

SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW
PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: I JOHN
I John 5:13-15

I. INTRODUCTION

A. BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Late in the first century, the last living apostle writes to believers who were established in their faith to remind them and us how to live in fellowship with God through Jesus Christ. God is light. As children of the Light, we must obey God's commandments. However, everyone sins. When we do so, we should stop sinning, admit it, and seek forgiveness through our Advocate, Jesus Christ. God is also Love. As His children, we must not love the world, which is in the evil one's power. Instead, we show God we love Him by doing His will and by loving one another. In the last days, followers of the antichrist will deny both the Father and the Son. False prophets will delude the worldly by claiming Jesus is not God's divine and incarnate Son. Do not believe them. Remember, God is also Life. He promises us eternal life through Jesus Christ, His Son, who laid down His life for us. We have eternal life if we have the Son; we have the Son when we trust Him completely. We show we have eternal life by loving one another. We know we have eternal life because God promises us so in His word.

B. TITLE

- GREEK = **Ιοαννου Α**—'First of John'
- LATIN = **1 Ioannis**

C. PLACE IN BIBLE

- FIFTH OF EIGHT NON-PAULINE EPISTLES
- POPULARLY [BUT INACCURATELY] KNOWN AS 'CATHOLIC EPISTLES'
 - Because James, I Peter, and II and III John were sent to specific addressees

D. AUTHORSHIP

1. NOWHERE IN THE LETTER IS THE AUTHOR EXPLICITLY IDENTIFIED
2. TRADITIONAL VIEW—JOHN THE APOSTLE
 - a. External Evidence
 1. John's authorship was universally attributed by the early Fathers
 2. Used early in the second century by two Apostolic Fathers
 - Polycarp (Bishop of Smyrna)—a disciple of John
 - Papias (Bp of Hierapolis)—companion of Polycarp and maybe John's disciple

3. Irenaeus—end of second century—specifically attributed it to John

b. Internal Evidence

1. Style and vocabulary—very similar to Gospel of John
 - Both share distinctive Johannine phrases and words
 - Both use frequent contrasts of opposites
2. Themes covered by the Gospel and this epistle are similar
3. The ‘we’ language testifies to the author’s witnessing these things as an apostle

3. ALTERNATIVE VIEWS

a. Challenging Johannine authorship of *both* the **Gospel** and the **epistle**

1. Both were written by ‘John the elder’—not the Apostle
2. II and III Peter were written by ‘the elder’—see **II Jn 1:1** and **III Jn 1:1**
3. Argument for I John based on a statement in Eusebius’s *Ecclesiastical History* (c. 323)
 - Eusebius interpreted Papias to suggest there were two ‘Johns’ writing
 - But there is no reason to interpret Papias’s statement this way

b. Challenging *only* Johannine authorship of the **epistle**

- ❖ Arguments are based on difference in style—in the epistle
 1. Demonstrative pronouns starting sentences, followed by conjunction or particle
 2. Use of conditional phrases in a way not found in the Gospel

E. JOHN THE AUTHOR

1. FAMILY BACKGROUND

- Born—son of Zebedee
 - Means ‘my gift’
 - From Hebrew ‘Zabdi’ = ‘endowment’
- Brother—James
- Fisherman—Sea of Galilee—he and James partnered with Peter (and Andrew)
- Tradition says—mother was Salome
 - Mk 15:40—Salome was at the cross
 - Mt 27:56—says mother of the sons of Zebedee

2. DISCIPLESHIP WITH JESUS

- Possibly a disciple of John the Baptist

- If he was the other disciple with Andrew meeting Jesus—**Jn 1:35-40**
- Jesus named James and John—‘sons of thunder’
 - Boanerges = Aramaic—‘ben’ (son) + ‘regesh’ (tumult/thunder)
- Jesus called him and James as disciples—while fishing—**Mk 1:19-20**
- Called as one of Twelve Apostles—**Mk 3:17**
- Asked Jesus about the man casting out demons in Jesus’ name—**Mk 9:38**
- He and James—wanted to bring down fire upon Samaritans—**Lk 9:51-56**
- Asked for special position in Jesus’ kingdom—**Mk 10:35-37**
 - With help from their mother—**Mt 20:20-21**
- His mother helped support Jesus’ ministry in Galilee—**Mt 27:55-56**
- The ‘other’ disciple who helped Peter enter the high priest’s courtyard—**Jn 18:15-16**
- Witnessed empty tomb with Peter—**Jn 20:1-10**
- Apparently—the ‘disciple whom Jesus loved’
 - Leaned against Jesus during the Lord’s Supper—**Jn 13:23-25**
 - Jesus committed his mother Mary to his care—**Jn 19:26-27**
 - Mary Magdalen ran from the tomb and informed Peter and this disciple—**Jn 20:2**
 - Identified Jesus from the boat on the Sea of Galilee—**Jn 21:7**
 - Peter asked Jesus what would happen to him in the future—**Jn 21:20**
 - This is the disciple who wrote the Gospel of John—**Jn 21:24**
- Inner circle—Peter, James and John
 - Witnessed raising of Jairus’s daughter—**Mk 5:37-43**
 - Witnessed Transfiguration—**Mk 9:2-8**
 - Received end-time prophecy with Philip—**Mk 13**
 - Only Peter and John prepared Lord’s Supper—**Lk 22:7-13**
 - In Gethsemane—went further with Jesus—**Mk 14:33**

3. APOSTOLIC MINISTRY

- Accompanied Peter in healing of lame man at Gate Beautiful—**Acts 3:1-10**
- Arrested and gave account before Sanhedrin—with Peter—**Acts 4:1-22**
- Imprisoned and beaten with other Apostles—**Acts 5:17-42**
- Confirmed presence of Holy Spirit in Samaria—with Peter—**Acts 8:14-17**
- A pillar of the Jerusalem church, with Peter and James—**Gal 2:9**
- Authored five canonical books—the Gospel, I-III John, and The Revelation
- Church tradition
 - Left Jerusalem about 70 AD
 - Ministered in Ephesus—where he wrote the Gospel
 - Banished during Domitian’s reign—mid 90s—Isle of Patmos—wrote Revelation
 - Returned to Ephesus—where he died during Trajan’s reign—after 98 AD

- Polycarp and Ignatius were his disciples

F. BACKGROUND

1. DATE

- Late first century
- Probably before mid-90s—no persecution is mentioned

2. SETTING—PROBABLY EPHESUS

3. RECIPIENTS

- a. Probably churches near Ephesus—in vicinity of ‘seven churches of Asia’
- b. Christians well-grounded in apostolic doctrine
 - They had heard the ‘old commandment’ from the beginning—[2:7](#)
 - They knew the truth from the beginning—exhorted to abide in that truth—[2:21, 24](#)
 - Your anointing abides in you—you have no need for anyone to teach you—[2:27](#)
 - The message of loving one another—they had heard from the beginning—[3:11](#)

4. SETTING—RISING HERESIES

- a. Heretical teaching and immorality
 - 1. Those who denied Jesus is the Christ—who denied the Father and the Son—[2:22](#)
 - 2. Those who practiced sin—who practiced lawlessness—[3:4](#)
 - 3. Those who denied that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh—[4:3](#)

b. Related heresies

1. Cerinthians

a. Cerinthus

- ▲ Contemporary with John the Apostle
- ▲ Polycarp said John and Cerinthus opposed each other in Ephesus
- ▲ Established heretical circle of followers in Asia
- ▲ Teachings were similar to Gnostics—but with key differences

b. Teachings

1. Accepted Jewish Scripture
2. Required strict adherence to Mosaic Law
3. Used Gospel similar to that of Ebionites—Jewish-Christian legalistic heresy
4. Like Ebionites—rejected the deity of Jesus—denied the virgin birth
5. Jesus and Christ were two separate persons
6. Divine Christ came upon Jesus at baptism as a dove

7. Like Gnostics—said Christ was never incarnate
8. Christ departed Jesus at the crucifixion
9. Like Gnostics—said God did not create the universe—but a *demiurgos*
10. Unlike Gnostics—*demiurgos* was good—not evil

2. Early Gnostic teachings

- a. Dualistic worldview
 - The physical world is evil—only the spiritual is good
- b. Jehovah is not true God
 - But an evil *demiurgos* who created the physical world
- c. Opposed Judaism and the Old Testament
- d. Rejected parts of the New Testament favoring Judaism
- e. Christ was not truly incarnate—not fully human
 - Doceticism—He only ‘appeared’ to have human flesh

G. STYLE

1. EPISTOLARY—BUT NO GREETING OR CLOSING

2. INTIMATE/PERSONAL

- Refers to readers as ‘beloved’—*αγαπητοι*—five times—3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11
- Calls them ‘little children’—*τεκνια*— seven times—2:2, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21

H. THEMES

1. GOD IS LIGHT—GOD IS LOVE—GOD IS LIFE

2. GOD WANTS US TO HAVE FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM

- *κοινωνια*—1:3, 6, 7

3. IF WE BELONG TO GOD, WE STOP SINNING, ASK FORGIVENESS, AND OBEY HIM

4. CHRISTOLOGY

- a. Jesus Christ is fully God—the divine Son of God
- b. Jesus Christ is fully Man—the incarnate Son of God
- c. Jesus Christ has atoned for our sins—He is our propitiation
- d. Jesus Christ will forgive our sins—if we repent
- e. Jesus Christ is our Advocate

5. GOD’S CHILDREN LOVE ONE ANOTHER

6. GOD GIVES US ETERNAL LIFE THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

7. BE ON GUARD AGAINST HERESY AND IMMORALITY

8. KNOW AND PRACTICE THE TRUTH—DO NOT BE DECEIVED OR LIE

a. Sin

- If we say we have not sinned, we deceive ourselves and make Him a **liar**—**1:8, 10**
- Whoever says ‘I know Him’ but does not keep His commandments, is a **liar**—**2:4**

b. Jesus Christ

- Whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ is a **liar**—**2:22**
- Whoever does not confess Jesus [as Christ in the flesh] is not from God—**4:2-3**

c. Loving others

- If someone says, ‘I love God’ and hates his brother, he is a **liar**—**4:20**

d. Eternal Life

- He who does not believe God’s testimony has made God a **liar**—**5:10**
- The testimony: God has given us eternal life through Jesus Christ, His Son—**5:5-12**

9. AFFIRMATION OF CERTAINTY

a. The truth of God’s word—His expectations of us—and His promises to us are certain

b. John speaks of knowing these things 42 times

- **γινωσκω**—to know at the intimate level—**25 times**
- **ειδω**—to perceive, understand, see—**17 times**

I. OUTLINE

INTRODUCTION—**1:1-4**

CHILDREN OF THE LIGHT—**1:5—2:14**

God is Light—Walk in the Light—**1:5-7**

Confess Your Sin—**1:8-10**

Christ is our Propitiation and Advocate—**2:1-2**

Obey God’s Commandments—**2:3-6**

The New Commandment—Love Your Brother—**2:7-11**

This Word Is for All Age Groups—**2:12-14**

DO NOT BE DECEIVED—**2:15-27**

Do Not Love the World—**2:15-17**

Beware of Antichrist—Who Denies Christ and the Father—**2:18-24**

God's Promise of Eternal Life Is True—**2:25-27**

ABIDE IN GOD—**2:28-3:24**

Live Righteous Lives—Do Not Practice Sin—**2:28-3:10**

Love One Another—Take Care of Your Brother—**3:11-24**

TEST THE SPIRITS—OPPOSE HERESY—**4:1-6**

ABIDE IN GOD'S LOVE—LOVE ONE ANOTHER—**4:7-21**

CHILDREN BORN OF GOD—**5:1-12**

Obey God—**5:1-3**

Overcome the World—by Trusting Christ—**5:4-5**

Believe God's Testimony of Eternal Life—**5:6-12**

ASSURANCE OF THESE THINGS—**5:13-15**

CONTINUE IN OBEDIENCE TO GOD—**5:16-21**

Hold One Another Accountable—**5:16-17**

Remain Steadfast to the End—**5:18-21**

II. BIBLICAL TEXT

I John 5:13-15—13 *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.*

III. EXPOSITION

A. TO WHOM THIS WAS WRITTEN

1. ANOTHER INDICATION—LETTER WAS WRITTEN TO MATURE CHRISTIANS

2. NOT—LIKE THE GOSPEL—TO CONVINCe THEM

○ **Jn 20:31**—*but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name*

3. BUT—TO THOSE WHO ALREADY BELIEVE

○ **5:13**—*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God,*

B. THE CULMINATING 'SO THAT' PURPOSE OF THE LETTER

❖ OTHER 'SO THAT' PURPOSES POINTED TO THIS ONE

1. So that—you all may have **fellowship** with us—**1:3**

2. So that—your **joy** may be full—**1:4**

3. So that—you may **not sin**—**2:1**
4. Concerning them who **deceive** you—[So that—you will not be deceived]—**2:26**

C. THE CERTAINTY OF ETERNAL LIFE

1. INTERNAL EVIDENCE FROM LETTER—**5:7-12**

- a. From the three witnesses—of the Trinity—**vv7-9**
- b. From inner fellowship of the Son—*whoever has the Son has life*—**v10**

2. WHY WE BELIEVE IN ETERNAL LIFE

- a. God **promised** it:

I Jn 2:25—*This is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.*

Titus 1:2—[we have] *the hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago*

- b. Jesus **explained** it

Jn 3:14-15—*As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life*

- c. John **testified** to it—in his Gospel account

Jn 20:30-31—*Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in his name.*

3. HOW WE KNOW WE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE

❖ **God's Written Record**

❖ **Work of the Holy Spirit**

❖ **Proof from Our Own Lives**

❖ **Understanding from Christ Himself**

a. **God's Written Record**

1. John wrote his Gospel—to convince us Jesus is the Christ

- a. His **purpose**—for us to believe—and to have eternal life

- b. His **emphasis**—on 'witness'—[various forms of μαρτυρᾶ]

▲ Half the 'martyr' [witness] references in the NT are Johannine

- c. John's Gospel—full of 'signs' [σημειον]—to convince us Jesus is the Christ

▲ **Changing water to wine—Jn 2**

▲ **Healing royal official's son at a distance—Jn 4**

▲ **Healing paralytic at Bethsaida—Jn 5**

▲ **Feeding 5000—Jn 6**

▲ **Walking on water—Jn 6**

▲ **Healing man born blind—Jn 9**

▲ **Raising Lazarus—Jn 11**

▲ **His own resurrection—Jn 20**

d. Luke—speaks of ‘infallible proofs’

Acts 1:3—To these [apostles] He also presented Himself alive after His suffering, by many infallible proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days and speaking of the things concerning the kingdom of God.

e. First John—goes the next step

1. **Builds** on this previous knowledge—of Jesus’ performing these ‘signs’

2. States **assurance**—we have eternal life

3. Assurance based on **faith**—we believe in the veracity of written **record**

b. Work of the Holy Spirit—BY SPIRITUAL INTUITION

1. He has **given** us His Spirit—to assure us

I Jn 4:13—By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

2. He teaches us by the **anointing** and **presence** of His Spirit

*I Jn 2: 20—But you have an **anointing** from the Holy One, and you **know all things** . . . 27 As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.*

c. Proof from our own lives

1. Because we love the brothers

I Jn 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the Brethren. . . . 23 This is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

2. Because we keep His commandments

I Jn 3:24—The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.

d. Understanding from Christ Himself

1. ‘Knowing’ is both **intellectual**—and **relational**

2. First John—never speaks of static ‘knowledge’

- a. It always uses a verb—to ‘know’—**41 times!**
 - **ειδω** = intellectually knowing—17 times
 - **γινωσκω** = relationally knowing—24 times
- b. They come together as—personal ‘understanding’
- c. See **I Jn 5:20**
 - We **know** intellectual facts *about* the Son of God—**ειδω**—that He has come
 - **Purpose**—gives ‘understanding’—**διανοια**—*spiritual* knowledge [the mind]
 - **Result**—so we ‘know’ Him—relationally—**γινωσκω**
 - **Result**—we are ‘in’ His Son Jesus Christ
 - **Result**—we actually experience the true God—and eternal life

4. CONCLUSION

- ❖ WHEN WE BELIEVE AND *KNOW* JESUS CHRIST
- ❖ WE DON’T JUST KNOW *ABOUT* ETERNAL LIFE
- ❖ WE DON’T JUST *HAVE* ETERNAL LIFE
- ❖ WE SPIRITUALLY *EXPERIENCE*—AND ARE CONVINCED OF ETERNAL LIFE

D. ASK ANYTHING ACCORDING TO HIS WILL—AND WE WILL HAVE IT

1. ASK FOR THE FATHER’S WILL TO BE DONE—**Mt 6:10**
2. SEEK FIRST HIS KINGDOM—**Mt 6:33**
3. PRESENT OUR REQUESTS IN JESUS’ NAME—**Jn 14:34; 16:23-24**
4. CONFIRMED BY INTERNAL PROMISE FROM I JOHN

- If we pray in **good conscience**
- According to **His Will**
- And **obey** His commandments

I Jn 3:21-22—*Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.*