



# Love & Truth

## Authentic Christianity in 1, 2, and 3 John

### SESSION 1

#### Introducing 1 John

##### 1. Introducing the First Letter of John

- Does not follow usual form of ancient letter; may have been a sermon or a teaching
- Author not named, but early on seen as John, fisherman, “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23), who also wrote Gospel of John and Revelation; likely he writes in his old age
- Likely one of latest New Testament books (85-95 AD)
- Likely written to the churches of Asia Minor, to Christians who needed assurance in their faith (5:13)
- Many similarities to the Gospel of John
  - i. Compare these references from 1 John to the Gospel of John: 1 John 1:1 to John 1:1, 14; 1 John 1:4 to John 16:24; and 1 John 1:6-7 to John 3:19-21.
  - ii. Both 1 John and John use similar Greek (very simple Greek) and work with many of the same contrasts: light and darkness, love and hate, truth and lies.
- 1 John speaks to an early form of Gnosticism, which presented the following false teachings:
  - i. Spirit is good; matter is evil. (dualism)
  - ii. The body is evil. Therefore, one may beat it down (asceticism) or use it freely (immorality).
  - iii. God would not defile Himself with an evil body nor would He create matter (lesser gods did that).
  - iv. Salvation comes not by faith but by a secret knowledge (Greek, *gnosis*) of lesser divine beings.
  - v. Jesus may have just “seemed” to have a body (Docetism, from the Greek word for “seems”). Or the divine Christ joined the human Jesus at his baptism and left him before he died (Cerinthianism).

By the second and third centuries, Gnosticism had become widespread and fully developed into a secretive system of sacred knowledge threatening the church’s teaching of the deity of Jesus Christ.

*“What think you of Christ?” is the test/To try both your state and your scheme;  
You cannot be right in the rest,/Unless you think rightly of Him. JOHN NEWTON*

##### 2. Three Tests for Authentic Christianity in 1 John

- Theological (1:1-3) – The necessity of a historical Jesus
- Moral (2:3-4)
- Social (4:20-21)

### 3. Notes on 1 John 1:1-7

- Vs. 1, *"the beginning"* (Greek, *arche*): Jesus Christ has always existed, i.e., was there at the beginning. See John 1:1.
- Vs. 1, *"heard...seen with our own eyes...looked at...hands of touched"*: The verbs testify to an eyewitness's careful observation of Jesus Christ as a flesh and blood, in-history human being.
- Vs. 1, *"Word"* (Greek, *logos*) = multifaceted, personal revelation
- Vs. 1, *"Word of life"* reveals Jesus identity as "the life" (Greek, *zoe*; John 11:25; 14:8), the one who brings eternal life. See John 1:4, 20:30-31, and 1 John 5:20.
  
- Vs. 2: *"life"*: Jesus has been described as "the Word" and "the life."
- Vs. 2: *"testify"* (*martureo/marturion*) = witness
- Vs. 2: *"with the Father"* = in heaven with the Father
- Vs. 2, *"appeared to us,"* = was visible to us in flesh and blood
  
- Vs. 3: *"seen and heard"*: See Acts 4:20
- Vs. 3: *"so that"* means purpose
- Vs. 3: *"fellowship"* (Greek, *koinonia*) = the spiritual union of believers by which we are joined to the Father and the Son (See John 15.)
- Vs. 3: *"his Son"*: Jesus is the Son of God, and, therefore, fully God.
- Vs. 3: *"Jesus Christ"*: Jesus is His human name, Christ His divine name.
  
- Vs. 4: *"to make our joy (Gk, chara) complete"* (Gk, *pleroma* = filled full): John's joy could never complete until all his readers have fellowship with the Father and the Son.
  
- Vs. 5: *"message"* (Gk, *angelia*) can also be translated "news"
- Vs. 5: *"light"* (Gk, *phos*) and *"darkness"* (Gk, *skotia*): There is no duality to God, no coming together of goodness /truth (light) and evil/lies (darkness). God is all light. See John 3:19-21.
  
- Vs. 6: *"live by the truth"* (Gk, *aletheia*): The unity we find in God is meant to be a marker of us as well. Our fellowship with God shows itself in our ethics. We are not "double-minded." See James 1:5-8. God's light will be evident in God's people. See John 3:19-21. For Christians "truth" is both absolute or objective and personal (John 14:6).
  
- Vs. 7: *"walk"* (Gk, *peripateo*) = conduct one's life
- Vs. 7: *"If we walk in the light as he is in the light"*: Marking us as authentic Christians in fellowship with Christ is the way we live our lives. (See Is. 2:5.)
- Vs. 7: *"the blood of Jesus, His Son, purifies us"*: See Leviticus 17:11; Romans 3:25, 5:9; Colossians 1:20; Hebrews 10:23-28).
- Vs. 7: *"all sin"* (Gk, *hamartia*): The word for sin, used 27 times in 1 John means missing the mark as on an archery target.

#### **WALKING IN THE LIGHT**

1. Beware of anyone who claims a secret knowledge of God apart from the Bible.
2. A Christian's authenticity is proven in theological, moral, and social tests.
3. Crucial to the Christian witness is a real, historical, human Jesus Christ.
4. Faith is fellowship with the Father and the Son, uniting us to other Christians.
5. Our joy is never complete as long as we know people who do not know Christ.
6. The entire witness of the Scriptures testifies to the cleansing blood of Jesus.
7. Truth for Christians is both objective and personal.