

1 John: Introduction

Pastor Adam Hall • Dryden First Baptist Church • November 3, 2024

INTRODUCTION

- within the last month our family made a prudent decision to watch a Christmas movie
- this was not just any Christmas movie, this movie was Home Alone #6
- to a certain point this movie did not meet my expectations because I had hoped that they would have brought in more of the original crew from Home Alone 1 and 2
- the movie only cast Buzz, who was by far the most annoying of the characters from Home Alone 1 and 2
- but what I did like about this movie was they used a lot of the traps of the original Kevin from Home Alone 1 and 2
- after we finished the movie with family, some of the family members said that they did not like it because there was no originality
- they were disappointed that they used many of the same traps and stunts from Home Alone 1 and 2
- they were looking for a new storyline that was different from Home Alone 1 and 2
- but new and different is not always better

- when you look at the letter of 1 John, you will see that the Apostle John does not write anything new or different from what he wrote in the Gospel of John
- if you are looking for new theology from John in 1 John, you are not going to get it
- if you do not like the Gospel of John, you will not like the letter of 1 John
- the similarities between the Gospel of John and 1 John are blatantly obvious
- you really must see 1 John as a parallel letter to the Gospel of John

- the same truths that John wrote about in the Gospel of John are the same truths that he writes about in the letter of 1 John
- this is because truth does not change
- Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever as Hebrews 13:8 says
- God the Father, who is light and love, does not change
- God the Son, who dies on the cross for sinners, does not change
- God the Holy Spirit, who empowers the believer to live a Christian life, does not change

- here is one example of how the Gospel of John and 1 John are similar
- John wrote about salvation only being possible through faith in Jesus Christ in the Gospel of John as we see in John 3:15-16

John 3:15-16 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. ¹⁶ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.

- we also see in the letter of 1 John that salvation is only found in the person and work of Jesus

1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whoever has been born of him.

1) WHO WROTE 1 JOHN?

- a) unidentified author
- if you have read the letter of 1 John, you will see that the introduction of this letter is different than the other letters in the New Testament
- usually, the author identifies himself and then he addresses whom he is writing to

- but, in 1 John, John does not identify himself or address those to whom he is writing to

b) reasons to believe John who wrote it

i. eyewitness to Jesus

- this is how we conclude that John wrote 1 John

- we do know that the author is an eyewitness to Jesus Christ as he records several times

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life--

1 John 4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.

ii. early church tradition

- early church tradition tells us that 1 John was written by John the Apostle

- this is the same John that wrote the Gospel of John, the Book of Revelation and 2nd and 3rd John

- John was called by Jesus, as described in Mark 1, to be an Apostle

Mark 1:19-20 And going on a little farther, he saw James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in their boat mending the nets. ²⁰ And immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants and followed him.

- John was a fisherman who was called by Jesus
- John left everything and followed Jesus

- John also came to be known as the beloved disciple as we see in the Gospel of John

John 13:23 One of his disciples, whom Jesus loved, was reclining at table at Jesus' side,

iii. text style and similarities

- we can conclude that the Apostle John, the author of the Gospel of John, is the same author of 1 John, because there are so many similarities between the two books

- let us look at some of the similarities found in the Gospel of John and 1 John

1. John and 1 John both start out with the phrase "the beginning"

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

1 John 1:1 That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life--

2. John and 1 John both speak about Jesus laying down His life

John 15:13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

1 John 3:16 By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

3. John and 1 John both emphasize Jesus who gives eternal life

John 5:24 Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.

1 John 3:14 We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death.

- there are many more similarities that you will see if you compare John with 1 John

- so, it is with these areas in mind, that scholars reach the conclusion that John the beloved disciple of Jesus wrote the letter of 1 John

2) WHO RECEIVED 1 JOHN?

- since John did not address a specific group in 1 John, we cannot fully know who this letter was written to
- the letter of 1 John was written from the city of Ephesus
- it is thought that 1 John was a letter that was to be circulated to the churches in the Ephesus area

3) WHY WAS 1 JOHN WRITTEN?

- thankfully, we do not need to guess why John wrote this letter because he is very clear on his motivation for writing this letter

a) John tells us why he writes this letter

1 John 1:4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

1 John 2:1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin.

1 John 2:12-14 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. ¹³ I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father.

1 John 2:21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth.

1 John 2:26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

1 John 5:13 I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

b) can be categorized in three areas

- as you look at the above scriptures for why John wrote 1 John, you can summarize his reasons for writing 1 John into three points

- John wrote this letter to these Christians so that they would know the joy and hope of being a Christian
- John wrote this letter so that these Christians would not sin
- John wrote this letter so that these Christians could be warned about the false teachers who were distorting the message Jesus

4) OUTLINE OF 1 JOHN

- 1) (1:1-4) Introduction*
- 2) (1:5-3:10) God is Light*
- 3) (3:11-5:12) God is Love*
- 4) (5:13-21) Conclusion*

5) WARNING ABOUT FALSE TEACHERS

a) deceptive teachers

- John speaks about the deception of these false teachers two times

1 John 2:26 I write these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you.

1 John 3:7 Little children, let no one deceive you. Whoever practices righteousness is righteous, as he is righteous.

b) these false teachers had three serious issues
i) they were distorting the true Jesus
- the biblical teaching on Jesus is that He is fully God and fully man

Philippians 2:6-7 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by

taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

- the false teachers were denying that Jesus was the Christ

1 John 2:22-23 Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

- these false teachers were denying that Jesus was fully man

1 John 4:2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

- these false teachers were distorting the truth of who Jesus was, they were teaching that Jesus was a super-human like figure

ii) they were distorting Christian living

- the false teachers were denying that you had to follow Jesus Christ in obedience

- these false teachers appeared to be teaching that you could confess Jesus Christ but you did not have to live for Jesus Christ

- they were claiming that Jesus could be your Saviour but He did not have to be your Lord

- John speaks out against this idea many times in this letter, one example is:

1 John 2:3-4 And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. ⁴ Whoever says "I know him" but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,

iii) they were rejecting love

- in 1 John, we see a big emphasis on love for one another

- it is thought that these false teachers were not only rejecting Jesus and rejecting obedience to God, but they were also rejecting the command of Christ to love one another

1 John 2:9-11 Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. ¹⁰ Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. ¹¹ But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

- the false teachers who were trying to deceive these churches had distorted beliefs and bad practices

6) FIVE IMPORTANT THEMES IN 1 JOHN

1. God the Father

- there are two important truths that we learn about God the Father in the letter of 1 John

a) "God is light"

1 John 1:5 This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

- John is explaining the holiness of God

- since God is light, it means that there is no darkness or sin in God

- since there is no sin or darkness in God, we must conclude that God is perfect and holy

b) "God is love"

1 John 4:16 So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.

- not only is God holy, He is also love

- now when people think about love in our culture, they associate it with the feelings that make you feel good

- our culture's view of love is like the feeling that you get when you watch a Hallmark movie
- but that is not the Biblical definition of love

- God's love is expressed in His gift to the world in the person and work of Jesus Christ

1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

2. God the Son, Jesus

- in 1 John we see a clear picture of Jesus
- Jesus is fully God and fully man
- this does not mean that Jesus is half God and half man
- yes, at the same time, Jesus is fully God and fully man
- yet He is a man without any of the sin that humans have

- **Jesus is fully God**

- Jesus is called the Son of God many times in the letter of 1 John

1 John 5:10 Whoever believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself. Whoever does not believe God has made him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has borne concerning his Son.

- this actually means that Jesus is equal with God and thus He is God
- but just in case you do not find that argument adequate you will find that Jesus is directly called God in 1 John

1 John 5:20 And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life.

- I cannot believe that after this verse people still deny that Jesus is God but they do

- **Jesus is fully man**

- John says the person who claims that Jesus has come in the flesh has the Spirit of God

1 John 4:2 By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God,

- therefore, you must embrace that Jesus is fully man and fully God

- we also see that **Jesus is wholly the Saviour** of the world who goes to the cross to pay for sin

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

3. God the Holy Spirit

- John also teaches extensively on the work of the Holy Spirit
- God the Holy Spirit has been given to the Christian, and He, the Holy Spirit, dwells within the believer

1 John 3:24 Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

- John says in 1 John, as he also says in the Gospel of John, that the Holy Spirit is truth
- this means that the Holy Spirit guides people into truth

1 John 4:6 We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

4. Living for Jesus

- when you read the letter of 1 John, you will certainly see that John is serious about Christian living and obedience to Jesus Christ

- in fact, John talks numerous times about the dangers of living in sin
- John talks about the danger of hating a brother

1 John 2:11-12 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. ¹² I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake.

- John states that if you love God, you will obey Him

1 John 5:2 By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and obey his commandments.

5. *Love for One Another*

- just like in the Gospel of John, John, in 1 John speaks about the importance of love for one another

1 John 4:7-8 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸ Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Application

1) PONDER THE GLORY AND GRACE OF GOD

- a) in the letter of 1 John we see the glory of God
- John says that God is light and there is no darkness in Him (1 John 1:5)
- in 1 John we also see the grace of God because God in His love sends Jesus to die for us

1 John 4:10 In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

- we ought to ponder in our hearts the glory of the Lord

- first, God is light and there is no darkness in Him
- this means that the Lord is holy
- the Lord cannot look upon sin with any sort of pleasure
- the Lord's eyes are too pure to look upon evil
- I encourage all of you to not lose sight of the holiness and the glory of God
- the Lord is holy and He deserves to be feared and shown reverence

- b) in the letter we see the grace of God too
- but the Lord is also love and out of His loving nature, He shows us grace
- the Lord's loving kindness is better than life
- the Lord shows His love to humanity by creating them
- the Lord also shows His love to humanity by the gift of Jesus Christ who died in our place so that we can be free

- in the letter of 1 John we see the glory of God and the grace of God
- if you are a Christian, remind yourself of these wonderful truths every day
- delight in God's glory and give Him praise because He is a holy God
- delight in God's grace because God has shown good to you when you did not deserve it
- you can praise the Lord, because, God has been gracious to you through Jesus Christ

2) WHAT DOES THE DEATH OF JESUS MEAN TO YOU?

- a) no one is without sin
- the letter of John speaks very clearly about our need for Jesus Christ and the wonderful work of Jesus on the cross for us

- first, we see that none of us have been good

- God is light and there is no darkness in Him, but when we have sin against God we lived in darkness
- hear what John says about us

1 John 1:8-10 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰ If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

- John is very bold to say that we all have sinned
- this is because we all have rebelled against God in thought word and deed
- the New City Catechism can help us understand just what we have done

Question 16: What is sin?

Answer: Sin is rejecting or ignoring God in the world he created, rebelling against him by living without reference to him, not being or doing what he requires in his law—resulting in our death and the disintegration of all creation.

- b) we all need forgiveness
 - God's Word says that if we do not acknowledge our sin then we are liars
 - so, we need Jesus every day
 - some of us do not like sequels that have the same theme as the previous movie
 - but today and every day we need Jesus Christ
 - we probably need Jesus more today than we did yesterday
 - that is because we still sin and if we say today that we have not sinned, God calls us a liar and the truth is not in us

- c) Christian, if you have trusted in Jesus Christ
 - so, we have made the case that we are sinners, so now what?
 - Christian, we ought to praise the Lord for the person and work of Jesus Christ
 - hear what John says about our need for Christ

1 John 2:1-2 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

- Christian, praise the Lord for the work of Jesus Christ
- Christian, give thanks to the Lord for what Jesus has done for you
- Christian, at judgment you will not stand alone with all your sins stacked against you, you have an advocate who is Jesus Christ
- if the work of Christ does not give you any joy then I would ask you to ponder God's holiness and your sin all over again
- your sin will condemn you, but in Christ you can be free and forgiven

- d) friend, if you have not yet trusted in Jesus Christ
 - if you are outside of Jesus Christ and have not trusted in Him and you are not living for Jesus Christ and you are serving sin, then today is the day to get serious about Jesus Christ
 - look at yourself and what you have done
 - think about all the sins you have committed, not only against a God of perfection and holiness, but also a God of love
 - everyone deserves judgment because of their sin
 - but look to Jesus and His wonderful grace
 - Jesus took upon your sin so that you could be free and forgiven

- trust in Christ and you can be free from the judgment that you deserve for your sin
- also, you can have complete joy in Jesus Christ
- this is why John wrote this letter!

1 John 1:4 And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.