

King James Bible Study Correspondence Course

An Outreach of Highway Evangelistic Ministries
5311 Windridge lane ~ Lockhart, Florida 32810 ~ USA

1 John**Lesson 1**

return pages 7 & 8 only

Are you certain you are saved ?**God wants His children to know that they are truly saved.**

Have you ever come across an old letter in a drawer or a closet? As soon as we find a letter like that, we are curious about it. Who wrote it, and to whom? Why was it written? What does it talk about? If we cannot determine who the author was, then we have to search like a detective to answer our questions.

In many ways, reading the epistle of 1 John is like reading an old anonymous letter. The author does not identify himself, but he does give us numerous helpful clues. He does not identify the recipients either, but he does describe them. It is clear that they were facing some major challenges in their spiritual lives. The author encouraged them in warm pastoral tones to abide in genuine Christianity.

Although 1 John was written nearly two thousand years ago, its truths are relevant for Christians today. We, too, are confronted by religious counterfeits who threaten to move us away from Christian belief and behavior. We, too, need reminding about who Christ is and what He has commanded us to do. We, too, have to learn to put our belief into action by cultivating fellowship with Christ and with other Christians.

Although the language of 1 John is simple, its teaching is profound. It directs us to a true understanding of who Christ is, and it challenges us to walk as He desires.

Who Wrote This Letter?

Unlike most of the New Testament epistles, 1 John does not begin with the name of the author. Because of this fact, we have to look for clues in the letter itself. When we do that, we find several hints that point to the apostle John as the likely author.

This conclusion was also reached by the earliest Christian writers. Several of the Church Fathers, writing in the second through fourth centuries A.D., said that John was the author of this letter. In addition to reading the evidence in the letter itself, they likely were reflecting the common knowledge that had been passed down through the few generations from the time of John to their own day.

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Scripture memorization

1 Jn 5:13

13 These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

(KJV)

First John was written to Christians who already knew GOD. Even Christians can experience doubts. Doubts and questions can drive us to a fresh knowledge of GOD and a renewed commitment to HIM. GOD wants us to be certain of our salvation.

The first three verses of the epistle make it clear that the author had been an eyewitness of Jesus Christ when He lived on earth. This fact would likely narrow the possibilities to Jesus' twelve disciples. Of that number, John, James, and Peter were the inner circle who had witnessed several significant events that the others did not see. In the fourth Gospel, John is called the beloved disciple, or the disciple whom Jesus loved.

One of the striking facts about 1 John is its extensive overlap with the Gospel of John, particularly chapters 13 through 17. Both texts use similar vocabulary. In fact, the epistle appears to be an adaptation of Jesus' words to His disciples to the specific situation of the church that John addressed. The language is so similar that it is hard to deny that they were written by the same author.

The writer of 1 John communicated with both authority and affection. He was apparently a highly respected spiritual leader. He was confident in giving his readers instructions and warnings. At the same time, he wrote with a fatherly tone, as he addressed them as "my little children." Certainly the apostle John perfectly fit the description of authoritative and affectionate. He was deeply revered as one of the original disciples, and ancient witnesses described John's compassionate ministry in his old age.

Although the letter does not specifically identify its author, all of the lines of evidence point in the direction of the apostle John. Likely writing near the end of his long life and ministry, John spoke yet tenderly of the need to love and to live God's truth.

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What Was Going On?

The group of Christians to whom John wrote were facing a strong challenge to their spiritual lives. A number of people who had formerly numbered themselves among the Christians had left the Christian community. In addition, they were teaching doctrine contrary to genuine Christian belief and were endeavoring to seduce the Christians into error as well.

It is hard to determine exactly who the false teachers were. From what John wrote against them, there may well have been a mixture of several false beliefs. It appears that the error centered on the person of Jesus Christ. Early Christian writings indicate that much confusion and debate circulated concerning the human and divine natures of Christ. This certainly seems to be the case in the situation that prompted the writing of 1 John.

Many ancient thinkers insisted on a sharp separation between the material world and the spiritual world. They claimed that the material world was sinful and the spiritual world was pure. Because of this difference, the two could not come together. This philosophy made it impossible for these thinkers to accept that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, Who had taken on human flesh when He came to earth.

To resolve this problem, several erroneous teachings emerged. Some people claimed that Jesus was not really a human. Instead, He remained divine while He was on earth, and He only appeared to have a physical body. If this were the case, then He did not fully identify with humanity, so He could not have died on the cross as the substitute for sinful humans.

Others, in particular a man called Cerinthus, argued that Jesus was only a man. He said that at His baptism, Jesus received a special divine enabling but that it left Him before His crucifixion. In Cerinthus' thinking, Jesus was not truly divine.

The New Testament teaches throughout that Jesus is the unique God-Man. He is genuinely and fully divine as well as genuinely and fully human. Therefore, He was the perfect substitute for humans as He died for them on the cross. This is the only way that God could be just and still justify sinners.

One of the sad effects of wrong belief is that it inevitably produces wrong behavior as well. John, therefore, had to counterattack on two fronts. He argued against the false teachers by reaffirming the truth about Jesus Christ. At the same time, John exhorted the Christians to renew their commitment to faithful obedience and fervent love.

John recognized that the best defense is a good offense. He challenged the believers to focus on fellowship with God and with one another. This fellowship would fortify them in the face of the false teaching that threatened to seduce them into error. The cure for error is truth and love.

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Why Did He Write It?

When John wrote his Gospel, he sought to convince unbelievers that Jesus was indeed the Son of God as He claimed to be. John's first epistle, however, had a different audience and a different purpose. According to 1 John 5:13, John was writing to Christians to reassure them of the truth of what they had already believed. He stated, *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."*

John also stated some other objectives that fit into his larger purpose. For example, he wanted to nurture their fellowship with other Christians (1:3). He desired to increase their joy (1:4). He also sought to keep them from failing into sin (2:1). No doubt if John had written to the false teachers themselves, he would have had much more to say against their specific errors. As he wrote to the Christians, however, he addressed their specific needs. He wanted to reassure them in a constructive way. He reminded them of what they had already learned about Christ. With firm but tender words, He warned them against the danger that the false teaching posed. Most of all, he built them up in the Truth and in love to strengthen them as individuals and as a Christian community.

Little, if anything, that John wrote was new to his readers. The false teachers were introducing new beliefs, but John turned the Christians back to the truth that they already knew. He took them back to the fundamentals of Christian belief and behavior, and he encouraged them to persevere on the path they had been shown.

Because 1 John focuses attention on the basics of the Christian faith, it is relevant to all Christians. The foundational truths that John affirmed are the building blocks of godly living. This epistle contains the principles that new Christians need as they start to grow in Christ. These same principles are what older Christians need to remember when they are confronted with error. As John wrote to reassure Christians in the first century, so he serves as a pastor to Christians in every century and in every place.

What Are His Main Points?

As we write letters, especially to those whom we love, we often write from the heart rather than in a carefully reasoned format. That is just what we find in 1 John. Unlike some books, such as Romans and Hebrews, which have all the marks of intricately constructed treatises, 1 John flows through several ideas, often repeating subjects several times. Actually, this is just what we should expect from the aged apostle as he wrote from the heart to his beloved Christian friends.

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One repeated theme is knowledge and certainty. False teaching typically raises doubts, so John wanted to remind his readers of what they already knew. He recalled for them the truth that they had heard from the beginning of their Christian faith. They did not need new facts, but rather they needed to remember what they had been taught in the past.

One of the major teachings of the letter focuses on the marks of the Christian. The false teachers claimed to be Christians, but they were not. The true Christians were beginning to doubt themselves because of the attacks by the false teachers. John gave three marks by which authentic Christians can be identified.

The first mark is an accurate understanding of Jesus Christ as the Son of God, Who came in the flesh as a human. The second mark is faithful obedience to God's commands. The third mark is genuine love for other Christians. These marks evidence that a person truly knows Christ and is living for Him.

The reason these marks of the Christian are accurate is that each of them requires the work of the Holy Spirit, Who comes to indwell each Christian. The Holy Spirit teaches God's truth about Jesus Christ. He also produces His fruit, which includes obedience and love, in their lives.

As the Christians evaluated the false teachers by these three standards, they recognized how far short of God's standards the false teachers fell. At the same time, the marks prodded the Christians back to a renewed focus on the basics of the Christian life. This is a standard that distinguishes between what is true and what is false, what is good and what is bad, what is genuine and what is counterfeit.

Life Applications

Most ball games are won or lost on the fundamentals, the skills that we learn first. In the same way, our Christian lives succeed or fail on some basic issues. First John focuses our attention on the basics. Certainly learning the advanced details of theology is important, because they enrich our understanding of God and His plan. We must not, however, forget the first principles of who Christ is and how He wants us to live for Him.

Although we face a different set of circumstances from what the original recipients of 1 John faced, we also have to resist erroneous teaching. Many of the things taught on radio and television and through music go by the name of Christ. However, we need to be discerning so that we can see if they are truly in keeping with Biblical truth. Not everything that calls itself Christian is the real thing.

John presented a wonderful example of how to help Christians who are struggling with doubt. He focused on constructive reassurance. With tenderness he spoke the truth to the Christians. Certainly there is a proper

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time and place for direct confrontation of error, but we must also give loving help to those who have been under attack.

How do you measure up to the marks of the Christian? Do you have a Biblical understanding of Jesus Christ as the Son of God? Are you consistent in obeying God's commandments? Is your life characterized by genuine love for other Christians? This week ask the Lord to help you in any of these areas where you need to improve.

notes

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**1 John
Lesson 1**

Name _____

1. Why would the apostle John be an especially good choice to write an epistle that speaks fellowship with God?
2. Why is it crucial for Christians to understand clearly Who Jesus Christ is?
3. Why might John have focused his attention on the Christians rather than on the false teachers?
4. How could the three marks of the Christian be helpful to John's readers?
5. What are the three marks of a Christian ?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
6. Why is it important for you to understand what you believe in?
7. What is the key verse of this lesson?
8. What did Cerinthus believe , why is his belief wrong?
9. What will happen to yourself if your belief is wrong?
10. What was the error of false teaching that faced the early church?
11. Was JESUS CHRIST 100 % man and 100 % GOD when he walked the earth 2001 years ago?
12. What chapters of what Book overlap with 1 John?

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13. When confronted with false doctrine, how should we attempt to correct the one error?
14. Give two examples how JESUS CHRIST was 100% man
 - a.
 - b.
15. Why is it important to understand eternal life?
16. Explain how to use the material world and still maintain a Spiritual walk.
17. Give two examples how JESUS CHRIST was 100% GOD
 - a.
 - b.



Memory verses, write these out on the back of this page.

1 John 5:10-13; 1 John 3:16; 2 Cor. 5:1; 2 Peter 1:10