

Chardon Christian Fellowship

Wednesday Night Bible Study

1 John

**Lesson 1: Introduction to 1 John;
the 5 w's of Who, What, When, Where & Why.**

KEY VERSE: 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Theopneustos - _____

I. WHO?

Evidence the Author is Apostle John

1. Was with Jesus

1 John 1:1-3 _____

Refers to Jesus as _____ (see **John 1:1**)

Author identifies himself in relation with Jesus

_____ having used three senses: _____, _____, _____

Conclusion: author was present with Jesus, probably one of the Twelve

2. Reference as Senior Leader

In **2 John** and **3 John** author states he is "The Elder" (*ho presbyteros*)

Definition, *presbyteros*: in the Gospels and Acts, elder, usually as an official leader of the Jewish community, in the epistles, older man and older woman, who may or may not be official leaders of the church, depending on the context; Elder, senior; older, more advanced in years; an elder in respect of age, person advanced in years; an elder, member of the Jewish Sanhedrin; an elder or presbyter of the Christian church.

Acts 14:23 _____

Acts 15:2 _____

1 Peter 5:1 _____



Apostles John and Peter;
Albrecht Dürer

3. John was church planter in modern Turkey

John was a missionary to Ephesus (modern day Turkey). Author was intimately familiar with the church receiving letter, has a pastoral love for them, and uses three expressions to describe the relationship:

a. My little children (*egō teknion*) or little children (*teknion*); endearing appellation, my dear children -

1 John 2:1, 1 John 2:12, 1 John 2:28, 1 John 3:7, 1 John 3:18, 1 John 5:21

b. Children (*paidion*); children, but with endearment –

1 John 2:18

c. Beloved (*agapētos*); beloved, dear, worthy of love -

1 John 2:7, 1 John 3:2, 1 John 3:21, 1 John 4:1, 1 John 4:4, 1 John 4:7, 1 John 4:11

4. Historical evidence

Early church fathers attributed this as Johannine Epistle.

5. Writing Style

a. Writing style is essentially the same for Gospel of John and First Epistle of John (*e.g.* Jesus as Word of Life; **1 John 1:1, John 1:1**)

b. Stylistic (syntax) contrasts: light and darkness; love and hate; life and death; truth and falsehood.

c. Dualistic position of man: children of God or children of devil; belong to world or don't belong to world; have life or don't have life; know God or don't know God

d. Other Greek grammar similarities.

II. WHAT?

A. Not a typical letter from New Testament times

1. Typical letter

Typical letter construct is:

salutation (greetings and originator); intended audience (recipient); body of text; valediction

2. Typical salutation

Revelation 1:4 _____

Jude 1:1 _____

1 Peter 1:1 _____

James 1:1 _____

Romans 1:1 _____

3. In 1 John, no salutation

1 John does not follow this rule (nor **Hebrews**)

The letter is more of a pastoral letter than a treatise of theology (Epistles) or account of the Lord (Gospels). It is not revelatory (Revelation), but addresses specific issues that were unfolding in the church.

III. WHEN?

A. Timing of Letter

1. General consensus that letter written around 80-85 A.D.
2. Where was everyone at this time?
 - a. The Romans had destroyed the Temple in 70 A.D.
 - b. Jews and Christians (The Way) dispersed from Jerusalem
 - c. John (son of Zebedee) will die in 100 A.D. in Ephesus (94 years old; only one to _____). John is about _____ when Epistle of 1 John was written.
 - d. Paul, writer of most of New Testament, executed in 64-67 A.D.
 - e. Simon Peter was crucified in 67-68 A.D.;
Judas Iscarot, 33 A.D.;
James, Son of Zebedee, 44 A.D. (**Acts 12:1**);
James Alpheus, in Judea (?? A.D.)
 - f. Some Apostles departed as missionaries and probably died there (historical accounts):
 - Philip to Greece and Asia Minor (Phrygia & Hierapolis) (54 A.D.);
 - Jude Thaddeus to Armenia, Syria, Persia (martyred 65-72 A.D.);
 - Matthew to Persia, Parthia, Medes, and Ethiopia of Asia (~70 A.D.);
 - Thomas to Persia, Pakistan and India (martyred ~72 A.D.);
 - Simon the Zealot to Egypt and Persia (martyred ?? A.D.);
 - Andrew to Greece, Thrace, Georgia, Asia Minor (martyred in Greece, ?? A.D.);

- Bartholomew to Armenia and India (martyred ?? A.D.);

B. Persecution

- 1.** Continued persecution by Second Temple Judaism (*e.g.* Pharisees, Saul of Tarsus). Pharisees persecuted ‘The Way’ (Christianity) in towns outside Jerusalem. It was seen by Pharisees as a heretical sect of Judaism.
- 2.** Sporadic persecution by Roman Government up to 64 A.D. Roman Empire was a mixture of Roman and Greek pagan beliefs, with the Emperor as a demigod (ref. Augustus). Judaism and Christianity were inconsistent with Roman Empire: (1) God is authority above Emperor; (2) was not caste system.
- 3.** Emperor Nero officially declared persecution in 64 A.D. after Great Fire of Rome, and as result of Jew’s Great Revolt of 66-70 A.D. in Judea (led to destruction of Second Temple in 70 A.D.).
- 4.** Persecution of Christians in other countries as the *diaspora* spreads out: Egypt, Syria, Persia (Iraq, Iran), Asia Minor (Turkey), Armenia, Greece, India subcontinent. Persecution came from Second Temple Judaism and local pagan religions.

IV. WHERE?

Consensus is this letter was written by John from Ephesus. John was in Ephesus for many years and died in Ephesus. No mention of “location” in the letter.

The “target” church is not identified. Must have been church planted by John or visited by John (see section **I.3** above).

V. WHY?

A. John was writing the church regarding false teachers and heresy. Evidently false teachers and doctrine sprung from the church (**1 John 2:18-19, 26**). Paul also had to address heresies (*e.g.* see **Galatians 1:6-9**).

B. This is a treatise directly focused against specific heresies promulgated upon this specific church at that time:

- Heresy of continued walking in sin as a believer (carnality)
- Heresy of sinless-perfection while alive (now I am sinless, I can do what I want)
- Heresy of regarding Jesus (denial of humanity and/or deity of Jesus)
- Heresy of not needing to walk in love

C. John prescribes 7 tests to know if a teaching or spirit is from God (**1 John 4**). These were like “litmus tests” (colloquialism: determining intent or factors behind a position) for the church.

VI. How does 1 John relate to us today?

Do we have heresies and false-teaching today?

Quote attributed to A.W. Tozer:

“Heresies are typically _____.”

** We need to know the Word of God, and be prepared to:

1 Peter 3:15 _____

2 Corinthians 10:5 _____

2 Timothy 4:2 _____

(the following is not a complete list – only a sampling)

A. Islam

Assault on Christianity at many levels, especially on the death and propitiation of Jesus for our sins.

“... the Qur’an claims that Jesus was not in fact crucified. Instead, according to most interpretations, another person who was made to look like him was killed in his place, while Jesus escaped and was taken up into heaven without dying ... they did not kill him, nor did they crucify him, though it was made to appear like that to them; those that disagreed about him are full of doubt, with no knowledge to follow, only supposition: they certainly did not kill him. On the contrary, God raised him unto himself. God is almighty and wise” (Surah 4:157-158). [www.challies.com]

B. Secularism

Literally, the separation of human institutions from religious institutions, so that someone does not represent both. George Holyoake in 1850’s authored opinions of promoting social order separate from religious influence.

First Amendment to Constitution states *“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...”*

Secularism promotes the idea of separation of any secular office or decision from any religious ideas or beliefs. In fact, secularism favors repression of any expression of religion, especially Christianity.

C. Humanism

Humanism has been with us for ages, but gained modern popularity with Friedrich Niethammer in Bavaria and the post-revolution French Enlightenment in early 1800's. The basis of humanism is it a "... *philosophical and ethical stance that emphasizes the value and agency of human beings, individually and collectively, and generally prefers critical thinking (rationalism) and evidence (empiricism) over religious teachings or belief*". See **Romans 1:25**.

C. New Age

In the 1970's moved into Western culture and is very eclectic. It is a broad movement characterized by alternative approaches to traditional Western culture, with an interest in spirituality, mysticism, holism, and environmentalism. Predominantly rejects Christianity, and focuses on spiritualism or spiritual energy of man, animals, cosmos, spiritual beings, or defined god-like entities (other than Jehovah of Bible). Most have elements of pagan religions including Buddhism (reiki), Taoism, Druidism, and religions of Ancient Egypt, Native Americans, and India. There is a preponderance of belief in mental and physical powers of healing from natural sources, crystals, meditation, psychics, etc. See **1 Corinthians 2:12-16, Leviticus 20:6, Deuteronomy 18:10-12, Colossians 2:8**.

D. New Thought

Modern New Thought (or Higher Thought) religious movement started with Phineas Quimby in the 1800's, and believes that God (Infinite Intelligence) is everywhere, and in spirit is the totality of real things. Human selfhood is divine, and divine thought is a force for good. Any sickness originates in the mind, and human righteousness (in thought) has a healing effect.

Key principles are:

- God or Infinite Intelligence is "supreme, universal, and everlasting";
- Divinity dwells within each person, that all people are spiritual beings;
- The highest spiritual principle is loving one another unconditionally... and teaching and healing one another;
- Our mental states are carried forward into manifestation and become our experience in daily living.

Mary Baker Eddy was a student of Phineas Quimby, and founded the Christian Science cult. Another cult is the Unity Church.

D. Within Christianity:

1. Modalism

This is also known as Sabellianism, Patripassianism, or Oneness Pentecostalism.

This view of God teaches that God exists as either God the Father, God the Son, or God the Holy Spirit. He expresses His presence in one of these three aspects or modes. The

correct view is the Trinitarian view, that God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three distinct persons within the Godhead. The First Council of Nicaea (325 A.D.) and Council of Constantinople (381 A.D.) focused on this controversy and developed the Nicene Creed: *“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost and of the Virgin Mary, and was made man; he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered, and was buried, and the third day he rose again, according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of the Father; from thence he shall come again, with glory, to judge the quick and the dead; whose kingdom shall have no end.*

Modalism is taught in some Pentecostal Churches and by the very popular T.D. Jakes among others.

2. Universalism

Universalism, also known as “Christian Universalism” or Universal Reconciliation, is a religious movement with the view that all human beings will ultimately be "saved" and restored to a right relationship with God. It bases this on “*How can a God of Love condemn people to Hell?*”.

a. Traditional

The Universalist movement was present in 6th Century Christianity. More modern movements are Universalist Church, Universalist Church of America, and Unitarian Universalism. Many deny Hell as a real destination of souls, or believe in a Purgatorial Hell (restorative, remedial) with eventual reconciliation with God.

b. More recent

Two significant movements referred to as Charismatic Universalism (Evangelical Universalism) and Liberal Christian Universalism have emerged relatively recently. Although not organized, there is a tendency of the leaders tend to come from more charismatic churches. These proponents claim that “all roads lead to God”, regardless whether they follow the teachings of Buddha, Muhammed, or Jesus.

Universalism denies the consequences of sin. It denies the Holiness of God, and that sinful beings cannot be in His presence. Most of all, it is in conflict with **John 14:6**

3. Prosperity Theology (Prosperity Gospel)

This “... is a religious belief among some Christians, who hold that financial blessing and physical well-being are always the will of God for them, and that faith, positive speech, and donations to religious causes will increase one's material wealth. Prosperity theology views the Bible as a contract between God and humans: if humans have faith in God, he will deliver

security and prosperity. The doctrine emphasizes the importance of personal empowerment, proposing that it is God's will for his people to be happy. It is based on interpretations of the Bible that are mainstream in Judaism (with respect to the Hebrew Bible), though less so in Christianity. The atonement (reconciliation with God) is interpreted to include the alleviation of sickness and poverty, which are viewed as curses to be broken by faith. This is believed to be achieved through donations of money, visualization, and positive confession.” [Wikipedia.com]

This is an affront to the pure Gospel on many levels. First and foremost is the passages about trials and suffering: **2 Timothy 3:12, Colossians 1:24, John 16:33, Romans 5:3**

Some popular teachers of Prosperity Gospel include many for the “Word of Faith” movement: Oral Roberts, Robert Tilton, Joel Osteen, Creflo Dollar, Kenneth Copeland, Reverend Ike, Kenneth Hagin.

4. Positive Thinking

This was promoted by Norman Vincent Peale in early 1950’s. The central tenants are one can achieve a higher satisfaction and quality of life with an optimistic attitude and positive conscious thought, achieved with positive affirmations and visualizations.

This narcissistic thought process has crept into the teachings of many churches.

5. Mormonism

In the 1820’s Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon after translating gold plates revealed to him by the angel Moroni. He claimed God the Father and Jesus said that all existing denominations were evil and corrupt. Further revelations from “god” were include in Doctrines and Covenants.

We will find that the actions and teachings of Joseph Smith are in fact violations of the Word of God: **Galatians 1:8-9, Revelation 22:18-19, Matthew 5:17-18**

Resources:

The Letters of John, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, Volume 19. John Stott, InterVarsity Press

Bible Knowledge Commentary, An Exposition of the Scriptures by Dallas Theological Seminary Faculty, John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Victor Books, 1983

1-3 John, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series, Marianne M. Thompson, InterVarsity Press, 1992

<https://amazingbibletimeline.com> <https://studylight.org> <https://www.openbible.com>

<https://jewishvirtuallibrary.org> <https://www.challies.com>

<https://www.wikipedia.com> <https://www.biblereasons.com>

<https://www.thecripplegate.com> <https://www.biblestudytools.com>