

A Study of I John

Introduction:

- A. John writes so that his readers:
 - a. Might have fellowship with other Christians, God, and Christ (1:3).
 - b. Might have full joy (1:4).
 - c. Might not sin (2:1).
 - d. Might continue to know the truth (2:21).
 - e. May know they have eternal life (5:13).
 - f. Might continue to believe in Jesus Christ (5:13).
- B. Several key words are used:
 - a. Love, loved, loveth – 46 times.
 - b. Know, known, knoweth, knew – 39 times.
 - c. Sin, sinned, sinneth, sins – 28 times.
 - d. True, truly, truth – 16 times.
 - e. Commandment(s) – 14 times.
- C. **I John I.**
 - a. **I:1-4 – John's First Hand Testimony of Jesus Christ.**
 - i. This opening is very similar to the gospel of John.
 - 1. Beginning – John 1:1.
 - 2. Word – John 1:1-3, 14.
 - 3. Life – John 1:4.
 - 4. We beheld – John 1:14.
 - ii. John uses many verbs in this introduction:
 - 1. Heard, seen, looked upon, handled, manifested, seen, bear witness, seen, heard.
 - 2. "From the beginning" is a reference to the eternal nature of Christ.
 - 3. Seen is from a word that simply means, "to see with the eyes."
 - 4. Looked upon is from a word that means, "to view attentively, to contemplate, to wonder."
 - 5. Handled is from a word that means, "to touch or feel an object." By using this word is showing that Jesus Christ was a real person.
 - 6. By referring to Him as the "Word of life" John touches on His divine nature. Spiritual life emanates from Jesus (John 6:68).
 - iii. Jesus was "manifested" (to make apparent, known, or shown). John is stating that he and the other apostles (we) are credible witnesses to the life, works, and teaching of Christ. Jesus is also referred to as "that eternal life." John 17:5, 24.
 - iv. Today there are no ear witnesses or eye witnesses to the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. Therefore, there are no apostles on earth today.

- v. To have fellowship with God and Christ we must hear what they teach (2 John 9-11). Fellowship is exclusive in that we must hear and obey the word of God in order to obtain it (2 Corinthians 6:17).
- b. 1:5-10 – Walk in the Light to Have Fellowship.**
 - i. The positive of the message: God is light.
 - 1. Biblically, this is a sign of purity, truth, holiness, and knowledge.
 - 2. 1 Timothy 6:15-16; James 1:17.
 - ii. The negative of the message is: God has no darkness at all.
 - 1. There is not even a small shadow to dim some of His light.
 - 2. John 3:19-20.
 - iii. If we walk in ignorance, sin, etc., (darkness) we cannot have a relationship with God. To walk in something indicates a continual, habitual practice.
 - 1. There were some in John's day and some in our day who believe that the body may sin, but that it does not affect the soul.
 - 2. Mark 7:20-23.
 - iv. Fellowship with God is conditional because John says "IF."
 - 1. The Greek states verse 7 like this, "If we keep on walking in the light...the blood of Jesus keeps on washing us from our sins."
 - 2. Again, fellowship is exclusive – 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14.
 - v. Verse 8 obviously contains a false claim that some were making.
 - 1. Again, some in John's day denied the fact that sin affected the soul and John is trying to combat that theory. We add sin to sin when we deny the reality of it in our lives.
 - 2. The need for sin is confession, not denial (v. 9). 2 Chronicles 7:12-14; Proverbs 28:13.
 - 3. John mentions two attributes of God: faithful and just.
 - 4. The person who denies the reality and consequences of sin makes God a liar. To say that we have not sinned or that sin does not affect the soul is to deceive ourselves and make an accusation against God Himself!

A. 1 John 2.

a. 2:1-2 – Jesus, Our Advocate.

- i. It is estimated that John is in his 90's as he is writing this letter. There is a connection between 1:10 and 2:1. He has just been discussing sin (1:8-10) and then states, "...so that you may not sin." John does not want sin in the lives of his readers. John didn't write "Chapter 1:10" and "Chapter 2:1." He is writing this letter to fellow Christians encouraging them to stay away from sin.
- ii. There is a provision for the Christian if and when this happens. We have an "advocate" (parakletos – a legal advisor or pleader; one who comes forward in behalf of and as the representative of another). Jesus is our mediator (1 Timothy 2:5). Acts 8:18-24.

- iii. Our helper is “righteous.” He is just, He will always do what is right.
- iv. “Propitiation” is from a word that means, “to expiate, to put an end to.” Jesus put away sin on the cross. This word is also used in Hebrews 9:5 in reference to the mercy seat in the temple. Jesus did this for the sins “of the whole world.”

b. 2:3-6 – Keep His Commandments!

- i. “Him” of verse 3 is a reference to Jesus. The commandments of Jesus are to be followed today. “Know” is from a word that means to have perception or to understand. Gnostics of that time claimed to have a superior knowledge than the Christians and so John is correcting that idea as well. Being right with Jesus is conditioned upon obedience to His commands.
- ii. There are some in the NT who claimed to “know” Jesus, but their lives denied their confession (Titus 1:16).
- iii. Love for God is often equated with obedience (Deuteronomy 6:1-5; John 14:15).
- iv. We must “abide” (remain, dwell) in God. Therefore, it must be possible to leave God. We can know that we are in Him, that is, in a right relationship with God. It is by keeping the commandments, not a feeling or an experience.

c. 2:7-11 – Love Your Brother.

- i. This passage should be connected with John 13:34-35. The “new” part of the commandment was, “as I have loved you.”
- ii. Again, the Gnostics claimed to be enlightened, but their sense of enlightenment often caused them to look down on other Christians.
- iii. Any degree of hatred (active ill will in word or conduct) takes a person from the light and into darkness. James 2:1, 9. As Jon puts it (v. 11) many people are blind to their own condition!

d. 2:12-14 – John Addresses Three Groups of People.

- i. Little children. Not infants or toddlers (v. 12, 13c). These are apparently people who are very young spiritually.
- ii. Young men. A reference to those in the church for some time now (v. 13b, 14b).
- iii. Fathers. Old men in the faith who had produced other Christians (v. 13a, 14a).

e. 2:15-17 – Love Not the World.

- i. I believe these three verses are directly related to what he said in verses 12-14. He is encouraging all people in the church to stay away from the love of the world.
- ii. Verse 15 literally reads, “Love not now and keep on not loving the world...”
- iii. JB Coffman notes, “Here is a summary of all possible sins, as exemplified in the temptation of Eve (Genesis 3), and of our Lord (Matthew 4).”
 - 1. Flesh – appealing to needs, appetites of the body.
 - 2. Eyes – eyes are the “gateway” to the soul (Matthew 6:22-23).
 - 3. Pride – selfishness, achieving fulfillment for self.
- iv. There is no middle ground with God (Matthew 6:24).

f. 2:18-23 – The Antichrist.

- i. Biblically, the “last hour” not hours, is a reference to the Christian age. The next “age” to come is eternity, thus, we are in the last period of time before that happens.
- ii. Note that he states many antichrists have already appeared. This cannot refer to one individual in history. Antichrist simply means one who is opposed to Christ. Jesus had warned the apostles of “false Christ’s” while He was on earth (Matthew 24:4).
- iii. Also, “they went out from us” (v. 19). Many believe that this has a reference to the Roman Catholic Papacy, but this does not fit the context. The popes do not deny that Jesus is God’s son (v. 22).
- iv. Verse 20 – “unction” is from *chrisma* meaning, “anoint, anointing.” Biblically this is a reference to the work of the Holy Spirit who was passed on by the laying on of the apostles hands (Acts 8:14-17). They knew who the antichrists were as a result of the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-10). They knew the difference between the Christ and antichrists.

g. 2:24-29 – Remain In God.

- i. The false teachers had not done this. What they had heard from the beginning (v. 24) was the truth and they needed to stay in it.
- ii. The only way to have promise of eternal life is through remaining in the truth (2 Peter 1:5-11).
- iii. The anointing they had received (v. 26-27) is in the context a reference to the teaching they had received. This is how they would not be deceived (v. 26).
- iv. It is good to know that we can stand confidently (ASV – boldly) in front of God at the day of judgment (v. 28). This confidence is based on our righteousness, that is, our doing what is right in God’s eyes (v. 29).

A. I John 3.

a. 3:1-3 – Purifying Hope.

- i. The world does not understand or appreciate the concept of sonship. Sadly, neither do some members of the church.
- ii. Ephesians 2:4-7.
- iii. Great responsibility comes with being a child of God. As such, we are obligated to conduct ourselves in a certain manner.
- iv. This passage reveals that in the resurrection there will be some changes.
- v. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44.

b. 3:4-9 - The Christian and Sin.

- i. Verse 4 defines sin as things we may do. Sin is also defined as things we do not do (James 4:17).
- ii. The sinner lives as if God had no law. John gives two reasons why the Christian should not sin: (1) Christ came to take away sin and (2) Christ did not sin.

- iii. Verse 6 shows that the Christian does not live in the habit of sin. As we live in Christ, we do not live in the habit of sin.
 - iv. Righteousness is defined in Psalm 119:172. To live in righteousness simply means that we are living by God's commands. One who lives in the practice of sin is a follower of the devil (Colossians 3:5-7).
 - v. The Christian does not continue in sin because the "seed" is in him (Luke 8:11). Following the Bible will not allow us to live in sin.
- c. **3:10-15 – Love One Another.**
- i. There is a clear line drawn between two spiritual families: Satan (hate), and God (love). As Satan was coming into the scene so was jealousy and murder (Genesis 4). Evil is never comfortable in the presence of good.
 - ii. Guy Woods wrote, "Brotherly love is here declared to be the condition, **not of our salvation**, but of the certainty of our knowledge of it. It affords the evidence by which we may know we have passed out of death and into life."
 - iii. This is a practical test of our sonship. Roy Lanier wrote about this, "This test is easy to observe and judge, simple to understand, clear to see. Either we are lovers or we are not."
- d. **3:16-24 – The Outworking of Love.**
- i. We clearly understand what God's love was willing to do because He sent His Son for us. Christ took our place! The extent of man's love is challenged in verse 16.
 - ii. We know that we are "of the truth" when we love in deed and truth. If we do what we ought to be doing our conscience will be clear. James 2:15-16.
 - iii. By doing what is right we have assurance of salvation and also the assurance that God hears our prayers. In verses 22-24 the verbs are written in such a way as to show continued action. "We keep on keeping His commandments"... "We keep on doing those things that please Him"...

A. I John 4.

- a. **4:1-6 – Test the Spirits and Overcome the False Ones.**
- i. Verse 1 literally reads, "stop believing every spirit." From this it is clear that some of John's brethren were gullible. Seven times in six verses John uses the phrase "of God." False teachers are not "of God," that is, they do not have their origin from God.
 - ii. You can know (v. 2) whether or not a "spirit" is from God by what he teaches. Matthew 7:15-20.
 - iii. Jesus (Savior) Christ (Messiah) has come in the flesh (v. 3). There were those who denied this fact (Gnostics). They believed that Jesus and Christ were two, separate entities.
 - iv. Antichrist was already in the world 2,000 years ago.
 - v. The faithful (little children, v. 4) have God "dwelling" in them. How? A literal, physical indwelling? The spirit of truth and error (v. 6) is known by what is heard.

Therefore, the manner in which God dwells in the Christian is through His teaching (Ephesians 3:17 states that Christ “dwells” in the Christian as well).

b. 4:7-21 – The Love Passage.

- i. “Love” is used 22 times in 15 verses!
- ii. JB Coffman wrote on this section, “John’s repeated stress of such Christian love in this epistle might have been due to the fact, as supposed by MacKnight, that some of the Jewish converts, retaining their ancient prejudices, still considered it their duty to hate the heathen, even those who had accepted Christianity.”
- iii. Notice LOVE:
 1. One another (v. 7, 11, 12, 17, 21).
 2. Is from God (v. 7, 8, 16).
 3. God loved us (v. 9, 10, 11, 16, 19).
 4. Love can be perfected (v. 12, 17, 18).
 5. Abide in love, abide in God (v. 12-13, 16).
 6. Love casts out fear (v. 18).
 7. We love Him (v. 20).
 8. He first loved us (v. 9-10, 16, 19).
- iv. Love if “of” God. That is, God is the original source. On verse 8 William Barclay wrote, “This is probably the single greatest statement about God in the whole Bible. It is amazing how many doors that single statement unlocks and how many questions it answers.”
- v. Man’s love for God did not precede God’s love for man. Guy Woods wrote, “Only an ingrate would refuse to love Him in return.”
- vi. We can have “boldness” in the day of judgment because we become like God as Christians. Therefore, we do not dread (fear) the day of judgment (v. 17-18).
- vii. Verses 20-21 deal with our relationships with each other. We *must* love!

A. First John 5.

a. 5:1-5 - Our Faith Overcomes the World.

- i. John again stresses that Jesus IS the Christ. 4:20-21 has discussed that we must love the brethren. 5:1 tells who those brethren are: those who have been born of God and believe in the divine nature of Christ.
- ii. If Jesus is not the Christ, all of Christianity falls.
- iii. Verse 2 shows our intimate connection: the proof of our love for one another is seen in our obedience to and love for God. True Christian love is practical and active, and expresses itself in deed and truth.
- iv. Love for God has always been displayed by obedience to His commands (2 Kings 23:25; John 14:15).
- v. *Burdensome (grevious)* literally means, “weighty, heavy, oppressive.” Thus, doing what God commands is not an unbearable task. How do you harmonize this with Matthew 7:13-14?

- vi. Verse 4 – the “world” of that time was dominated by the Romans. As John was writing Domitian was emperor and there was an organized effort to persecute the Christians inside and outside of Rome.
 - vii. A 2nd-3rd century church writer, Eusebius, wrote, “Christians were flogged until their flesh hung from their bones...salt or vinegar was poured in their wounds...their flesh was cut off bit by bit to feed waiting animals...they were eaten piecemeal by starved beasts...their fingers were pierced with sharp reeds under their nails...their eyes were gouged out...they were suspended by a hand or a foot...some had molten lead poured down their throats...they were beheaded, beaten to death with clubs or crucified...some were torn asunder by being tied to bent branches of trees.”
 - viii. Over a period of 8 years 1,500 Christians were put to death and thousands were tortured, but the Roman consciences began to be effected. In 311 AD the Edict of Toleration recognized Christianity as a legal religion and this type of persecution was brought to a stop.
 - ix. Hebrews 11:32-40.
- b. 5:6-13 – Testimony from God.**
- i. John just stated that the faith which overcomes the world is a faith that believes that Jesus is the Son of God. There were particular groups of Gnostics (those with special knowledge) who did not believe in the deity of Christ.
 - ii. John states that He came by water which most agree is a reference to His baptism, but also by blood, which could be a reference to the crucifixion. Some believe this to be a reference to John 19:34 which records the piercing of His side. Whatever the specific meaning John shows that Jesus certainly is the Christ.
 - iii. The Holy Spirit is the revealer of all truth (1 Corinthians 2:9-13).
 - iv. John states that men normally accept the testimony of other men, but the testimony of men can be very limited. However, God’s testimony is absolutely and always true (Matthew 3:16-17).
 - v. Verses 11-13 contain two facts: (1) God’s faithful record is that He has given us eternal life and (2) eternal life is in a certain place, Christ.
 - vi. If we “have the Son” means that we are Christians and not everyone is. On earth we have the prospect of eternal life and at the judgment we will have it in actuality.
 - vii. Notice the confidence in salvation: “that you may know that you have eternal life.”
- c. 5:14-17 – Confidence in Prayer.**
- i. John has stated that we can have boldness in judgment (2:28; 4:17) and in prayer (3:22-23; 5:14-15).
 - ii. Prayer is not a “blank check.” It must be offered in faith (Mark 11:24), in the name of Jesus (John 14:14), and by those abiding in Christ (John 15:7).
 - iii. Matthew 7:7-11.

- iv. Verses 15-16 – this is a sin that a fellow Christian has committed. I believe the sin “not unto death” is a sin that a Christian will confess and repent of. God can forgive anything that a person will repent of. Therefore, the sin “unto death” is one that will not be repented of. There are some people who persist in sin and die in that condition. Guy N. Woods wrote, “The sin unto death is thus a disposition of heart, a perverseness of attitude and an unwillingness of mind to acknowledge one’s sin and from it turn away. Such an attitude effectively closes the door of heaven in one’s face.”
- v. If a person persists in sin and we pray to God for him to have eternal life, what good will that prayer do if the sinner does not repent?
- d. **5:18-21 – Concluding Thoughts.**
 - i. The child of God does not persistently live in sin, but continues to keep himself pure from that defilement.
 - ii. “World” (v. 19) does not refer to the physical planet, but to those individuals who choose to live in sin.
 - iii. John again emphasizes the divine nature of Jesus Christ in verse 20. Jesus truly is God and He is the source of eternal life (John 6:68; 8:58).
 - iv. Anything that comes between me and God becomes an idol.

A Study of 2 John

Introduction:

- A. John writes to plead with “the elect lady and her children” to love one another.
- B. Commentators are divided as to whether or not this was a literal lady or a congregation.
- C. Key words:
 - a. Truth – 5 times.
 - b. Love – 4 times.
 - c. Commandment – 4 times.
 - d. Walk – 3 times.
- D. Notice he loves them in truth, but they know the truth. John also affirms that truth is eternal (v. 1-2). Matthew 24:35.
- E. Apparently, not all the children were faithful (v. 4). It is good to hear when people obey the truth and are remaining faithful.
- F. Again, the commandment to love one another is nothing new. Leviticus 19:18; John 13:34-35.
- G. He also reemphasizes that loving God is connected directly to obedience (v. 6).
- H. Christians need to love and support one another because of the existence of false teachers (v. 7-8). They are encouraged to not allow false teachers to take their reward.
- I. Verses 9-11 contain a command that many people do not like to obey.
 - a. Transgress = to go beyond, trespass.
 - b. Doctrine = teaching.
 - c. Of Christ = there are similar statements about other people in the Bible – Matthew 16:12; Revelation 2:14. We must abide in the doctrine OF Christ, not just the doctrine ABOUT Christ.
- J. To wish someone like this well is to approve of what they teach. Romans 16:17-18.

A Study of 3 John

Introduction:

- A. Many of the thoughts are the same as 2 John, just a different audience.
- B. Notice, “no greater joy...” John’s emphasis is on spiritual prosperity, not just physical.
- C. They work for the good for all people (Galatians 6:9-10).
- D. Diotrephes loves the “preeminence.” A compound word (philoproteo) meaning loves the first place, ambitious to be first. “Prating” means to babble.
- E. “Imitate” (NKJV) is from *mimeomai* meaning, mimic, follow.

A Study of Jude

A. The main purpose of Jude is revealed in verse 3. There was a great need for Christians to stand for the truth. Jude gives detailed descriptions of false teachers in the first half of the letter.

B. I-4 – Introduction.

- a. Christians are described in three ways:
 - i. Called. By the gospel (2 Thes. 2:13-15).
 - ii. Sanctified. By the truth (John 17:17).
 - iii. Preserved. In Christ (2 Tim. 2:10).
- b. He was in the process of writing this letter when he found it necessary to add something to it (v. 3). Christians are to
 - i. Contend – to struggle.
 - ii. Earnestly – intensity.
 - iii. The faith – the gospel (Acts 6:7).
- c. It was delivered “once for all.” The Greek word is *hapax* meaning, once numerically, a single time. Used in Hebrews 9:28. The gospel has been fully revealed and, therefore, no one is receiving any revelation from God today.
- d. Verse 4 shows the M.O. of false teachers. *Unawares* (KJV) *Unnoticed* (NKJV). It literally means, to settle in alongside, to be sneaky.
 - i. The use *lasciviousness* or greed. One commentator states that this word also implies sexual debauchery.
 - ii. These are words of warning about false teachers and in verses 5-15 compares their demise to those of old.

C. 5-7 – The Godless People of Old.

- a. Verse 5 refers to the Israelites who rebelled against God in the wilderness.
- b. Verse 6 mentions angels who fell from their proper place. 2 Peter 2:4.
- c. Verse 7 refers to Sodom and Gomorrah. Notice *eternal fire*.

D. 8-15 – The Apostates are Doomed!

- a. False teachers have no respect for God or authority.
- b. “The greatest of good angels would not even speak bad of the worst of the evil angels.”
- c. The last part of verse 8 is a quote from Zechariah 3:2.
- d. The false teachers are completely ignorant and continue to speak!
- e. Jude now compares them to three OT apostates. Genesis 4; Numbers 22-24; Numbers 16.
- f. Verses 12-13 are very descriptive of the nature of false teachers:
 - i. Spots – a ledge or reef in the sea. They cause shipwrecks.
 - ii. Feed themselves – Romans 16:17-18.
 - iii. Clouds – terrible disappointment.
 - iv. Barren trees – leaves, but no fruit, worthless.
 - v. Twice dead, pulled up by the roots.
 - vi. Blackness of darkness forever.

- g. Verses 14-15 reveal the end of false teachers. Many people today are not willing to be so “judgmental.” Matthew 7:15-20.

E. 16-19 – The Results False Teachers Bring.

- a. In reference to verse 16 one man wrote, “When it was safe to do so, they blustered and bullied, and played the superior person, but they cringed to rich men, and flattered them for the sake of dinners and presents.”
- b. When it comes down to it, the only thing they care about is themselves.
- c. The end result is division. The Holy Spirit has revealed the truth, but they do not follow or teach it.

F. 20 - 25 – Concluding Encouragements.

- a. Verses 20-21 show that man has responsibility in maintaining his faith. It is not, “God saved you and God will keep you, regardless.”
- b. Some versions of verse 22 read, “And on some have compassion, who are doubting.” There are some Christians who doubt and they need our support.
- c. There are some who need to be rescued from sin.
- d. God is able to keep us from stumbling, but we must do our part as well (2 Pet. 1:5-11).