

For I have never, like many, delighted to hear those that tell many things, but those that teach the truth, neither those that record foreign precepts, but those that are given from the Lord, to our faith, and that come from the truth itself. – Papias

I. Introduction

First John is the Book of Fellowship. Practical teachings on the Christian walk are given by the last living Apostle. Walking in the light and walking in fellowship with the Father and the Son are dominant themes. Many antichrists have gone forth into the world, and John urges his hearers to remain faithful to the witness that they have received from the Disciple Whom Jesus Loved.

A. Authorship and Canonicity

1. Not named in the text.
2. Universally received (ἐν ὁμολογουμένοις), accepted and cited by early church fathers that attributed it to John the son of Zebedee.
 - a. The early church was consistent in ascribing the authorship of the Fourth Gospel and 1 John to the apostle John. Possible allusions appear in (1) *Didache* (ca. A.D. 90–120; 10:5–6 / 1 John 2:17); (2) Clement of Rome (ca. A.D. 96; 1 Clem. 49:5; 50:3 / 1 John 2:5; 4:12, 17, 18); (3) the *Epistle of Barnabas* (ca. A.D. 130; 5:9–11; 12:10 / 1 John 4:2; 2 John 7); and (4) Polycarp (ca. A.D. 135; Phil 7:1 / 1 John 2:22; 4:2–3; 2 John 7).
 - b. Papias, who knew John (and was born ca. A.D. 60), is the first person to make a specific reference to a Johannine letter as the work of the apostle John in his *Exposition of Oracles of the Lord* (written ca. A.D. 130 and cited in Eusebius [*H.E.* 3.39.17]).
 - c. Irenaeus (ca. A.D. 180) specifically makes reference to 1 and 2 John (*H.E.* 3.16.5; 3.16.8), and attributes both, as well as the Fourth Gospel, to the apostle John.
 - d. Clement of Alexandria (ca. A.D. 180) writes of “the larger epistle” of John the apostle (see *Strom.* 2.15.66).
3. Similarities in theology, vocabulary, and syntax with the Gospel of John.
 - a. Topics Comparison
 - b. Vocabulary Comparison
 1. The term παράκλητος occurs only five times in Scripture, and all occurrences are in John’s writings (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7; 1 John 2:1).
 2. The word μονογενής as an expression of the Son’s unique relationship to the Father occurs in John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18, and 1 John 4:9.
 - c. Implicit claims of apostolic, eyewitness testimony found in 1 John 1:1-4; 4:6
 - d. Conclusion: Evidence both internal and external favors the view that the apostle John is the human author (the Holy Spirit is the divine Author) of this scripture inspired by God (2 Tim 3:16). . The writing style is so close to that of the Fourth Gospel that common authorship is obvious. The verdict of the early church was unanimous in its affirmation of John the apostle as author of the Fourth Gospel.

B. Date and Place of Writing

1. Dating cannot be certain.

2. Tradition is strong that John spent his later years in the city of Ephesus ministering to the churches of Asia Minor. Irenaeus wrote, "John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned upon His breast, did himself publish a Gospel during his residence at Ephesus in Asia" (*Against Heresies*, 3.1.1).
 3. Eighty percent of the verses in 1 John reflect ideas and themes found in the Gospel. This confirms the assertion that the readers were previously familiar, at the least, with John's teaching, but it also strengthens the probability that they possessed that teaching in the written form of John's Gospel.
 4. 2nd John appears to address similar issues but in a limited, first defense scope in which John hopes to resolve the issues with a confidently expected future visit.
 5. Conclusion: 66-96 AD in Ephesus with 2nd John coming first followed by the gospel then 1st John.
- E. Audience and Purpose
1. Anonymity indicates the intended audience would recognize the author but structure indicates a homiletic discourse rather than individual address. (1 Tim 4:13).
 2. John made four purpose statements.
 - a. First, he wrote to promote his readers' fellowship and joy. "We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete" (1 John 1:4).
 - b. Second, he wrote to help readers avoid the pitfalls of sin, yet find forgiveness when they stumbled. "My little children, I am writing you these things so that you may not sin" (1 John 2:1).
 - c. Third, he wrote to protect believers from false teachers. "I have written these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you" (1 John 2:26).
 - d. Finally, he wrote so they might know they had eternal life. "I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). This last purpose statement governs the other three and brings them together in a unifying theme.
 - e. In summary, 1 John was written to confirm Christians in true apostolic Christianity by helping them avoid the destructive beliefs and behaviors to which some had fallen prey.

1 JOHN 1:1-4 SUMMARY

PROLOGUE: APOSTOLIC DECLARATION

Contents: Eyewitness testimony of Jesus Christ coming in flesh, fellowship with the Father and the Son made possible through the Filling of the Holy Spirit, completion of John's joy as well as all the apostolic writers of the New Testament by the fellowship of their spiritual children.

Conclusion: John's goal in writing is Fellowship with his spiritual children and their combined fellowship with the Father and with Jesus Christ

Key Words: Testify, Proclaim, Fellowship

1 JOHN 1:5-2:2 SUMMARY

FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

Contents: Absolute standard for fellowship—walking in the light vs. walking in darkness.

Conclusion: Fellowship with the Father, which has been made possible by our position in Christ as having been saved ones, can be maintained only by walking in the light, which signifies the recognition and agreement with God about our sins, and rejecting the old nature (Eph 2:1-3). Walking in light or darkness is a volitional choice. Walking in the light is consistent with God's nature and essence and imitates Christ in His earthly life. It provides the believer with continuous cleansing from sin and filling of the Holy Spirit. Walking in darkness is consistent with the old nature and the character and nature of Satan. Christ died for the sins of the whole world on the cross (1 Pet. 2:1, 24; Jude 4). Placing your faith in Christ results in eternal life by the application His blood. Sin in the believer brings the loss of fellowship with God which can be restored by agreement with God (ὁμολογεω) and stepping out of darkness and back into the light. Unconfessed sin brings divine discipline (1 Cor. 11:31–33; Hebrews 12:4-11). Denial of the sin nature or personal sin reflects the lack of God's Word implanted within the soul (James 1:21). John's message here is to challenge believers to live without sin or guilt, and to maintain fellowship and the filling of the Holy spirit through which we can bear much fruit.

Key Words: Light, Darkness, Fellowship, Blood, Sin

1 JOHN 2:3-11 SUMMARY

GOD'S COMMANDS

Contents: Results of fellowship: Obedience to the Word, increased intimacy with God.

Conclusion: Walking in the light is nothing new and yet is entirely new in the dispensation of the church.

Believers in God have been challenged to walk in the light in every age, but now believers are light "in Christ" and we are called to walk just as He walked. His intimacy with the Father and use of the scripture is our example in the warfare we've been called to.

Key Words: Know, walk, light

1 JOHN 2:12-14 SUMMARY

REASONS FOR WRITING

Contents: Walking in the light is absolutely required for believers of all spiritual age-levels to have victory in the angelic conflict.

Conclusion: Believers of every age are able to walk with the light and should be walking together. God's word is absolutely essential to have victory in the angelic conflict

Key Words: Writing, Know, Abide

1 JOHN 2:15-17

A WARNING ABOUT THE WORLD

Contents: Love for the world and the things of the world is a snare for the believer who desires to walk in the light.

Conclusion: Love for the world and the things of the world leads to pride, arrogance, lust and ultimately to idolatry. "Then the woman saw that the tree was good for food and delightful to look at, and that it was desirable for obtaining wisdom. So she took some of its fruit and ate it... (Gen 3:6). By contrast the one who does the will of God abides forever.

Key Words: World, Pride, Lust

1 JOHN 2:18-27 SUMMARY

SPIRITUAL WARFARE APPLICATIONS OF THE BELIEVER IN THE LAST HOUR

Contents: Walking in the light, abiding in Christ and knowing and applying the truth.

Conclusion: Antichrist is coming (2 Thess. 2:3ff.), many antichrists have come (1 Jn. 2:18). Antichrists deny that Jesus is the Christ and deny the revelation of the Father through the Son (1 Jn. 2:22). They come from within but are forced to leave if faithful believers are walking in the light, abiding in the truth and rejecting lies.

Key Words: Last Hour, Antichrist, Truth

1 JOHN 2:28-3:9 SUMMARY

GOD'S CHILDREN

Contents: Love motivates to purity, character of Christ that becomes our character as we are remade in His image.

Conclusion: Believers are able to sin, but when they do it does not come from their divine nature. Believers become partakers of the divine nature as they are renewed in the spirit of their minds (Rom 12:2; Eph 4:22-24) and walk in consistent fellowship with the Father and the Son. Consistent operation in the light now and even up to His appearing will give us confidence before Him.

Key Words: God, Devil, Children, Pure, Know

1 JOHN 3:10-15 SUMMARY

LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Contents: Distinction between God's children and the Devil's Children, obvious outworking of faith and hatred from the world.

Conclusion: A believer who is walking in the light will practice righteousness and love his brother, being an imitator of Christ. The believer walking in darkness practices lawlessness and hates his brother, being an imitator of Cain. We either abide in light, love and life or darkness, hate and death.

Key Words: Life, Death, Brother, Cain, Righteous, Evil, Love, Hate

1 JOHN 3:16-24 SUMMARY

LOVE IN ACTION

Contents: Love Expressed in a tangible way, the example of Christ, love an expression of truth, the crux of the Christian life (2:23).

Conclusion: Laying down your life is the highest form of Christlike love for the believer and is the direct opposite of Cain who took his brother's life. Love is expressed by action not by words and is a confirmation of the truth that abides in us. Our motivation for love is revealed by conscience. If we are walking in the light and obedience to His commandments, our requests will be according to His will and according to love.

Key Words: Life, Love, Truth, Abide

1 JOHN 4:1-6 SUMMARY

THE SPIRIT OF TRUTH AND THE SPIRIT OF ERROR

Contents: Discernment in the believer's life to recognize a message from God and an antichristological message from the world.

Conclusion: Every spirit that does not concede Jesus Christ coming "εν σαρκι" is the spirit of antichrist. In flesh is an understanding and confession of the preexistence of Jesus the Christ, His physical incarnation and death on the cross, and His physical resurrection from the dead (1 John 1:1-4; John 1:1:1-18; 1 Cor 15:3-19). The actuality of the incarnation is not secondary or optional. It is essential.

Jesus is the Christ.

If you are a having been saved one, you are an overcomer in Christ (1 John 4:4; John 16:33; 1 John 5:4). We are from God; they are from the world. These distinctions become evident from the messages that are given and from the reception or lack thereof.

Key Words: Spirit, Antichrist, Flesh, God, World

1 John 4:7-19 SUMMARY

KNOWING GOD THROUGH LOVE

Contents: The example of God's love, the testimony of God's love in us, love perfected.

Conclusion: The believer who loves is walking in the light experiencing fellowship with God. The source of the believer's love is God. God the Father's ultimate outworking of His love was sending His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Jesus Christ's ultimate outworking of His love was laying down His life for His Friends. Loving one another is the ultimate outworking of God's love in us. The ultimate ground of Christian assurance (including confidence on the judgment day, v 17) is not to be found in *our* loving, however 'complete' (v 18), but in God's prior love for us. Our ability to love and our practice of love come from God's love for us.

Key Words: Love (10x), Abide (6x)

1 JOHN 4:20-5:5 SUMMARY

KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDS

Contents: Love God, Love one another, love Christ, keep His commandments, overcome the world.

Conclusion: The abiding love of the believer for God the Father empowers and motivates that believer's love for the Son, and obedience to God's commandments (1 John 5:1-3; John 8:42). The believer in Jesus Christ has overcome and has the potential to be "overcoming" the world by our faith and by our faithing.

Key Words: Commandments, Overcome, Love

1 JOHN 5:6-13 SUMMARY

THE CERTAINTY OF GOD'S TESTIMONY

Contents: The water and the blood, the testimony of men and God, the Life.

Conclusion: The water and the blood fulfill all righteousness and declare to humanity and angelicity that Jesus is the Christ and His work of redemption is finished. The Holy Spirit becomes the final witness in agreement. The testimony of God concerns His Son, that those who believe have THE Life, those who do not believe do not have THE Life.

Key Words: Water, Blood, Spirit, Testimony, Life

1 JOHN 5:14-21 SUMMARY

EFFECTIVE PRAYER AND CONCLUSION

Contents: Prayerful confidence, prayerful conflict, effective intercessory prayer, the believer's relationship to sin.

Conclusion: Verse 19 is perhaps one of the most powerful statements John makes in the entire letter. It is a blatant and blanket statement of the believer's relationship to the cosmos and the god of this age. We are behind enemy lines in a spiritual war in which prayer is one of our most effective weapons against our adversary. Indeed, "The Word of Truth and the Power of God, weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left." Our enemies are not flesh and blood, so neither can our weapons be. Prayer on behalf of our brothers and sisters who are still in the fight is the commission from John. Finally we have a reminder about positional truth, the source of truth and understanding and the deity of Christ and the source of eternal life. The last verse is a particularly striking end to John's message. Everything that occupies our heart is taking up space that belongs to God and keeping us from fellowship with and delight in Him.

Key Words: Confidence, Ask, Sin, Death, Evil, Idols

20 Topics in Both John's Gospel and John's First Letter

| Topic | John's Gospel | John's first letter |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| 1. The Word | 1:1 | 1:1 |
| 2. Jesus made known | 1:14 | 1:2 |
| 3. Joy complete | 15:11 | 1:4 |
| 4. Light | 1:7-9 | 1:5 |
| 5. Keeping God's word | 14:23 | 2:5 |
| 6. Abiding in Jesus | 15:4, 7 | 2:6, 28 |
| 7. A new command | 13:34 | 2:8 |
| 8. Light in darkness | 1:5 | 2:8 |
| 9. No stumbling | 11:10 | 2:10 |
| 10. Knowing God | 17:3 | 2:13 |
| 11. Children of God | 1:12 | 3:1 |
| 12. Seeing Jesus | 17:24 | 3:2 |
| 13. The devil's work | 8:44 | 3:8 |
| 14. Love one another | 13:34 | 3:11 |
| 15. Hatred from the world | 17:14 | 3:13 |
| 16. God's one and only son | 3:16 | 4:9 |
| 17. God has never been seen | 1:18 | 4:12 |
| 18. Born of God | 1:13 | 5:1 |
| 19. Are written/I write these things | 20:31 | 5:13 |
| 20. The true God | 17:2-3 | 5:20 |

Early Canons

THE NEW TESTAMENT CANON DURING THE FIRST FOUR CENTURIES

| BOOK | INDIVIDUALS | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | CANONS | | | | TRANSLATIONS | | | COUNCILS | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|-------------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|
| | PSEUDO BARNABAS (c. 70-120) | CLEMENT OF ROME (c. 95-97) | IGNATIUS (c. 110) | POLYCARP (c. 110-130) | HEERMAS (c. 110-50) | DIDACHE (c. 115-80) | PAPAS (c. 120-80) | IRENAEUS (c. 120-80) | DIODORUS (c. 120-202) | JUSTIN MARTYR (c. 150) | CLEMENT OF ALEXANDRIA (c. 150-215) | TERTULLIAN (c. 150-220) | ORIGEN (c. 185-254) | CYRIL OF JERUSALEM (c. 315-86) | EUSEBIUS (c. 325-40) | HEROME (c. 340-420) | AUGUSTINE (c. 400) | MARCION (c. 140) | MURATORIAN (c. 140) | APOSTOLIC (c. 170) | CHLITENNAH (c. 300) | ATHANASIUS (360) | TATIAN DIATHESSARON (c. 170) | OLD LATIN (c. 200) | OLD SYRIAC (c. 400) | NICEA (c. 325-40) | HIPPO (393) | CARTHAGE (397) | CARTHAGE (419) |
| Matt. | X | X | X | X | X | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Mark | X | | X | X | | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Luke | X | | X | X | | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| John | | X | X | X | X | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Acts | | | X | X | | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Rom. | | X | X | X | | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| I Cor. | | O | X | X | X | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| II Cor. | | | X | X | | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Gal. | | | X | | | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Eph. | X | X | X | X | | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Phil. | | | X | X | X | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Col. | | | X | X | | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| I Thess. | | | X | X | X | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| II Thess. | | | X | X | | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| I Tim. | | X | X | X | X | X | O | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| II Tim. | X | | X | | | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Titus | X | X | | | | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Philemon | | | X | | | O | X | X | X | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Heb. | X | X | | X | | O | X | ? | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| James | | X | | X | | O | | | O | ? | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| I Peter | X | X | X | X | | O | X | O | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| II Peter | X | X | | | | O | | | ? | O | ? | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | ? | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| I John | | | X | X | | O | | O | X | | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| II John | | | X | | | O | | | | | ? | O | ? | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | ? | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| III John | | | | | | O | | | | | ? | O | ? | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | ? | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Jude | | | | | | O | X | | O | X | | O | ? | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |
| Rev. | | | X | X | O | O | X | O | X | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O | O |

X = Citation or allusion
 O = Named as authentic
 ? = Named as disputed

- c. 140 Marcion
- c. 130-202 Irenaeus
- c. 150-70 Old Latin Version
- c. 170 Muratorian Canon
- c. 150-220 Tertullian
- c. 200 Old Syriac Version
- c. 185-254 Origen
- c. 200-225 Hippolytus
- c. 325-40 Eusebius of Caesarea
- c. 325-350 Codex Vaticanus
- c. 325-425 Codex Sinaiticus
- 367 Athanasius
- 380 Amphilocius of Iconium
- c. 375-400 Peshitta
- c. 397 3rd Council of Carthage
- c. 425-75 Codex Alexandrinus

1 John

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i = included (canonicity definitely accepted)
 m = missing (the codex omits the Pastorals and ends at Heb 9:13)
 o = omitted (canonicity doubted or denied)