

~ 1 John ~

Lesson 1 – Introduction to the First Epistle of John

Let's begin by reading the first four verses of this epistle- **1 John 1:1-4**

Today we begin our study of the First Epistle of John. But before we begin digging into the book, I want to give you the background pertaining to this letter. I believe it is so important to know the context surrounding the letter and the purpose and motivation that John had for writing this epistle so we can better understand how to then apply it to our life today. This letter of 1st John will help us understand how we are to respond and live in this present world that is progressively growing worse and worse every day.

This epistle was written by the Apostle John who walked with Jesus for 3 years in His earthly ministry.

The Life of John

He was a Galilean, the son of Zebedee and brother to James, born around 10AD. He was a fisherman by trade with his father and brother of which he left the family business to follow our Lord. He was possibly a disciple of John the Baptist, being the other disciple that was with Andrew, Jn 1:35-40. This was common in John's writings. He never mentions his name personally in his gospel or his epistles.

- John had a special, close relationship that seemed more intimate than any of the other disciples. John, although he never referred to himself by name, he called himself, "the disciple whom Jesus loved", Jn 13:23, 19:26, 21:7, 20. This shows the closeness he had with Jesus.
 - He was always in the "inner circle" of the disciples with his brother James and Peter,
 - At the healing of Jairus' daughter, Jesus permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John, Mk 5:37.
 - Mount of transfiguration, Mk 9:2.
 - The Olivet Discourse, Mk 13:3.
 - The Garden of Gethsemane, Matt 26:37.
 - He laid his head on the bosom of our Lord at the Last Supper, Jn 13:23, 21:20.
 - When Peter wanted to know who Jesus meant that would betray Him, he didn't ask Jesus himself, but motioned to John to ask him, Jn 13:23.
 - Jesus specifically chose John to take care of his mother Mary after His departure. "26 ... "Woman, behold your son!" 27 Then He said to the disciple, "Behold your mother!" And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home.", Jn 19:25-27
 - Another interesting thought, John is the only disciple mentioned as being at the crucifixion.
- After the resurrection when Jesus appears to them on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, it is John who notices that it was the Lord first.
- After Christ's ascension, Peter and John begin preaching the gospel and become the elders of the church at Jerusalem Acts 3:11, 4:13.
 - Paul makes mention of them as "pillars of the church", but titles don't mean much to Paul, Gal 2:9.
- Sometime after the martyrdom of Paul in 66AD at the hand of Nero, and before the fall of Jerusalem in 70AD, the Apostles residing at Jerusalem were disbursed.
 - according to Eusebius, he says, 3.I. [1] SUCH was the condition of things among the Jews, but the holy Apostles and disciples of our Saviour were scattered throughout the whole world. [2] Thomas, as tradition relates, obtained by lot Parthia, Andrew Scythia, John Asia (and he stayed there and died in Ephesus), Euseb 3.1.
- We can assume that John was not in Ephesus before 66AD because Paul would have mentioned him living in Ephesus in his letter to Timothy.
- John outlived all the other disciples and was the only Apostle who wasn't martyred. Although it was not from lack of trying. Before being exiled, Domitian tried to kill John by boiling him in oil, Tertullian tells us that John was plunged into boiling oil, unhurt, then exiled to the Isle of Patmos. ¹

¹ Tertullian, a 2nd century historian, "*The Prescription against Heretics*"

- Could there have been enough power in Jesus words that sustained his life from martyrdom when He said, “If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me”, John 21:20–22
- According to Eusebius, John was exiled to Patmos by Emperor Domitian in the 15th year of his reign, 95AD.
 - John was in complete isolation for one year and then in 96AD after Domitian died, Nerva took over, John was released and returned to Ephesus. Euseb 3.18-20.
 - I believe John wrote his gospel first, probably while still in Ephesus, maybe even as early as mid to late 80’s, but before his exile in 95AD. While in Patmos, he wrote all three epistles and the book of Revelation. First John probably shortly after his exile, then Revelation, then 2nd and 3rd toward the end of his banishment because in his epistle you can see he is expectant that he will be getting out soon and able to talk face to face.
 - John, the one whom Jesus loved, was given the Revelation of Jesus Christ concerning end times, correlation to Daniel, the beloved also given the Revelation, Daniel 9:23
- John lived another 4 years after his release and died in the year 100AD in Ephesus.

The Writings of John

John wrote 20% of the NT. Luke and Paul combined wrote over half of the NT. And between the three of them, their writings make up 75% of the NT.

As we will see, John has a much different writing style than Paul or Luke. Paul and Luke are very systematic. Their writings build on each other. When Paul writes, it’s like he is building a case to present in the court of law. We saw this as we studied 2 Timothy and the best example of this is the book of Romans.

John’s epistles are not like this at all. They are more like heartfelt conversations. John’s writing style leads the reader in a conversation with him. It’s like a father talking to his son and teaching him through conversation. If you do an outline of First John, you see that John keeps going through the same idea, just elaborating on them fuller each time. Again, like a father to his children.

The order that John wrote his books in follow the pattern of salvation. There are three stages to Salvation: 1) Justification 2) Sanctification 3) Glorification. His Gospel teaches us Justification, John 20:31. His Epistles, specifically this First epistle, teaches us Sanctification, 1 John 3:3. And the Revelation shows us our Glorification, Rev 19:7-8; 21:1-22:7.

The heart of John’s writings is to show and prove that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. John showed this in a unique way, different than any other writer of the NT by revealing Jesus as: The Lamb of God; The Great I AM; the Living Water; and the Bread of Life. Each one of these symbolizes Jesus as the Christ and they are all unique to John and his writings.

- The Lamb of God- John 1:29; Revelation 5:6; 8–13; 22:1
- Living Water- Jn 4:10; 6:35; 7:37-38; 3:5; 19:34; Rev 22:1
- Bread of Life- Jn 6:35, 47, 51
- The Great I AM- the burning bush, Exodus 3:13-14; Samaritan woman, Jn 4:26; Jesus walking on the water, Jn 6:20; I AM the Bread of Life, 6:35, 47, 51; I AM the Light of the world, Jn 8:12; then you will know that I AM, Jn 8:28; before Abraham was, I AM, Jn 8:58; I AM the door, Jn 10:7, 9; I AM the Good Shepherd, 10:11, 14; I AM the resurrection and the life, Jn 11:25; I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life, Jn 14:6; I AM the true vine, Jn 15:1; soldiers fell back at the I AM, Jn 18:5-6

Just like Paul, John had an eternal life mindset, and his writings reflect this more than any other writer. The phrase Eternal Life, *zoe aionios*, ζωὴ αἰώνιος, is used 44 times in the New Testament, 23 of which are used in John’s writings. An example of this is **1 Jn 5:13**.

John is known as the Apostle of Love. He uses the word “love”- *agape*, ἀγάπη, 111 times in all of his writings and 51 times in just this little five chapter epistle.

Church history tells us that when John was very old, and no longer able to preach, he would simply say, “little children, love one another.” William Cave 1676, Lives and Acts of the Holy Apostles

An Overview of the First Epistle of John

This epistle is a great segue from 2 Timothy because this letter is written 30yrs later to the church of Ephesus. And even 3 decades later, this church is still battling the attacks from the enemy, namely the Gnostic heresies within the church. This first epistle of John is meant to strengthen the church, assure the church in its promise of eternal life in Christ, and teach the church how to guard itself from false teaching. You remember in our study of 2 Timothy, Paul showed us the importance to guard the Truth, to take a stance for Truth, and how to respond to those in opposition of the Truth. This was the charge Timothy had as the bishop of Ephesus and now John is in Ephesus as an elder helping direct them in the Truth. The Truth in the church was still being attacked heavily even 30 years later. Satan has always attacked the Truth, we see this all the way back in the garden and it won't stop until Jesus comes back to set up His kingdom on the earth.

The Word of God is THE only source for Truth. We are living in a time in America, when we can't look to outside sources to tell us what is right or wrong. The government is trying to tell us what is right, but they lie and the Truth is not in them. Social media and the news are starting to censor everything and the enemy is trying to banned the Word of Truth. Universities and schools are teaching our kids their version of the truth, which in reality is not truth at all and it is deceiving and warping the minds of our little ones.

In fact, all these groups in the world consider themselves so morally excellent. They present themselves on the outside as these self-righteous people, but inside they are liars, haters of God, they are hypocrites. Jesus described them like this... ²⁷ "...For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead *men's* bones and all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.", Matthew 23:27–28.

These people reject the Truth. They are resisting the Truth, they are destitute of the Truth, and never able to come to the knowledge of the Truth. So if we are to know the Truth, we have to look at the source of Truth, that is Jesus Christ and His Word He gave us.

John's style of writing is very straightforward and uncompromising. And this is the conviction we need in America today. Uncompromising convictions of the Truth. Now is the time to take an uncompromising stance for the Truth. This is the mindset you must have in a time when the majority of the world is feeding you lies. This is the mindset of John as he writes this epistle. The purpose is not to condemn the believer, but to expose the darkness, assure the believer, and give us hope in eternal life in Him.

In this first epistle, John is speaking the Truth in love. To get us familiar with the book I want to show you 3 main points that John is making in this letter. This will give us a good overview of the book and then we can start digging into the details in the weeks and months to come.

- 1) Jesus, is presented as the pre-existent One, who was sent by the Father and manifested in the flesh to give us Life.
- 2) True believers abide in God. They are born of God and have fellowship with Him, being one in Him
- 3) John gives us the tools to expose the darkness and discern between the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error

The best way for us to get familiar with this book it to start reading it. As I said before, this letter reads more like a conversation rather than a systematic outline, so in order to get the full understanding of what John is saying we need to be very familiar with this epistle as a whole. To do this lets review these main points and then read some verses that correspond to this.

- 1) Jesus, is presented as the pre-existent One, who was sent by the Father and manifested in the flesh to give us Life- John 1
 - a. **1 John 1:1-4**; 2:1-2, 22-23; 3:5, 8, 16, 4:2-3, 9-10, 14-15; 5:5-13
- 2) True believers abide in God. They are born of God and have fellowship with Him, being one in Him- John 17
 - a. **1 John 2:24-3:3**, 6-9, 18-19, 24; 4:4, 12-19; 5:1-5, 11-15, 19
 - b. Abiding in Him. Having fellowship with Him. Being one with Him. Being committed to His will and His righteousness. This is what it means to be born of God.

He who is born of God will then bear the fruit of Righteousness and Sanctification, John 15:1-17.

- a. The fruit is the evidence of being born of God
 - i. We will keep His commandments, 1 Jn 2:3-5; 3:23-24; 5:2-3
 - ii. To be committed to His will, 1 Jn 2:17, 29; 3:7, 22
 - iii. To walk in holiness and be separate from the world, 1 Jn 1:5-7; 2:15-17; 3:3, 8; 4:4-6; 5:4-5, 18-19
 - iv. To love the brethren, 1 Jn 3:23; 3:11, 14, 16; 4:7-12, 20-5:3
- 3) To expose the darkness and discern between the Spirit of Truth and the spirit of error- John 8
 - a. **1 John 2:26; 3:10; 4:1-6.**

In closing lets read **1 Jn 5:13**

This is a letter to the believer.

A letter of assurance of our eternal life in Him

Our fellowship with Him

And our Oneness with our Savior