

The Incarnate Word of Life

Authorship—The author of this epistle is John, the beloved Apostle, the author of the gospel of John, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John, as well as Revelation. There is no surviving early copy of the epistle that does not attribute it to him in the title. Unanimous attribution of the early church (including Ignatius in 110 AD, Polycarp, in A.D. 120)), and Papias.

Recipients—The Christians of Asia Minor (present-day Turkey), where John spent his days in ministry (mostly at Ephesus), where he had served as both a pastor and an elder. Likely mostly gentile believers.

Date—An exact date when 1st John was written is not known, but John is older (mid-seventies to mid-eighties), and evidence points to A.D. 80 or 90, after his Gospel, about the same time as his other epistles, and before Revelation.

Purpose—Several, but were going to talk today about the fact that the Holy Spirit inspired him to write about a problem that had arisen in the church. Much like the first part of Revelation, this letter is concerned with correction of the church. He was the last of the original Twelve, and God was going to make sure and deliver these corrections through a messenger that He knew the Church would trust.

Gnosticism—So what was this problem that John addresses in this book? Gnosticism's teachings blended Greek dualism with Eastern mysticism. It is based on the Greek dualistic concept put forward by Plato that matter, or the physical world is irredeemably evil and the spiritual world is 100% good. This form of dualism influenced their view of Jesus. Recognizing Jesus' deity, they reasoned that Jesus could not have had a physical body, because everything physical, everything in the material world was "evil" and claimed that Jesus only appeared to have a physical body, but in reality was a spirit. Some kind of Phantom. Their biggest denial is that they believed that, since Jesus didn't really have a physical body, then how could he suffer and die on the cross—so he must have only *appeared* to have done so. That's a big error in doctrine. The Central belief in Christianity is Jesus' atoning death on the cross! Without that belief, you aren't a Christian, no matter what you call yourself. And of course, if Jesus didn't die, then there's no need for a resurrection. The belief in the resurrection is central to the Christian faith. In fact Paul, in 1 Cor 15:16-17 goes as far as to say **16 For if the dead are not raised, then not even Christ has been raised; 17 and if Christ has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins.**

1 John 1:1 In order to refute this teaching, John begins his first epistle with the Words **1 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—**

What was from the beginning,--Just like in the beginning of the Bible, in Genesis 1:1, **In the Beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth.** Just like He did at the beginning of his Gospel, John is going to state right up front that God, Jesus was present at creation. Jesus was from the beginning. This attests both to the deity of Christ, as one who was from the beginning, and especially lets us know that John is going to refute these notions of Gnosticism.

what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands,--John personally experienced life with Jesus during His earthly ministry. He followed Jesus around as His disciple for 3 years, learning from Him, eating with him, experiencing life together, often out in the wilderness. And he states right up front that he was an eye-witness to Jesus having come in the flesh. And, along with Peter and James his brother, John is among those who knew Jesus the best.

Jesus raised Jairus' daughter—John was there. Jesus took Peter, James and John up onto a high mountain, where He was transfigured before them. At Gethsemane, when Jesus went on a little further, He took these three disciples along with Him. John was at the Cross with Jesus, when he was crucified as an eye-witness. John was allowed to protect and care for Jesus' mother until the end of her life.

Why is it important that Jesus was fully Human, with a Human Body?--It's important, because understanding Who Jesus is, is critical to understand Jesus' role as Christ, in order to correctly understand our salvation. Remember that Jesus is not only our Lord, He's our Kinsman-Redeemer.

Eligible to Redeem--Jesus' role as the Kinsman-Redeemer depends on Him being 100% human, because he had to be eligible to redeem. People are always trying to get the cross and Jesus' blood out of Christianity—the flesh always wants to do this (**1 Co 1:18–24; Heb 9:22**). **Able to Redeem**--The one who was to be the redeemer had to be able to redeem—have the means to redeem. Jesus is qualified to be called One “**without blemish**” because His life was completely free from sin Hebrews 4:15 **15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin.** And because God was His father through direct creation of the person Jesus within Mary's womb, Jesus was qualified to be the redeemer because He was not born with original sin, as all of us were. He was 100% God. (1 Peter 1:18). **Willing to Redeem**--The one who was to be the redeemer had to be willing to redeem—he could choose to redeem or not to redeem. And Jesus chose to go to the cross. In Hebrews 12:2, we are reminded to **fix[ing] our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** (Also Titus 2:14).

The Word of Life--2 and the life was revealed, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was revealed to us Why is it important to us? Because Jesus not only redeemed us on the cross, but shows us a new way to live! John describes Jesus as the Word of Life in the Gospel of John chapter 1 vs. 1-4 saying **In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.** Both of these introductory verses focus on the origin of Jesus being from the beginning, and being the Word of God, the Word of Life. It speaks both of His origin from God and as God, and also describes His mission is showing us the Way to Life through the example of His life. He said in John 14:6 **6 Jesus *said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through Me.** Since the Gnostics thought that everything spiritual was good, and everything physical was evil, they separated their physical lives from their spiritual, rationalizing that their physical lives had no impact on their spiritual lives. And so, they thought that “ethical behavior was of no consequence for the Christian life” basically, that they could live any old way that they wanted to, as long as they had a belief in Jesus. We see John railing against this view, when he says things like claim to be without sin in John 1:8-10 **8 If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous, so that He will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us.** They were saying that they were sinless because of their false-belief in this “Phantom-Jesus” they'd made up in their minds, not the REAL Jesus. And of course that means that they were deceiving themselves. Col 2:8 **See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy**

and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Eternal life in Christ, experienced through oneness with the person of Christ through a healthy relationship with Him is the focus of this epistle. Jesus said in John 11:25-26, 25 **(Jesus said to her), “I am the resurrection and the life; the one who believes in Me will live, even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”** Well, John is trying to convince us that our eternal life springs from the Person of Christ, and our fellowship with Him is the source of our life in Him, and the Joy, Peace, Love that we can experience flows in the person of the Holy Spirit, from Him to us, as believers. And so, John’s central purpose is to promote oneness with God in Christ through righteous obedience and to promote fellowship within the congregation (1:3), both with God, in unity with Him, and with each other. His purpose is to encourage them in their faith and walk with God (2:12–17). His corrections to false doctrines that were appearing and threatening the faith of the church are important (2:26). But his concern is over how this deception affects the individuals walk in unity with God, made possible through God’s love for us, and how these lies ultimately degrade unity. The lesson for us, and for the recipients of this letter, is not to let false teachers and false doctrines disrupt our unity and fellowship. And as we look at how John handles these false teaching in verses like 2:18, 19, and 26, and addresses this threat to the church, his stand for the truth necessitates confrontation of deceitful doctrines, but John’s focus remains the pastoral care of his flock, pointing them toward unity with Jesus, and fellowship with God and one another. Jesus said in John 10:10b that he **(I) came so that they would have life, and have it abundantly.** John is going to show us how to have this more abundant life in Christ.