

Lesson 48

1 JOHN

THE APOSTLE JOHN

John was the younger of the two sons of Zebedee. At least, that seems to be the case since John's brother, _____[a], is almost always listed first when the two are mentioned together. He was employed in the family _____[b] business on the Sea of Galilee, and apparently, they were quite successful and prosperous. After all, they owned their own boat and had hired _____[c] (Mark 1:20).

John was a disciple of John the _____[d] (John 1:35-40; though characteristically, John didn't name himself). When John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the Messiah, John immediately left the Baptist and began _____[e] Jesus (John 1:37). After staying with Him for a while, John returned to the family business. Later, he became a permanent disciple of Jesus (Matt 4:18-22) and was named an _____[f] (Matt 10:2).

Along with James and Peter, John was part of the _____[g] circle of the Twelve. After Jesus ascended to the Father, John became one of the leaders of the _____[h] church (Gal 2:9; Acts 3:1-11; 4:13-21; 8:14). He is often considered "the great apostle of _____[i]" because his teachings on love are the deepest and most precious in the Bible. It was said early in church history (Jerome, AD 400s) that when John would come to the assembly of Christians, he would be carried to the door of the place of meeting where he would pat the Christians on the head, saying, "my little children, love one another."

Despite his reputation as "the great apostle of love," John had a fiery temperament. Jesus nicknamed John and his brother James "Sons of _____[j]" (Mark 3:17), and you can see those two brothers living up to that name in Luke's Gospel. When a Samaritan village refused to receive Jesus and the disciples, James and John were indignant, and they eagerly asked Jesus, "Do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luke 9:54). I think it's safe to add here that this episode not only shows their fiery temperament, but it also shows they overestimated their apostolic _____[k]. In the only recorded incident in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) in which John acted and spoke alone, he reveals the same fiery temperament when he said to Jesus, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us" (Luke 9:49).

According to tradition, John spent the last decades of his life in the city of _____ [l], overseeing the churches in the surrounding region and writing his gospel (AD 80-90) and three epistles (AD 90-95). Toward the end of his life—according to the church father Irenaeus (AD 130-200)—John lived until the time of the emperor Trajan (AD 98-117) and was banished to the island of _____ [m]. It was there that he received and wrote the visions described in the book of Revelation (AD 94-96). So, he wrote five books of the New Testament. He wrote the Gospel of John to _____ [n] sinners. He wrote the epistles of 1, 2 and 3 John to _____ [o] the saints. And he wrote the book of Revelation to _____ [p] the Savior.

DATE AND PLACE OF WRITING 1 JOHN

There aren't any clear historical indications in 1 John of when or where it was written. John most likely wrote it toward the _____ [q] of the first century while he was in _____ [r]. As noted above, the testimony of early church writers puts John in Ephesus during that period. Another indication which suggests he wrote this letter toward the end of his life is his repeated references to his readers as "little children" (1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). This may suggest he was much older than most of his readers. Again, as mentioned a moment ago, it's most commonly thought that John wrote all three of his epistles (1, 2, 3 John) around AD 95.

CONTENT OF 1 JOHN

1 John is the only _____ [s] letter in the New Testament except for Hebrews. Many scholars think both of these "epistles" were originally _____ [t]. First John has no references to any specific recipients but only types of people (fathers, young men, 1 John 2:12-14). More often John calls his readers "my dear children." This epistle has numerous admonitions from the beginning in the manner of a sermon (e.g., 1 John 1:6-10; 2:1-6, 7-11, etc.). There is no typical letter greeting at the beginning of the letter or an ending. It has been suggested that 1 John was a _____ [u] letter or what's called an "encyclical letter" much like Paul's letter to the Ephesians. This means it was a letter that was intended to be passed around for all to read.

John is a wonderful author who always gives his _____ [v] for writing. In his Gospel the key is located at the end, in John 20:31, where he writes, "But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name." In Revelation the purpose is stated right at the front, in Revelation 1:19, where he quotes Jesus: "Therefore write what you have seen, what is, and what will take place after this." In 1 John, however, there are four

keys that are scattered throughout the five chapters and 105 verses that help us unlock the purpose of this letter. In 1 John 1:4 he says he wrote to _____[w] full joy in the family of God. In 1 John 2:1 he says he wrote to _____[x] sin in the family of God. In 1 John 2:26 he says he wrote to _____[y] from false teachers in the family of God. And in 1 John 5:13 he says his purpose was to _____[z] assurance of salvation in the family of God. Let's take a little closer look now at the content of this letter.

1 John 1:1-2:2: The Basis of Fellowship

John opens his letter by giving his credentials as an eyewitness to the person of Christ. Jesus was not merely a spirit, but one who could be _____[aa] touched. John's purpose is to transmit his personal witness of Christ's life and ministry to his readers so they may share in the same fellowship with Christ that John enjoyed. This fellowship is made possible by the _____[bb] of Jesus which cleanses the believer and satisfies God's righteous demands against sin. As a result, believers will walk in this light of God's fellowship and willingly _____[cc] sin, knowing that they have Jesus Christ as an advocate with the Father.

1 John 2:3-27: The Companions of Fellowship

Fellowship with God has _____[dd] that are associated with it. These actions must be the constant companion of a Christian. One who abides with God will live in _____[ee], walk in Christlikeness, _____[ff] his brother, separate from the _____[gg], and confess Jesus as the Son of God.

1 John 2:28-3:23: The Mark of Fellowship

The basic theme of 1 John is that fellowship with Jesus come through a close relationship with Him. This happens when a person is _____[hh] again. A person in fellowship with Christ will _____[ii] righteousness, anticipate His _____[jj], have an aversion to _____[kk], and love the _____[ll] of God. A believer's love is manifested in self-sacrifice and gives one _____[mm] before God.

1 John 3:24-4:21: The Proof of Fellowship

John now introduces the important concept of the _____[nn] of believers by Holy Spirit. The Spirit of God residing in a person confesses that Jesus has come in the _____[oo] and manifests love for others. This love affirms the reality of Jesus—God in the flesh—and anticipates the perfect fellowship to come. This love gives a believer confidence to one day meet the one from who all love is derived, Jesus.

1 John 5: The Assurance of Fellowship

John ends by listing a number of ways believers can be _____ [pp] of their _____ [qq] with God. They will: (1) believe in Jesus Christ, (2) have love for both the Father and the Son, (3) keep God's commandments, (4) experience victory over the world, (5) possess eternal life, and (6) be assured of answered prayers.

Refuting False Teachers

Part of the reason John wrote this letter was to help check the deadly plague of false teachers who were assaulting the church. That purpose warrants some special attention. As an apostle of Christ, John couldn't stand idly by when satanic lies were posing a grave threat to the truth.

So, what was this heretical teaching? It was the beginning stages of what later came to be known as "_____ [rr]." Gnosticism developed in the _____ [ss] century, but the elements of it were definitely present in the New Testament age. Gnosticism was basically a belief system that combined various pagan, Jewish, and quasi-Christian ideas. One major component of it was the belief that _____ [tt] was inherently evil while the spiritual realm was pure and good. That belief distorted the message of the gospel in some very basic ways. First, if spirit is good and matter is bad, then the eternal _____ [uu] of God could never become _____ [vv]—that is, He could never take upon Himself our flesh-and-blood _____ [ww] nature. Therefore, Jesus only appeared to be human. This idea not only completely undermines the biblical teaching of Jesus' true humanity; but also of the _____ [xx]. If Jesus were not truly man—as well as truly God—when He suffered and died, He could not have been a suitable and acceptable substitutionary sacrifice for human sin. So, John forcefully deals with this by asserting that he had "heard," "seen," and "touched" Jesus Christ with his hands (1 John 1:1), and that Jesus had truly "come in the _____ [yy]" (1 John 4:2). Also, he makes it clear that only spirits who confess "Jesus Christ has come in the _____ [zz] is from God" (1 John 4:2).

The Gnostics' view that matter is inherently evil as caused them to be indifferent to _____ [aaa] values and ethical _____ [bbb]. To them, the body was merely the prison in which the spirit was incarcerated. Therefore, sin committed in the _____ [ccc] had no connection to or effect on the _____ [ddd]. But John emphatically declared, "If we say we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. . . . If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us (1 John 1:8, 10).

LESSONS FROM 1 JOHN

- Seek the presence of the _____[eee]. God wants us to have a relationship with His _____[fff] and not just Him.
- Only by living in harmony with the _____[ggg] can we be in _____[hhh] with God (1 John 1:6).
- Jesus is the only way we are going to survive _____[iii] Day for two reasons: He is (1) our _____[jjj] and (2) our _____[kkk] (1 John 2:1-2).
- _____[lll] sums up what it means to love God (1 John 2:3-6).
- There are two basic fundamentals of the Christian life: (1) _____[mmm] God, and (2) _____[nnn] others (1 John 2:3-11).
- Keep in mind the _____[ooo] view; don't be a prisoner of the _____[ppp] (1 John 2:15-17).
- Remain in the _____[qqq] (1 John 2:14, 24).
- Not every spiritual _____[rrr] is credible (1 John 4:1-6).
- We can _____[sss] that we have eternal life (1 John 5:13).
- We must guard ourselves from _____[ttt] (1 John 5:21).

KEY PASSAGES FROM 1 JOHN

- 1 John 1:5-10
- 1 John 2:3-6, 15-17
- 1 John 3:9, 11, 14, 18, 23-24
- 1 John 4:1-3, 7, 11, 13, 20
- 1 John 5:1-3, 13, 16

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY

[a] James	[ss] second
[b] fishing	[tt] matter
[c] servants	[uu] Son
[d] Baptist	[vv] man
[e] following	[ww] human
[f] apostle	[xx] atonement
[g] inner	[yy] flesh
[h] Jerusalem	[zz] flesh
[i] love	[aaa] moral
[j] Thunder	[bbb] behavior
[k] power	[ccc] body
[l] Ephesus	[ddd] spirit
[m] Patmos	[eee] church
[n] convert	[fff] people
[o] confirm	[ggg] Light
[p] coronate	[hhh] fellowship
[q] end	[iii] Judgment
[r] Ephesus	[jjj] Advocate
[s] unsigned	[kkk] propitiation
[t] sermons	[lll] Obedience
[u] circular	[mmm] obey
[v] purpose	[nnn] love
[w] promote	[ooo] long
[x] prevent	[ppp] moment
[y] protect	[qqq] Word
[z] provide	[rrr] teacher
[aa] physically	[sss] know
[bb] blood	[ttt] idols
[cc] confess	
[dd] actions	
[ee] obedience	
[ff] love	
[gg] world	
[hh] born	
[ii] practice	
[jj] appearing	
[kk] sin	
[ll] family	
[mm] assurance	
[nn] indwelling	
[oo] flesh	
[pp] assured	
[qq] fellowship	
[rr] Gnosticism	