

# 1st John

1 John doesn't include its authors name, but it's apparent that the author of the gospel of John and Revelation and 1 John are the same, and the testimony of several Christian writers in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries all affirm that John the apostle, the son of Zebedee and brother of James, is the writer. In 1:1-4, which resonates with John 1:1-5, the author identifies himself as an eye witness and companion of Jesus, the word of life who came from the Father to bring eternal to us.

John reminds us of the nature of God, that "God is light," in 1:5; that "God is greater than our heart, and he knows everything," in 3:20, and most famously, that "God is love," in 4:7-8 & 16.

A key affirmation in John is that Jesus truly is the Son of God and truly came in the flesh as a human being. This is to be "confessed" by genuine Christians in 2:23, 4:2-3, and 4:15, as a fundamental of faith. There is no room for prevarication of the reality of Jesus the Son of God coming in the flesh, dying for our sins, and rising from the dead to ascend into glory. There were many challenging these fundamental concepts by the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and again in our day.

Being in fellowship with the Father and the Son (1:3) calls for turning away from sin/darkness (1:5-2:6). There's no notion that Christians will be completely free from sin, but that Christians will reject sin and when they err will confess their sins to the Lord who will forgive (1:9). The one and only atonement for sin is the blood of Jesus (1:7, 2:2). Forgiveness, and walking in the light, calls for obedience to the Lord (2:3-6) which in turn gives us confidence that we truly belong to him (2:28, 3:19-21, 4:17-18). A primary demonstration of obedience to the word of Christ is loving and actually helping fellow believers (3:1, 16-18, 4:20-21, 5:16).

The "already but not yet" nature of the kingdom of God is highlighted in 2:7-17. We are in the light, the darkness is passing away, but at the same time we are still in the world and the allure of the world has to be resisted. The 3 fold allure of the world in 2:16 are evident in the story of Eve's sin in Genesis 3:1ff, and in the testing of Jesus in Matthew 4:1-11. Note that these desires and this pride are "not from the Father" but "from the world." There are things in this world, invented in rebellion, distorting the goodness

of creation, that do not come from God.

John mentions the antichrist(s) in 2:18, 22 and 4:3, and then once more in 2 John 1:7. These are the only times in the Bible the word is used. It's a descriptive term, not a name, and refers to a spirit of rebellion, not a particular individual. Antichrists are led by other spirits than the Spirit of God (4:1-3), do not abide among the faithful (2:19), are liars and deny Jesus by teaching and/or deeds (2:22) and are characterized as deceivers who fundamentally deny Christ in 2 John 1:7.

In John's references to confessing Jesus Christ or denying Jesus the Son of God, there are the doctrinal truths of who Jesus is, and also the moral truths and principles of Jesus' word, of walking in the light. One who does not continue to abide in Jesus is not confessing Jesus. Even demons can and do give verbal acknowledgment of Jesus being the Son of God (Mark 1:23-24, 5:7).

The Holy Spirit is highlighted as a blessing and necessity for Christian life and victory over the world in 2:20, 27, 3:24, 4:1-6, 4:13, 5:6-8.

God's great love demonstrates what our love should look like, 3:1-5:12. Jesus resurrection glory demonstrates our future appearance, 3:2.

Jesus work to destroy sin/lawlessness (3:4-5), the devil's work (3:8) calls those born of God to be holy as he is holy, as only the redeemed with the Spirit can be holy. Righteousness demands love for our brothers, sacrificial love (3:9-24). The way to have confidence before God, that is, confidence of our salvation, is for our faith and love to be lived out in obedient practice. Don't miss the fact though that the Lord wants us to be confident before him, confident of our sonship and salvation in Christ with the Spirit's help.

The reality of misleading spirits in this world in 4:1 is not to be daunting, rather we are assured that the Spirit who abides in Christians (3:24) is greater than "them" who dwell in the world (4:4).

The running theme of chapters 3 and 4 is love in action. God's love for us, demonstrated by Jesus, our love for God demonstrated by loving our brothers in obedience.

There are things in the world that are not from God (2:16), but love is from God (4:7).

Victory over the world (sin, darkness) is also a recurring theme, 4:4 and 5:4 for example.

The character and nature of the Lord is testified to by John, as a witness, and also by “water and blood” in 5:6-8, referring no doubt to the Lord’s crucifixion, but also his birth and his baptism, and then too our baptism when the blood is sprinkled on our hearts.

The testimony in 5:12 sums it up, just as in John 14:6.

In chapter 1:5-10 we were admonished not to sin, and if we do sin to confess and find forgiveness. The letter ends with an admonition to pray for each other when we see a need for forgiveness. All of us commit sins without particular awareness, and many times the need in such circumstances isn’t confrontation, just prayer, interceding for one another so that the Lord can be an advocate in our behalf.