “before God”?

1John 3:23-5:3

3:23-4:6, Fellowship tested by faith

Suggested marking for this section (use the same colors you used previously for these markings):

- “abide”
- “know”
- pronouns in 4:2-6 (“you” “them” “they” “we” “us”); include “us” in 3:24

Interpreted in the light of 4:1-3, what does “the Spirit whom He has given us” (3:24) enable “us” to do?

How did he tell “you” to test the “spirits”?

Compare 4:6 with 1:1-4, 2:19,24,27. In view of these verses, who do you think the “we” and “us” are of 4:6?

4:7-5:3, Fellowship tested by love

Suggested marking for this section (use the same colors you used previously for these markings):

- “love”
- “abide”
- pronouns “us” and “we” in 4:12-14
- “keep His commandments” family of words

Love for brother, love for God, and God’s love for us is discussed in this section.

- Based on this section, summarize in a brief statement how **love for brother** is related to **love for God**.
- *Question for thought: Is it possible to love God and not love His children?* (Note: who are his “children” in this section?)
- What is the ultimate demonstration and proof of **God’s love for us**?
- How is this related to the test of faith in John’s epistle?
- What is the ultimate test of **our love for God** and His children? (Note how this relates to another test of fellowship John writes about.)

Contrast what is said in the first part of v12 with the first part of v14. Who is the “we” in v14? (Compare 1:1-4.) Who is the second “us” in v13?

When John writes that “perfect love” casts out fear and gives us confidence in the day of judgment, is he speaking of love for our fellow man? for our family? for ourselves? If none of these, for who and why should this give us confidence?

John uses the word “believes” by the figure of synecdoche in 5:1. What is “synecdoche”? If one does *not* recognize John is employing synecdoche, who might one claim is “born (begotten) of God”? (Yes, this is a real error that has been taught by men who at one time were preachers in churches of Christ.)

1John 5:4-21

5:4-15, Fellowship tested by faith

Suggested marking for this section (use the same colors you used previously for these markings):

- “faith” family of words (“believes”; “not believe”)
- “life” family of words (include “eternal life”)
- “know”

What does John mean by “world” in “overcome the world”? (See lesson on **2:1-17** for notes on “world.”)

What must one believe about Jesus? (Note **vv6-8**; compare **4:2,3; 2:22,23**.)

Think about how this is different from what gnosticism taught about Jesus.

How does God “testify”? See **Jn 5:36-39; 10:24-25,36-38; 16:13-16**.)

What confidence does this faith give? (compare **1:1-4; 2:20-21,24-25,27-28**.)

5:16-21, Fellowship tested by righteousness

Suggested marking for this section (use the same colors you used previously for these markings):

- “life” family of words (include “eternal life”)
- “know”
- “sin” family of words (use same color you used on “keep his commandments” family; include “commit sin,” “unrighteousness”)

How can John say those who “commit sin” can have “life,” then say that no one who is “born of God” (and thus has “life”) sins? Compare **1:5-9; 2:1,2**. See your notes there.

Based on what is said here and in chapters 1,2, what is the “sin unto death” (note: “leading” is in italics)?

Who is the “we” and the “world” *in this text*? (i.e., what is the difference John is making here?)

Based on *this letter*, what erroneous concepts of God—“idols”—must they be especially on guard against?

Review

1. What is the theme of 1 John?
2. John begins and ends 1 John with the concept of “life” or “eternal life.” What does he mean by that?
3. What are the three tests of fellowship with God in 1 John? (Discussion of these tests cycle throughout the book.)
4. What is the philosophy of Gnosticism relative to
 - a. Knowledge
 - b. Sin
 - c. Love of God and His children
 - d. Faith in Jesus as the Christ
5. Explain John’s teaching relative to
 - a. Knowledge
 - b. Sin
 - c. Love of God and His children
 - d. Faith in Jesus as the Christ
6. Learn by memory: **1John 1:7; 1:9; 2:3; 3:14; 5:4-5.**