

62- 1 John: Behold, What Manner of Love!

- Some commentators believe that these letters from John (1, 2, 3 John) are the **last books written in scripture**. This may be true, since he likely wrote Revelation before these. Although his name does not appear anywhere in this letter (*very typical of John, the youngest of the disciples*), it is traditionally assigned to John. The author identifies himself as an eyewitness to the events of Jesus' life and resurrection, so he would have been one of the inner circle of disciples. Early historians ascribed this book to John, and we have no evidence that would dispute that.
- These three books are called **letters, but this first one reads more like a sermon**, a teaching for his flock of believers. There is no salutation at the beginning, and no final greeting. We do not know precisely whom this letter was to be sent to (most likely the churches in Asia Minor, as a circulated letter). Some believe it was written more for church leaders. It is clear this letter is written to believers.
- John died in Ephesus, and acted as a pastor to this church, though it was founded by Paul. This letter **sounds like a love letter to believers, confirming the Word of God they had received earlier**. This was probably written very near the end of the first century (*though some argue for an earlier date – it doesn't really matter!*), and the excitement and newness of Christianity had possibly worn off. John needed to remind his readers of the excitement of the Gospel message. If this book was written after Revelation, then the message of Jesus for the church at Ephesus ("You have lost your first love...") would certainly have been appropriate. Like us, these believers lived among intense peer pressure to conform to worldly standards, not God's standards.
- The **greatest danger to the churches at this time, especially in Ephesus was not persecution, but false teaching**. Christianity was becoming warped, conforming itself to the world, through wicked and dangerous false teachers. We don't know the exact nature of this false teaching, but John writes to underscore the truth and make sure his readers understood it and embraced it.
- John listed **five reasons for writing this letter**: 1) so they could fellowship with the triune nature of God, and with other believers; 2) that they would have joy; 3) so they would not sin; 4) to be assured of their eternal life; and 5) to believe in the name of Jesus.
- This epistle is about belonging to the family of God, and having a relationship with Him. It has been called the **"sanctum sanctorum" (inner sanctuary) of the New Testament, because it takes us beyond just knowing about Him to really knowing Him and abiding with Him**. It is a very intimate letter to the "insider" (believer). The world is viewed as being outside of this family. John calls his readers "little children" an endearing term of how the Father views us.



Highlights

1	We have seen the Word of Life (<i>Jesus, who was from the beginning</i>), the Father has given eternal life. You have fellowship with us and with the Father and His Son Jesus. We write so your joy is full. Our message: God is Light, no darkness. If we say we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness, we lie. If we walk in the light as He does, we fellowship with Him and each other, and His blood cleanses us from all sin. If we claim no sin, we deceive ourselves and don't have the truth. If we confess our sins, He will forgive and cleanse. If we say we don't sin, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.
2	I write so you won't sin. Jesus is our Advocate, righteous, propitiation for sins (<i>for entire world</i>). If we know Him, we keep His commandments. Anyone who says he knows Jesus, and doesn't keep His commandments, is a liar (truth not in him). Walk as Jesus walked. Your sins are forgiven, you have known Him who is from the beginning, you have overcome wicked one, you have known the Father, you are strong and the word of God abides in you. Don't love the world. Things of the world are not things of God. "It is the last hour" many antichrists have already come. You know the truth. Liars (antichrists) deny Jesus is Messiah, deny the Father. If you don't acknowledge the Son, you don't have the Father. Let Him abide in you, you have promise of eternal life. Some will try to deceive you. Abide in Him. When He appears you won't be ashamed at His coming. All who practice righteousness are born of Him.

3	<p>God's amazing love for us. World doesn't know us, because it didn't know Him. We will be like Him, and see Him as He is. Purify yourselves, like Him. In Him there is no sin. If we sin (<i>continue sinning</i>) we don't know Him. Don't be deceived. Sinners belong to devil. God came in the flesh to destroy devil and his works. If truly born of God cannot keep sinning. Message from beginning that we should love one another (<i>not like Cain who murdered his brother</i>). Don't be amazed if world hates you. We have passed from death to life, as we love our brothers. Those who hate their brothers are murderers (with no eternal life abiding in them). Jesus gave His life for us, and we should lay down our lives for our brothers. If we are able, we should meet the needs of others. Don't just love in word, but also in deed, and in truth. God can't be fooled. When we ask with true hearts, we receive from Him (keeping his commandments, pleasing Him). His commandment: believe in Jesus and love one another. We know He abides in us through His Spirit given to us.</p>
4	<p>Test the spirits. <u>The test</u>: "Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God." (the spirit of antichrist, already in the world) (4:2-3). We have overcome them because "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." (4:4) Love one another. God is love. His true love through His sent Son, our propitiation. If God loved us, we should love one another. If we love, God abides in us, His love is perfected in us. The Spirit is sign of His abiding. If we confess that Jesus is God's Son, God lives in us, and we in God. We know His love and believe it. Love is perfected in us, to be bold on day of judgment; no fear in love "perfect love casts out fear" (4:18). "We love Him because He first loved us." (4:19) If someone hates his brother and says he loves God, he is a liar. We are commanded to love our brothers if we love God.</p>
5	<p>Believers are born of God, loving others, loving God and His commandments (not a burden); those born of God overcome world; faith provides victory over world (believing Jesus is Son of God); Jesus came in flesh by water and blood, Spirit (truth) witnesses to this; Father, Word, Holy Spirit are one (<i>heavenly witnesses</i>) to these facts; Spirit, water and blood are also three that agree as one (<i>earthly witnesses</i>); witness of God is greater than man's, believers have the witness (and life), non-believers (do not have life) make God a liar. <u>The testimony</u>: "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." (5:11) <u>Purpose stated for letter</u>: to know you have eternal life, and continue to believe in Jesus. Anything we ask, if asked in His will, He hears and answers. Pray for believers who sin, so God can restore life to them. Keep yourselves in God, so enemy cannot touch you. Whole world is under influence of wicked one. But now we know Jesus, true One, we are in Him and have life through Him. Keep yourselves from idols.</p>

- John provides **3 definitions of God**: He is Light (1:5), He is Love (4:8, 16), and He is Life (1:1-2; 5:11-13).
- The theme of this letter is **fellowship with God through Jesus** (1:3-7). To combat false teaching, John defines the nature of this relationship. John provides proofs of fellowship, tests that indicate whether one is abiding and knowing Jesus in an intimate relationship where their lives are transformed.
- John presents the **message that has been given to believers** right up front: *⁵This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.* (1:5) He says in the beginning of the next chapter that he is writing this again so they don't sin, yet also reminds them that there is always forgiveness, through our Advocate Jesus. He reiterates the Gospel message again in very certain terms in chapter 5: *¹¹And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.¹² He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.* (5:11-12)
- The **first mention of the word "antichrist"** is found in this book. There are four total references in scripture to this word, and three are here in this 1st letter by John, and the other is in the 2nd letter of John. Only John uses this word, but he never used it in the book of Revelation. He speaks here of a "spirit of antichrist" which is anyone or anything in opposition to Jesus.
- John proclaims the **ministry of Jesus in the believer's life now and in the future**:

--His blood continually cleanses us from all sin --He is our righteous Advocate before the Father --He is the atoning sacrifice for the entire world --He is the Messiah who came in the flesh	--He is coming again --We will see Him --We will be like Him
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- *¹⁶If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is sin leading to death. I do not say that he should pray about that. ¹⁷All unrighteousness is sin, and there is sin not leading to death.*" (5:16-17) This section is often misunderstood. These verses refer to physical death not spiritual death. Most sins do not lead to physical death, but some are so serious that they do. In typical cases of sin, other believers should pray for the sinner to be restored to life in Jesus. This is regarding people who continue sinning.