

I. Introduction to I John.

A. Why are we studying I John? 5:13

B. Background: This is not a typical epistle.

- 1. The author is most likely the Apostle John, who wrote the fourth gospel. 4:14**
- 2. This book was probably written in the very late first century.**
- 3. The original recipients were probably in Asia Minor (Ephesus, Colossae, etc.).**

C. Occasion: *Don't be led astray by those who have seceded from the church.*

- 1. John writes to a church in crisis. 2:18-19 4:4**
- 2. There is much speculation about the exact nature of the heresy John is refuting.**
- 3. We can draw some inferences by examining what John affirms and denies. 4:1**
 - a. They claim a deeper knowledge. 2:27**
 - b. They deny Jesus is the Christ. 2:22 4:3 5:5-6 II John 1:7**
 - c. They claim obedience doesn't matter. 1:8 2:3f 3:10**
 - d. They are unloving and aloof. 2:13-14,20 4:8-9 I Co. 8:1**
- 4. John answers, not with a detailed critique of error, but rather through the proclamation of truth.**

D. Purpose.

- 1. John exhorts his readers to stand firm on the teachings they have received. 2:24**
- 2. John longs to build up their joy and assurance. 1:3-4 5:13**

E. Structure.

- 1. There is no clear progressive structure.**
- 2. Rather John develops key themes over and over again: tests of spiritual life**
 - a. The doctrine test: belief in Jesus as the Christ. 2:23 3:23 5:5,10**
 - b. The moral test: obedience to God's commandments. 1:5-6 2:3f 3:5,9**
 - c. The social test: brotherly love. 4:7-8**

F. We need John's message!

- 1. The biblical doctrine of Christ is being undermined. 2:20-21 II John 1:9**
- 2. Many in Christendom also fail the moral and love tests.**
- 3. Real Christians struggle concerning their personal assurance of faith.**

II. We proclaim the Word of life to you. v. 1-3a

A. John's prologue introduces the main themes of his epistle.

B. John's theme is the Word of Life. v. 1c

The Person of Jesus Christ embodies the Message of Life. 5:12, 20 John 1:4 8:12 6:35,48 4:10-11 11:25 14:6 20:31 Rev. 21:6 I Co. 1:23 II Co. 4:5

C. He was from the beginning. v. 1a John 1:1 Gen. 1:1

- 1. The Word of Life did merely come into existence at Bethlehem. He was from the beginning with the Father. v. 2b John 1:1-2,18 10:30 13:3 17:5 Rev. 22:13**
- 2. John traces the historical progression from His pre-existence, to His manifestation in history, to the apostolic proclamation, to our ultimate joy.**
- 3. Our apprehension of the Word of Life is possible only because He deliberately took the initiative to manifest Himself. v. 2 3:5,8 John 1:18 21:1,14 Heb. 9:26**

D. The Apostles are eyewitnesses of His manifestation in History. v. 1b 4:14 Jo. 1:14 21:24 Mt. 13:16-17 Luke 1:2 10:23-24 Acts 1:21-22 4:20 II Pe. 1:17-18

- 1. We have *heard* Him. Mt. 7:28-29**
- 2. We have *seen* Him. John 10:27,29 19:35**
- 3. We *looked at* (beheld) Him. John 1:14**
- 4. We *touched* (handled) Him. Luke 24:39 John 20:27**

E. The Apostles *proclaim* that which they have seen and heard. v. 2-3a

- 1. John emphasizes their role as witnesses of the manifestation of the Word of Life. 4:14 Acts 1:8 Luke 24:48**
- 2. They have been sent forth to authoritatively declare God's message. v. 2b,3a**
- 3. They proclaim eternal life. John 3:16 17:2-3**
- 4. Their testimony is recorded for us in the New Testament Scriptures. 4:14 Jo. 21:24**
- 5. We believe through their witness. John 20:29 I Pe. 1:8.**

F. Application.

- 1. Christianity rests upon historical facts. I Cor. 15:3-19 I Tim. 3:16**
- 2. What does John affirm about Jesus?**
- 3. God's chosen method of proclamation of Christ is through the reading and preaching of the apostolic gospel witness. II Ti. 4:1f I Co. 1:22 2:2f Isa. 55:11**
- 4. Your personal encounter with the Word of Life should result in your bearing witness to others.**

III. Our goal is that you might enjoy fellowship with us and with God. v. 3b-4

A. Our immediate purpose is that you might enter into fellowship. v. 3b

- 1. Christ was manifested that we would enjoy the closest possible relationship with God. 2:24 John 14:23 1:29 15:1f 17:3,22f**
- 2. The Apostles who first experienced that Divine fellowship invite us to join them through receiving their proclamation of the Word of Life. John 17:20-21**
- 3. The church is a community in which we share fellowship with God and one another. Acts 2:42 John 17:22**
 - a. All true spiritual unity is grounded in the gospel.**
 - b. You cannot be a part of the true fellowship of the church unless you are in fellowship with God through Jesus Christ, His Son. John 14:6 17:3**
 - c. You cannot be in fellowship with God if you reject the fellowship of His people.**
 - d. We can have no fellowship with those who reject the apostolic testimony. 1:6-7 2:19 II John 11**

B. Our ultimate purpose is that we all might experience the fulness of God's joy. v. 4

- 1. The greatest joy comes through fellowship with God in Christ. John 15:11 17:13 Gal. 5:22 Acts 13:52 III Jo. 1:4 Jo. 3:29**
- 2. How can you best promote your joy? Ps. 16:11. John 15:19-11**
- 3. If you haven't yet experienced this joy, receive the message of the Word of Life and enter into our fellowship!**

IV. Concluding applications: The proclamation of the historic manifestation of the eternal Word of Life is central to Christianity.

Discussion questions

- 1. What is the purpose of I John?**
- 2. What are the three tests of spiritual life?**
- 3. What false doctrines (ancient and modern) does John refute in the prologue?**
- 4. What would you say to someone who claims that what really matters is the teaching and example of Jesus, not whether the events in Scripture actually occurred in history?**
- 5. What does the prologue teach about the Person of Jesus Christ?**
- 6. What is the unique place of the Apostles in God's plan?**
- 7. What does the prologue teach about the nature of Christian fellowship?**
- 8. What is the source of true joy?**
- 9. Is a film a good way to convey the Apostolic message of the Word of Life?**