

1. 1 John 1 of a Verse by Verse Study of the Letters of John and Jude

The style of language and thought is common in the three letters of John. Of the three, the early church widely accepted the first epistle of John. The letter is unique in that it contains few proper nouns, the most prominent one used being the name of the Lord. It is also unique in that it contains no allusions to people, places, or historical events. The only references are to what the scriptures and the Lord had taught. However, since John wrote the letter and since the false doctrines of the false teachers and the antichrist are the same as those that John dealt with in the Revelation, one might place the location of the recipients of this letter in those same seven churches of Asia. The false doctrines here (unnamed by John) would be those prevalent among the churches of Asia: the teaching of the Nicolaitans and the Gnostics, both of which rejected the word of God. The Nicolaitans rejected Christ's teaching by incorporating the sinful pleasures of idolatry into the church. The Gnostics rejected the teaching by substituting their own minds and philosophies for the teachings of the eternal Son of God.

John expresses love for those to whom he is writing, calling them *little children, my little children, and beloved*. On the other hand, he condemns the teachings of those, perhaps in Asia, who deny the Lord and who place personal knowledge above that of the Lord and the apostles. John begins the letter by stating the empirical truths that establish his knowledge of the divinity of Christ the Lord. He ends the letter in 1 John 5:18-20 with an elegant summary of what may be taken as the theme of the letter:

18 We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot harm him. 19 We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one. 20 We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him who is true – even in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

The Word of Life

1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We write this to make our joy complete.

John begins in verse 1 by establishing empirical evidence supporting the proclamation of Christ as the eternal Word of Life. John's knowledge is about that which was from the beginning, eternal with the father. The apostles heard, first hand, these truths about Jesus Christ the Son of God from Jesus Christ himself. Their eyes had seen him, and their hands had touched him. The Word of Life about whom John speaks was from the beginning and appeared to the world. John had reported in John 1:1-5:

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
2 He was with God in the beginning.
3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been

made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

In John 1:14, John also had reported: “14 The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” These considerations become even more important later in the letter when John reveals the nature of the false teachers and the antichrist.

The Word of Life, which appeared, was eternal life proclaimed by John. This Word of Life which appeared in the flesh, is the word proclaimed by all apostles. The unifying principle for all Christians is the fellowship established by belief of the truth, the Word of Life. Thus, we have fellowship with the apostles, and they and we have fellowship with the Father and His son, Jesus Christ. The fellowship—mutual participation—with the Father and the Son makes our joy complete.

Walking in the Light

5 This is the message we have heard from him and declare to you: God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth. 7 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.

In verses 5-7, John sets down the first of several absolute dichotomies—light and darkness. There is no wiggle room, for this is the message from God to John and from John to us: “God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” We cannot walk in darkness as Christians, but “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.” The most blessed of all things follow to the Christians who walk in the light:

- We have fellowship with God and the Son.
- We have fellowship with one another.
- The blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

Confessing Our Sins

8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

That God has so blessed us with fellowship and the purification from all sin does not mean that we are sin free. To claim that we are without sin is deceitful for we are still human and subject to the temptations of the world. If we confess our sins, he who is faithful, will forgive our sins and once again purify us from all unrighteousness. Once again, John draws a contrast between two polar opposites: righteousness and unrighteousness. To enter the fellowship, we must obey the Lord when he said in Mark 16:16, “16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.” If after having entered into the fellowship, we continue in sin, we are worse off than before we obeyed. Heb 6:4-6 teaches:

4 It is impossible for those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, who have shared in the Holy Spirit, 5 who have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the coming age, 6 if they fall away, to be brought back to repentance, because to their loss they are crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting him to public disgrace.

In Heb 10:26-28, the Hebrew writer explained just how dire the situation is for those who keep on sinning:

26 If we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, 27 but only a fearful expectation of judgment and of raging fire that will consume the enemies of God.

Chapter 1 concludes, "10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives." This strong teaching was against those of the day who thought they could dictate in the place of God such as the Gnostics who followed their own wisdom and emotions, or the Epicureans who thought pleasure was the alpha and the omega of all things. For 2,000 years, men have developed their own principles of faith and practice in creating churches and denominations, thinking that there is no sin in it. Today, we find these same false teachings confronted by John.

Now, New Age Religion emerges with the teaching that sin and evil do not exist. Peace and love are the ultimate realities. New Age finds its roots in the same blending of Christianity and human philosophies and religions that confronted the early Christians in Asia. One author has said, "It has some similarities to ancient Gnosticism adopting both its methods and its individual nature."

The false doctrines that John will deal with are alive and well in 21st century.