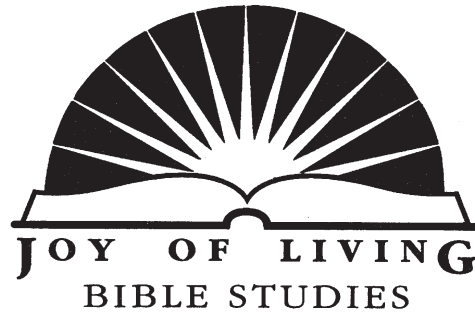


1-3 John & Jude

Lesson 1



Introduction

The author of these letters doesn't reveal his identity, but from the earliest time it was believed that the writer was the Apostle John. John was an eyewitness to the life and ministry of Jesus Christ— as was the author of these letters. Also, the wording of the letters bears a strong resemblance with that of the Gospel of John.

The Apostle John's life is divided into two definite periods. The first concludes with his departure from Jerusalem some time after the ascension of Christ; the second begins at that time and continues until John's death. This disciple who claimed Jesus' love stood close to his Master as He hung on the cross. John looked into the empty tomb on that morning of the resurrection. According to tradition, the Emperor Domitian banished the Apostle John from Ephesus to the lonely island of Patmos in A.D. 95. During the estimated eighteen months John spent there, he received visions of the Lord, which are recorded in the Book of Revelation. In his visions he was lifted up by the Spirit and saw a door opened into Heaven (Revelation 1:9-10ff). John's first letter was written from Ephesus, about A.D. 90.

The tone of the letters indicates that John was an old man at the time that he wrote them. They were addressed to Christians everywhere. In his first letter, John refers to the Christians as "dear children" (1 John 2:1, 12, 28; 3:7, 18; 4:4; 5:21). All the letters are warm and intimate. They were obviously written out of real love and a concern for younger Christians, during a time of great danger to the church of Jesus Christ.

John states, very deliberately, the fundamentals of the Christian faith and assures the Christians of the reality of Christ's salvation. "I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may *know* that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13, italics added). He warns Christians against a dangerous philosophy that threatened to rob them of their Christian faith. The Gnostic philosophy, Gnosticism, had begun to spread rapidly throughout that part of the world. Gnostics believed themselves to be a spiritual aristocracy and looked down with contempt at anyone with a different belief.

Actually, there were quite a few religious movements identified as Gnostic, which all stressed achieving salvation through some secret "knowledge." They based their belief on the Greek moral distinction between matter and spirit. This philosophy regarded matter as inherently evil. Thus they did not believe that Jesus Christ, the Word of God, became incarnate (in the flesh). In other words, they believed that Jesus Christ only *seemed* to become flesh.

Another group of Gnostics believed that the "divine Christ" came upon the "human Jesus" at baptism and left Him at the cross. Thus, they said, it was impossible that the divine Son of God suffered and died. The Gnostics, therefore, taught that the man Jesus was not the Christ, the Son of God.

John denounced these "antichrists" who denied the Son and as a result, denied the Father (see 1 John 2:18-23). He said that these people were false prophets because they did not confess that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh (see 1 John 4:1-3; 2 John -1:7). John emphasized the real humanity *and* the real deity of Jesus Christ (Perfect Man— Perfect God; see 1 John 2:22; 4:2; 4:15; 5:1,5).

John's first letter was written to assure the believers in Jesus Christ that they had eternal life because of their belief (that Jesus is the Christ). First John appears to have been intended as a companion to the Gospel of John. The word "believe" appears all through the gospel and the word "know" appears all through this letter. The word "know" is used more than thirty times in this short letter. It would be wise to underline it each time you discover it.¹

John wrote to the Christians referring to them by the tender word *teknia*— which means, "born ones." God is dealing with His very own born-again children (John 3) as He inspired John to write this letter.

John gives four reasons for writing this first letter:

1. That we might be joyful (1 John 1:4)
2. That we might not sin (1 John 2:1)
3. That we might be on guard against error (1 John 2:26)
4. That we might know we have eternal life (1 John 5:13).

John longed for the "born ones," both then and now, to know intimate fellowship with the Father and His Son. God came down to man in the flesh so that we "may have fellowship" (1 John 1:3) God wants us to have fellowship with Him and in Him to have fellowship with one another.

Then John says that not only must we believe in Christ, but we must live in Christ— act like Christians. In chapters 1-3 we find out if we are living like Christians, in chapters 4-5 we find out if we are believing like Christians. As thunder accompanies lightning, so does a living testimony accompany faith (see 1 John 2:3). Some say that they believe God but they continue to live like the devil! This cannot be, "If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth" (1 John 1:6).¹

1. Adapted from *What the Bible is All About*, by Henrietta Mears. Published by Regal Books. Used by permission.

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- b. What witness does the writer of 1 John give of his personal acquaintance with Jesus Christ? (1 John 1:1-3)

2.
 - a. What does 1 John 1:2 call Jesus Christ?

 - b. What do the following verses say concerning “eternal life?” Put these verses into your own words if you wish to.
John 17:3

John 3:36

3.
 - a. Who does the Christian have “fellowship” with according to 1 John 1:3?

 - b. Challenge: What is Christian fellowship? Look up “fellowship” in a dictionary to help you define Christian fellowship.

4.
 - a. What is the message the disciples of Christ have heard about God? (1 John 1:5)

 - b. What does 1 John 1:6 say regarding fellowship with the Lord?

5.
 - a. What does Ephesians 5:8-12 say regarding walking or living in the light?

 - b. What does the light do according to Ephesians 5:13?

6.
 - a. Challenge: Read John 3:19-21. Why do some people love darkness? (John 3:19)

 - b. How do those who do evil feel about the light? Why? (John 3:20)

 - c. Who comes to the light? (John 3:21)

7. a. What promise is given in 1 John 1:7 to those who choose to walk in the light?

- b. Personal: Have you chosen to walk in the light and come by faith to Jesus Christ, trusting Him to purify you from all sin? If not, why not do it right now? Write a prayer thanking Him that His blood purifies you from sin.

Fourth Day: Read 1 John 1:1—2:6, concentrating on 1 John 1:8-9.

1. What does 1 John 1:8 say?

2. Does the writer of this letter feel that he is sinless? How many times does he use “we”, “us”, “our”, and “ourselves” in 1 John chapter 1?

3. What does unconfessed sin do to a human being?
Psalm 32:1-5

Proverbs 28:13

4. If we are willing to confess our sins to Jesus Christ what two things does God do for us? (1 John 1:9)

5. Challenge: What do “righteousness” and “unrighteousness” mean? Look in the dictionary for help.

6. Personal: Do you daily enjoy the privilege which the Christian has as stated in 1 John 1:9? Why not begin today to keep “short accounts” with God by daily doing what 1 John 1:9 suggests?

Fifth Day: Read 1 John 1:1—2:6, concentrating on 1 John 1:10—2:2.

1. According to 1 John 1:10 what are the results of saying we have no sin?

2. Challenge: What do the following verses say concerning sin? Put them into your own words if you wish to, and add your name to the verse.

2 Chronicles 7:14

Psalm 19:12-14

Romans 5:8

3. What encouragement do you find in 1 John 2:1?
4. Jesus Christ is righteous and sinless. How do the following verses help you to understand 1 John 2:1? Personalize their thoughts in your own words if you wish to.

Romans 8:33-34

Hebrews 7:24-26

5. What does 1 John 2:2 say about Jesus Christ?
6. a. Christ's death on the cross was sufficient to provide forgiveness of sins for everyone who has ever lived on this earth, either in the past, present or future. The sad thing is that there are many people who reject this great love and forgiveness. Those who reject this great act by Jesus Christ cannot be saved. How do the following scriptures help you to understand this?

John 3:16-18

Romans 6:23

- b. Personal: Are you sharing the news with others of Jesus' sacrifice for our sin? Think of someone in particular who needs to hear this news, and pray for God's guidance and help in sharing it with them.

Sixth Day: Read 1 John 1:1—2:6, concentrating on 1 John 2:3-6.

1. Count the number of times the word "know" is used in 1 John 2:3-6.

2. How can we *know* that we have chosen Jesus Christ and love Him as our Savior and Lord? (1 John 2:3)

3. Challenge: Obeying God's commands is the *fruit* of knowing Him, not the *reason* the Christian is saved. The following verses describe the Christian's obedient walk. Put them into your own words if you wish to and personalize them by inserting your name into each verse.

Romans 8:1,2

Galatians 5:16,19-25

Ephesians 4:1-3

4. What does 1 John 2:4 say?

5. How can we know that we walk in faith in Christ? (1 John 2:6)

6. Which verse did you find most helpful in your daily life this week? Did you choose to memorize it?