

THE BOOK OF FIRST JOHN

The True Knowledge of the Sure hope

Introduction:

First John, as in the previous four epistles, generally focuses upon the end times when many antichrists shall appear (2:18; 4:3), but First John also contains truths for born again believers in Jesus Christ (3:1-3; 5:1-5). John apparently wrote his epistles, gospel, and Revelation of the Lord Jesus after the complete revelation and understandings of the New Testament. The writings of John the Apostle were the last writings of the New Testament.

Statistics: 5 Chapters, 105 verses, and 2,517 words.

Author:

Internally, the epistle bear's witness to John as its author although he is never named. It is clear from the overall tone that the writer had the knowledge and authority of an apostle and was so well known to the readers that mention of his name was unnecessary.

He classifies himself within the apostolic circle by the "we" passages which are his claims to be an eyewitness to Christ's life (1:1-3; 4:14). In addition, the similarities with John's Gospel are obvious.

The Date and Place:

The Gospel of John, 1-3 John, and the book of Revelation were all written after the destruction of Jerusalem which occurred in 70 A.D. It is believed they were written sometime between 88-96 A.D. The books of 1-3 John were in particular written between 88-90 A.D. Possibly from Ephesus???

Destination:

Until Revelation 1 the New testament does not indicate the whereabouts of John after his position in Jerusalem spoken of in Acts 1-8 and Galatians 2:9. However, tradition places him in Ephesus during the later years of his life. Thus the letter was probably written to a group of churches in John's acquaintance in the province of Asia facing Gnosticism.

This is supported by the destination of the letters in Revelation 2-3 written by John to the churches in Asia. The readers are clearly Christians (2:12-14, 21; 5:13) who have known John for some time (2:7, 24; 3:11).

Key Words: Know

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The Occasion:

John writes out of pastoral concern for his “children” who are threatened and confused because of false teachers (2:18-23). The nature of their heresy is disputed. However, it seems it focused on the person and work of Christ.

John makes frequent reference to the certainty of the incarnation of Christ (1:1-3; 4:2-3; 5:6). He also is careful to explain the basis of eternal life through Christ’s work (1:7; 2:2; 3:16; 4:10,14).

Many believe the heresy was similar to Docetism, which denied the reality of the incarnation of Christ. This teaching was propagated in the first century by Cerinthus. This could explain the arguments for Christ’s incarnation and the emphasis on His physical death on behalf of sinners.

It is also apparent that John’s concern for the readers’ moral condition exceeds his concern for the doctrinal threat. However, the two were related with false doctrine undermining the readers’ assurance in their Christian experience (5:13) and producing moral laxity.

John gives numerous tests by which the readers can discern the Christian experience and spiritual orientation of themselves and others (eg. 2:10; 3:7,8,14,24; 4:15). He also encourages the readers to continue in love (3:14-15; 4:7-11), to obey the commandments (2:3-4; 3:22; 5:3), to behave righteously (3:10,17-18) and to have a healthy attitude toward sin (1:8-10; 3:4-9; 5:16-17).

The Purpose:

John’s purpose is gathered from the several purpose statements indicated by “these things write I unto you” These statements show that he wrote to fulfill the readers’ joy by giving them full assurance, to keep them from sin (2:1), to guard them from the false teachers (2:26) and to assure them of their eternal life (5:13).

John’s primary purpose is to keep the readers from moral failure. Therefore he must also write to assure them of their salvation. But to do this he must guard them from the false teaching undermining their assurance. Thus John offers tests whereby the spiritual orientation of the false teachers and others may be evaluated. He also offers a theological

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refutation of the Christological errors being taught. Finally, he encourages the readers to moral purity.

Argument:

The epistle develops cyclically with John first discussing the Christian's walk in the light (1:5-2:29) and then the Christian's walk as a child of God (3:1-5:13). Under each section he mentions the basis for such a walk before proceeding with a series of assurances for the walk.

The introduction (1:1-4) first sets forth the apostle's authority by virtue of his eyewitness testimony to Christ's incarnation and life (1:1-2). John then states his purpose for writing (1:34). He wants the readers to share in the apostolic fellowship of truth concerning Christ.

This will also assure them of their relationship shared with God and Christ. Having this assurance, their joy will be full. Evidently, their assurance and their joy had suffered under the influence of the false teachers who denied the humanity of Christ.

John's first section concerning the Christian's walk in the light (1:5-2:29) begins with a statement of the basis for such a walk. The basis of walking in the light is the fact that God is light (1:5-7). The condition for fellowship with God is thus a walk in the light, or moral purity (1:6-7). John then discusses four tests or assurances from which his readers can discern the truthfulness of the experience for themselves and others (1:8-2:29). These may be tests of eternal salvation or tests of one's spiritual orientation.

The first assurance comes from the repudiation of sin (1:8-2:2). Those rightly related to God in truth will recognize and confess their sin (1:8-10). John's overriding concern is stated in 2:1-2: he does not want his readers to sin, but if they do, they should avail themselves of the provision of Christ's advocacy with the Father. Here John also defends the propitiatory work of Christ as effective for all.

The second assurance concerns the practice of obedience (2:3-11). Only those who obey God's commandments are from the truth (2:3-6). John's concern is that his readers keep the commandment they heard before from him (2:7-8), evidently, the commandment to love one another (2:9-11). The truthfulness of the spiritual experience of the false teachers or anyone else (third person pronouns) is manifested by their love or lack of love.

The third assurance comes from one's victory over the world (2:12-17). John reminds the readers directly (second person pronouns) that they are positioned for victory over the world and the devil by virtue of the fact that their sins are forgiven, they know God and the Word of God dwells in them (2:12-14).

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From this basis he appeals for separation from the world (2:15-17). Love of the world and love of God are mutually exclusive (2:15). Perhaps the false teachers were characterized by worldliness and were diverting the readers' affections away from God and toward worldly things.

The fourth assurance is largely doctrinal and concerns correct beliefs about Jesus Christ (2:18-29). John delivers a stern warning about the presence of antichrists who deny that Jesus is the Christ (2:18-23). The readers know the truth and should be able to recognize a lie (2:20-21). Those who deny the Son's incarnation have no part in the Father (2:22-23).

John moves from a warning to an appeal intended to guard the readers against deception (2:24-27). He wants them to remain in the apostolic doctrine of Christ as they learned "from the beginning" and thus enjoy the promise of eternal life (2:24-25).

John explains that he is trying to prevent their deception, yet expresses confidence that they will be kept in the truth by the Holy Spirit (2:26-27). As they remain in Christ and His truth, they will have confidence at His appearing (2:28-29). His mention of those "born of Him" serves as a transition to the discussion of the children of God.

John's second half of the epistle concerns the believer's relationship to God as a child and the resulting walk as God's child (3:1-5:13). He begins by declaring that the basis of the walk as children of God is the fact that God is the believer's Father (3:1-3). This relationship to God assures of future glorification which is a motivation for moral purity in this life.

This explanation shows the relationship of assurance to moral diligence. John wants them to be assured in their Christian experience so they will be morally pure. He addresses five assurances for the believer which follow much the same pattern as those discussed in the first section.

The first assurance is gained from a repudiation of sin (3:4-9). The practice of sin is totally contrary to Christ's person and work (3:4-5). Therefore, those who are characterized by sin demonstrate an ignorance of Christ and an allegiance with Satan. But those who practice righteousness demonstrate the divine nature obtained from their birth into God's family (3:6-9).

John's second assurance comes from the practice of obedience which he narrows to obedience to the premier command to love (3:10-24). He argues that love is necessary in distinguishing one's affiliation to God or Satan and in evidencing eternal life (3:10-15).

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The manifestation of true obedience in love lies not in words but in deeds (3:16-18). The presence of love in a person assures of being in the truth, brings confidence before God so that prayers are answered and assures of union with Christ (3:19-24). Obviously, the false teachers lack the love of which John speaks.

THE FIRST GENERAL EPISTLE TO PETER

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his _____ mercy hath begotten us again unto a _____ hope by the _____ of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an _____ incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, _____ in heaven for you, Who are kept by the _____ of God through _____ unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a _____, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold _____: That the _____ of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with _____, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the _____ of Jesus Christ.
2. As new born _____, desire the sincere _____ of the word, that ye may _____ thereby:
3. Who his own self bare _____ sins _____ his own body on the _____, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness _____ whose stripes we are healed.
4. Beloved, think it not _____ concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you: But _____ inasmuch as ye are _____ of Christ's sufferings; that, when his _____ shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding _____.
5. But the God of all _____, who hath _____ us unto his eternal _____ by Jesus Christ, after that ye have _____ a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be _____ and dominion for ever and ever, Amen.

THE BOOK OF SECOND JOHN

The True Knowledge of the Sure hope

Introduction:

Second John is the second shortest book or epistle in the Bible. The letter contains thirteen verses. The letter was addressed to a godly lady and her faithful children. The word lady is recorded four times in the Scriptures. Two occurrences refer to a wicked woman or nation (Isaiah 47:1-9) and two refer to a godly woman who raised obedient children.

John warned this godly lay of the many deceivers of false religions because women are more susceptible to deception by the smooth words of false teachers (Genesis 3:13; Romans 16:18; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:13-15; 4:7). Women tend to be more spiritual than men, but they also tend to be deceived because their attitude and emotions fluctuate.

A wise woman understands and prepares for her emotional fluctuations with the stability of the written word of God, the Holy Ghost, and/or a godly husband (1 Timothy 2:13-15; 1 Peter 3:7).

Truth cannot be properly disseminated without exposing religious errors (1 John 4:1-6). A faithful pastor must expose and warn of false religions (1 Timothy 4:1-6). The prophets and Jesus Christ exposed heresies and hypocrisies (Isaiah 30:8-13; Jeremiah 23:21; Ezekiel 13:2; Amos 5:21-24; Malachi 2:1-8; Matthew 23; Mark 7:1-13; Luke 20:45-47).

Paul and Peter exposed heretics and their false doctrines (Philippians 3:2; Colossians 2:6-8; First Timothy 1:19-20; Second Timothy 2:16-18; Second Peter 3:17-18).

The doctrinal aim of the letter refers to the end times of many deceivers and antichrists, but spiritual discernment, discretion, and discrimination are necessary for spiritual growth during all ages throughout history (Psalm 119:66; Proverbs 2:11). Satan's most useful tools of deception are deceived prophets with subtle misquotation of truth (1 Kings 13; Luke 4:9-11). Diligent shepherds warn their sheep from beasts of prey (Ezekiel 22:27; Mathew 7:15; Acts 20:28).

Statistics: 1 Chapter, 13 verses, and 298 words.

Author:

THE BOOK OF SECOND JOHN

Many of the same arguments for John's authorship of 1 John apply with 2 John. The letter bears great resemblance to John's Gospel and the first epistle in terminology and style. Early church fathers did not doubt that the letter was John's.

Doubt arose only later due to the limited circulation of this brief and seldom quoted letter. The author calls himself "the elder" assuming such recognition and authority he need not mention his name. The term "elder" can be used to refer to an apostle (Cf. 1 Peter 5:1) or may simply be a term of affection for an older man (Cf. 1 Timothy 5:1-2; 1 Peter 5:5).

It has been suggested that both 2 John and 3 John were cover letters for 1 John since both are brief and could be seen as addressed to individuals (v. 1; 3 John 1). If so, there is no doubt John wrote them.

The Date and Place:

The similarity in contents and circumstances suggest 2 John was written at the same time or slightly later than 1 John. If so the place of writing would also be the same as 1 John. Thus, it was probably written between A.D. 85 and 95 from Ephesus.

The Destination:

The letter is to "the elect lady and her children" (v. 1). Some interpret this figuratively as a church. They cite the change from singular pronouns after verse 5 to plural, the general nature of the contents which are suitable for a church, and the same circumstances found in 1 John which was written to a church or churches.

However, many take the address literally believing John wrote to a lady (possibly named Electa or Kyria according to the Greek) known for her hospitality toward itinerant preachers. In support is the simplicity of the letter, the reference to children of the lady (vv. 1,4), the mention of her sister (v. 13), the mention of the lady's house (v. 10) and the analogy of 3 John which was written to an individual.

If these two brief letters were cover letters for the longer epistle to a church, their personal nature and brevity would be understood. There is much which favors the personal address.

Whether to a church or a lady and her family, the recipients were well known to John and probably lived in the province of Asia as did the recipients of 1 John and the Revelation (Cf. Rev. 2-3).

The Occasion:

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According to 1 John 2:19 some false teachers had split from the church and were troubling the believers. Evidently some had become traveling teachers who depended on hospitality to meet their needs.

John knew that his readers had the practice of helping itinerant preachers, thus he writes out of concern lest they assist the heretics and share in their sins (vv. 10-11). The false teachers were the same as in 1 John. They were antichrists who denied Christ had come in the flesh (v. 7) and neglected to obey God's commandments, especially love (vv. 56).

The Purpose:

John's purpose is to encourage the readers to walk in love and obedience (vv. 4-6) and to warn them not to associate with or assist the false teachers (vv. 7-11).

Argument:

John's introduction (vv. 1-3) shows that truth is the basis for his relationship to the readers. In Christ he is able to greet them in truth and love (v. 3). His message to them is twofold; one concerns the practice of the truth and the other concerns the protection of the truth.

First is his message concerning their practice of the truth (vv. 4-6). He commends the readers for their walk-in truth (v. 4) and appeals for them to love one another (v. 5).

Their love will be demonstrated through obedience to God's commandments, which they already know (v. 6). Such a walk will protect them from the deception and deficiencies of the false teachers. The protective function of his appeal is indicated by the "For" which introduces his warning (v. 7).

John then delivers his message concerning their protection of the truth (vv. 7-11). He warns them against false teachers who deny Jesus is the Christ (v. 7) and explains the consequences of following this teaching (vv. 8-9).

The readers could lose their reward and their relationship with God. He then prohibits the readers from associating with or assisting a false teacher who appeals to them for hospitality (v. 10). Whoever does this will share in the sin and guilt of their evil deeds (v. 11).

John closes by declaring his desire to visit and extending a greeting from "the children of thy elect sister" (vv. 12-13). The letter, though brief, is a strong encouragement and a firm warning which will keep the readers from harm by the false teachers.

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NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Second John was addressed to a _____ lady and her faithful children.

2. For many _____ are entered into the world, who
_____ not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a
_____ and an antichrist.

THE BOOK OF THIRD JOHN

Truth and Love Verses Pride and Strife

Introduction:

Third John is the shortest book or epistle in the Bible. The epistle contains fourteen verses. The Apostle John expressed his gratitude to Gaius for his faithful hospitality toward the brethren, strangers, and the soldiers of Christ. It is a great encouragement to the infantrymen of God when they receive aid and comfort from others (Philippians 4:15-19).

The considerate people of the aid and comfort partake of the rewards of the battle (1 Samuel 30:24; Matthew 10:41-42). John warned Gaius of the egotistical Diotrephes was a self-promoting man with frustrated ambition.

He wanted to be the top dog, but God would not use him as God would not use men of Korah and Eliashib (Numbers 16:1-34; Nehemiah 13:7-9). Diotrephes' jealousy and envy caused him to sow seeds of discord against men of God (Proverbs 6:19; Romans 16:17).

Statistics: 14 verses, and 294 words

Author:

The same arguments used for 1 John and 2 John demonstrate that John is also the author of 3 John. There is the similarity in style and use of the term "The elder" (v. 1; Cf. 2 John 1). Also, apostolic authority is suggested in verse 10. The scant attestation of tradition is attributed to the brief and personal contents of the letter.

The Date and Place:

The date and place of writing would be the same as for 1 John and 2 John: about A.D. 88-90 from Ephesus. If it is true that the latter two epistles were cover letters for the first, these facts would be easily ascertained.

The Destination:

The letter is addressed to "the wellbeloved Gaius" (v. 1). This man is well known to John and greatly loved by him ("beloved is also used in verses 2, 5, and 11). Since it was a common name, there is probably no connection to others named Gaius in the New Testament. He evidently lived in the province of Asia near Ephesus and was a church leader.

The Occasion:

THE BOOK OF THIRD JOHN

Some traveling brethren had reported to John about the hospitality of Gaius (v. 5-6) and the hostility of Diotrephes (v. 9). Nothing is known of Diotrephes except that he belonged to the same church as Gaius (v. 9).

Diotrephes had vaunted himself in the church, spoken against John, refused to receive the brethren and punished those who did (vv. 9-10). This report of good news and bad news prompted John to write a note of encouragement and instruction to Gaius.

The Purpose:

The first purpose of the letter is to commend Gaius and encourage him in his practice of assisting the traveling brethren (vv. 5-8). Second, John announces his plans to confront Diotrephes in a near visit (vv. 9-11). Third, John wants to recommend Demetrius, a probable missionary and bearer of the letter (v. 12).

Argument:

John begins by declaring his love for Gaius in the truth (1:1). He follows this with a commendation of Gaius, a condemnation of Diotrephes, and a contrasting recommendation of Demetrius.

The commendation of Gaius (vv. 2-8) begins with a prayerful expression of John's joy caused by the report of Gaius' walk in the truth (vv. 2-4). He then commends Gaius for helping the traveling brethren (vv. 5-8) and encourages him to continue this practice in view of their dependence upon Christians for assistance (vv. 6-8).

The condemnation of Diotrephes (vv. 9-11) is prompted by his evil character and behavior (v. 9). On his visit, John intends to confront him about his hostility, his rejection of the brethren and his punishment of those who helped the missionaries (v. 10). This also prompts John to urge Gaius to avoid such evil practice (v. 11).

Finally, John recommends Demetrius as a brother with a good testimony (v. 12). He is obviously meant to be contrasted with the evil Diotrephes. John closes with a mention of his coming visit, a benediction, and greetings (vv. 13-14). His letter should encourage Gaius to continue in good works and warn Diotrephes of further rebuke.

THE BOOK OF THIRD JOHN

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Third John is addressed to “the _____.”

2. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children _____ in the _____.

THE BOOK OF JUDE

Contend for the Faith

Introduction:

Jude as the previous seven epistles is a general description of the apostacy and spiritism in the last days. Jude reveals some strange insights into the evil influences of the underworld and spiritual wickedness in high places (Ephesians 6:12; Hebrews 13:9).

The insights reveal the reason for the destruction of the world by a flood of water and the destruction of the cities by fire. This same perversion will be repeated during the Tribulation (Mathew 24:36-38; Luke 17:26-32).

Statistics: 25 verses and 608 words.

Author:

The author identifies himself as “Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James” (1:1). The designation “brother of James” limits the options to two different men. One is the apostle “Judas (not Iscariot)” (John 14:12), also called Lebbaeus or Thaddaeus (Cf. Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18 and Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13).

This is probably not the author of Jude because the designation “brother of James” suggests that James was a man of great repute in the church. The apostle James did not have such a reputation, if this is the one intended. Furthermore, Jude seems to indicate he was not one of the twelve apostles (v. 17).

Most agree that the second option is the author of Jude. This is Jude, the Lord’s brother (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3), and brother of the James who was the leader of the church in Jerusalem and author of the epistle.

Little is known about Jude except that he did not at first believe in Christ (John 7:5) and he may have traveled as an evangelist with his wife (1 Cor. 9:5). Some conjecture that he is the same as “Judas surnamed Barsabbas” (Acts 15:22,32). Though possible, there is nothing to confirm this other than the common name.

Jude, the Lord’s brother, was accepted as the author possibly as early as the beginning of the second century and certainly near the end. His authorship was accepted in later centuries, but some doubts did arise because of Jude’s use of apocryphal literature (vv. 9,14-15).

However, this use does not imply Jude approved of the whole book. Other arguments against his authorship assume a late date of writing, but these arguments do not stand up under close examination.

THE BOOK OF JUDE

The Date and Place:

40-80 A.D. and place unknown.

The Destination:

The Jewish tone of the letter has led some to conjecture that Jude wrote to a predominately Hebrew Christian audience. But this may only show the Jewish background of the author. Nothing is indicated in the letter except that they were Christians (1:1), and thus probably Jews and Gentiles. It appears from the overall content that Jude wrote to a specific group of churches, much like the epistles of Peter. It is possible he wrote to the same Asian churches Peter did since the heresy appears the same, only more advanced.

The Occasion:

The circumstances which prompted Jude to write are given in verses 3-4. False teachers had infiltrated the churches necessitating an immediate response from Jude. These apostates perverted the grace of God into license and denied the Lord (v. 4).

They also rebelled against authority (v. 8), sought after personal profit (v. 11), and were seductive, sensual and divisive (v. 16,19). The urgency of the situation is indicated by the presence of the false teachers in the readers' churches (v. 4) and love feasts (v. 12).

The nature of the heresy cannot be specified, but was apparently similar to that addressed in 2 Peter. Jude writes out of concern for these readers who are in danger of falling prey to the apostates.

The Purpose:

Jude has a positive and a negative purpose. His positive purpose is to urge the readers to "earnestly contend for the faith" (v. 3). Along with this he wants them to strengthen themselves in the faith and help others influenced by the heretics (vv. 17-23). His negative purpose is to warn the readers (v. 4) and remind them about the condemnation of the ungodly apostates (vv. 5-16).

Argument:

THE BOOK OF JUDE

Jude reminds the readers of their blessed standing in Jesus Christ in his introduction (vv. 1-2). He then relates the circumstances of his writing (vv. 3-4). While he had planned to write about their salvation, he found it necessary instead to write to encourage them to contend for the faith, because of the ungodly teachers who were present among them.

In the rest of his letter Jude describes the apostates and offers the readers a defense against them.

The description of the apostates (vv. 5-16) begins with examples of past apostates who were judged (vv. 5-7). This will remind the readers of their outcome lest any are tempted to join.

Jude then compares the present heretics to those of the past (vv. 8-16). Like them, these ungodly men have rebellious conduct which does not accept authority (vv. 8-11). He also uses figures from nature to describe their worthless character (vv. 12-13).

He then quotes a truth from the Book of Enoch to pronounce the certain judgment of these apostates (vv. 14-15). He finally describes them as essentially wicked (v. 16). His description will prepare his readers to avoid these corrupt men.

The readers can also take an active role against the heretics by defending themselves with awareness and proper attitudes (vv. 17-23). Jude calls to their remembrance the warning of the apostles about false teachers so that they will be aware of their presence (vv. 17-19).

He also encourages them to build themselves up in faith, prayer and love so they will be able to stand strong against the apostates (vv. 20-21). Finally, he encourages the attitudes of compassion and fear toward those affected by the false teachers (vv. 22-23).

He ends with a doxology emphasizing the Lord's sufficiency to preserve the readers (vv. 24-25). This prayerful praise expresses Jude's reason for writing and indicates his confidence in a positive outcome. By an informed awareness and a resolve to contend for the faith, the readers can withstand the onslaught of the false teachers.

THE BOOK OF JUDE

NAME: _____ DATE: _____

1. Jude as the previous seven epistles is a general description of the apostacy and spiritism of the _____.
2. Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and _____ you that ye should _____ contend for the faith which was once _____ unto the saints.
3. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, _____ men, turning the grace of God into _____, and _____ the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.