

LESSON 10

PART I: INTRODUCTION TO FIRST JOHN

Authorship

First John is related so closely to the Gospel of John in thought, content, and style that there has been little doubt that the same person wrote both. The same traditions which ascribe the Fourth Gospel to the Apostle John also attribute the Epistle to him. Polycarp, a disciple of John, clearly referred to 1 John 4:3 in his Epistle to the Ephesians: "For everyone who confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is anti-christ." Papias was said to be a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp. Eusebius, the church historian, wrote concerning him: "The same author (Papias) made use of testimonies from the first epistle of John, and likewise from that of Peter."¹ Irenaeus quoted frequently the Epistle as the work of the Lord's disciple John, the writer of the Fourth Gospel. Clement of Alexandria referred to it several times as the work of John. These external evidences show that from a very early date the Epistle was attributed to the Apostle John and was treated as Scripture.

First John and Hebrews are the only New Testament epistles in which no author's name is given. The content of 1 John, however, reveals some facts about the author. He testified that he was an eyewitness of Christ, having heard, looked upon, and touched the Word of life (1:1). This opening verse of the Epistle emphasizes that the writer based what follows on personal experience. The writer's authoritative statements infer that he was one of the original twelve. This authority is expressed in his repeatedly addressing the readers as little children. It is obvious that he expected his words to be heeded. His style gives the impression of an elderly, mature Christian's writing in familiar terms to younger, less mature Christians.

Most scholars conclude that the author of the Fourth Gospel also wrote 1 John since the thoughts and expressions in the two are similar. As noted in the introduction to the Gospel of John in this study guide, not all scholars are convinced that the Apostle John wrote the Fourth Gospel. With the absence of any conclusive arguments to the contrary and with the strong tradition in favour of Johannine authorship, it is reasonable to accept apostolic authorship for 1 John.

¹Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.

The Gospel of John and 1 John are related closely in t _____, c _____, and s _____.

Rearrange the letters to form names of two contemporaries of John who quoted from 1 John:

rayocp1P _____
siaPap _____

Two other early writers who referred to the Epistle as the work of John who wrote also the Fourth Gospel were:

_____ of _____

(thought, content, style, Polycarp, Papias, Irenaeus, Clement, Alexandria)

The author of 1 John stated that he was an _____ of Christ.

The writer's style expresses _____.

(eyewitness, authority)

Date

There is little specific evidence to guide in setting the date for this Epistle. One's conclusion concerning authorship will affect his attempt to set the time when it was written. Tradition relates that John, Philip, and Andrew were among those who sought refuge in Asia. Irenaeus claimed that John lived until the time of Trajan in A.D. 98. John would have been an old man when Trajan came to the throne and likely did not live long after his reign began.

Probably John went to Ephesus at the time of the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. After working in that area for a number of years, tradition states that he was banished to the island of Patmos; however, his exile was not for an extended period of time, and he was permitted to return to Ephesus before his death.

Irenaeus reported that John opposed the heretic Cerinthus who propagated Gnostic teachings. Perhaps he was concerned about the "little children" in Ephesus whom He had grown to love during his ministry among them. He could have been fearful that they would be led astray by Gnostic teachings during his exile. Since the Epistle appears to refer to the Gospel narrative in several places, a date shortly after the Gospel was written, in about A.D. 90, seems to fit the probable circumstances.

Occasion and Purpose

The Gospel was written to elicit faith by showing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (John 20:31). The Gospel focuses on the earthly life of Christ which reached a climax in His death, resurrection, and ascension. The First Epistle is concerned with Christian living after Christ returned to the Father, and it anticipates the return of Jesus Christ. It deals with how to live the Christian life during the interim between Christ's departure and His return.

Erroneous teachings threatened the unity and purity of the early Church. The Gnostic philosophy which made too sharp a distinction between material and spiritual reality threatened to distort the doctrine of Christ and His Kingdom. Jewish rabbis also distinguished between the created material world and the spiritual Creator, but they maintained there was a relation between God who is spirit and upright and the world which He created. Creaturely man has affinity with both creation and the Creator. The Jews believed that an evil power had gained control of God's good creation. Material existence was not evil in itself because God made it to be good. Evil resides in the rebellion of man who is given freedom to reject his Creator. Man rejects his Creator because of the influence of Satan, the adversary of God. Man who comes under the influence of Satan is controlled by him and becomes a part of his kingdom in opposition to God.

READ THE TOPIC DATE BEFORE DOING THE FOLLOWING EXERCISE.

Use the following words and dates to fill in the blanks concerning the probable date and circumstances of the writing of 1 John.

- Gnostic
- A.D. 90
- Ephesus
- exile
- A.D. 70
- Patmos

Probably John went to _____ in _____.
Later he was banished to _____.
Probably he feared that the Christians would be influenced by _____ teachings; therefore, he wrote the Epistle while in _____ about _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The First Epistle was written to teach Christians how to live during the interim between Christ's

_____ and
His _____.

(departure, return)

The Gnostic philosophy which threatened the unity and purity of the early Church made too sharp a distinction between

_____ and
_____ reality.

(material, spiritual)

Greek philosophers made a distinction between mind and matter. They believed that material existence is evil in itself because of its imperfection which is made obvious by its disintegration and transient existence. Mind and the spiritual life of man are far superior to material existence; therefore, the goal of life is to escape from the shackles of the material. The Jews never held this view because of their doctrine of creation. They believed that material existence is good. The problem of evil for them centred in a personal evil power known as Satan. The problem of evil for the Greeks centred in non-personal material existence which is imperfect and disintegrates.

The Christian gospel was constantly threatened with distortions by Jewish and Greek beliefs. Since the Greeks believed that material is evil, they concluded that the heavenly Being who is perfect could not come into contact with material existence. They gave a Docetic explanation to the appearance of Jesus; that is, Jesus did not have a real fleshly body but only the appearance of a body. The Gnostics denied the incarnation of the Word. John began his Epistle by affirming that the Word of life had taken on physical existence, for he had looked upon it and had touched it (1:1). This internal reflection of the Gnostic threat agrees with the external evidence from Polycarp who described the Apostle John's encounter with Cerinthus at a public bath in Ephesus. Cerinthus was a Gnostic who had adopted Christian beliefs. When John saw Cerinthus at the bath, he fled lest God's judgement should fall upon Cerinthus in the form of some catastrophe which might consume those about him as well.

Because the Jews emphasized the transcendence of God, it was difficult for them to conceive that God had come in the flesh. The Old Testament warns that man cannot look upon the holy God and live. God is so far beyond man in holiness that sinful man is uncomfortable in His presence. According to John's Gospel, the Jews accused Jesus of blasphemy because He taught He had come from God and was one with the Father. In addition, the Jews rejected Jesus' teaching that He was the Christ (Messiah) because He spoke of His death. Apparently these problems continued to threaten the faith of the Christians in the Asian churches. John was probably attempting to deal with these problems when he stated that one who claims to teach the truth is a liar if he denies that Jesus is the Christ and he is an antichrist if he denies the Father and the Son (2:22). The original purpose of the First Epistle was to warn the churches of the false doctrines of Gnostic and Jewish teachers. The Christian Church was struggling with the same problems as the Greeks and Jews; therefore, it was easy for the Church to be influenced by erroneous doctrines. The Church also had to define the nature of evil and the relation of the material to the spiritual. Its answers to these questions were and continue to be—

1. Jesus Christ (the incarnate Word of God);

Match the following:

___ Greek philosophers

___ Jewish rabbis

1. Material existence was not evil in itself because God made it to be good.

2. Material existence is evil in itself because of its imperfection.

(2-Greek philosophers, 1-Jewish rabbis)

The Gnostics concluded that Jesus had only the appearance of a body because they believed that the heavenly Being who is _____ could not come into contact with _____.

(perfect, matter)

The Jews had difficulty in believing that God had come in the flesh because of their emphasis on the _____ of God.

Jesus' teaching that He had come from God and was one with the Father was the basis of the Jews' accusing Him of _____.

The Jews rejected Jesus as the Christ because He spoke of His _____.

The relation of the transcendent God to material existence was a common problem for Jews, Greeks, and the _____.

(transcendence, blasphemy, death, Christian Church)

2. the Holy Spirit (God's presence in the hearts of men);
3. the Kingdom of God (the rule of God over created man).

The Creator is known to man in the person of God's Son who is the King or Messiah. This heavenly Being has returned to the Father but will come again. The Epistle instructs man how to live in preparation for the return of Christ.

Destination and Recipients

This Epistle does not conform to the characteristics of a personal letter to any certain group of people, but it contains instructions which were to be passed on from one group of Christians to the other. It does not have an introduction, an author's greeting, nor a concluding salutation. Although no individual is mentioned, its use of the first and second person pronouns gives it an intimate and direct approach.

This Epistle probably was written to the same group of churches as those referred to in the Book of Revelation. Some conservative scholars believe that it was written to Jewish Christians in Palestine, but the nature of the content does not support this belief. Apparently Jewish Christians were a part of the church, and either Judaizers or non-Christian Jews may have continued to threaten the purity of the doctrine.

The Book of Acts gives sufficient information about the work in and around Ephesus to reveal that both Jews and Gentiles were members of the churches. Paul had taught in the synagogue for three months, "disputing and persuading the things concerning the kingdom of God" (Acts 19:8). After separating from the synagogue, he taught daily in the school of one Tyrannus. This ministry continued for two years, and Luke stated that "all they which dwelt in Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks" (Acts 19:10). The Christian gospel made a great impact on the Jews and Gentiles of that city and the surrounding areas. When Christianity threatened the traditional beliefs and worship of Jews and Gentiles, great opposition arose against the church. Apparently Christianity had overcome much of the external opposition by the end of the century, but some of the beliefs which had caused conflict earlier continued to be held by many who came into the church. The Epistle reveals that some who taught heretical doctrines had been a part of the church but had departed from it (2:19).

List the answers of the early Church which continue to the present regarding the relation of the material to the spiritual.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answers with the text, beginning on the previous page.)

Underline the correct description.

First John was—

- a letter to a certain group of people.*
- a letter to be passed from one group of Christians to another.*

What three characteristics of a personal letter are not evident in 1 John?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

Underline the correct word or words.

The Book of Acts indicates that (Jews, Gentiles, both Jews and Gentiles) were members of the churches to which 1 John was addressed.

(both Jews and Gentiles)

PART II: THE CHRISTIAN'S RELATION TO GOD

1 John 1:1-2:27

Introduction

As mentioned in the introduction to this Epistle, a primary religious problem is to understand how the holy God can relate to sinful man and material existence. An innate religious attitude of man is his unworthiness in the presence of the righteous God. Another problem is how man who is of this world can relate to God who is not of this world. Is man left to do the best he can in a world with problems too great for him to solve, or can man expect divine help?

A major religious problem is to understand how the holy _____ can relate to sinful _____ and material _____.

(God, man, existence)

Relationship is Defined as Fellowship with God

1 John 1:1-10

Fellowship through the incarnate Word (1:1-4)

John's first assertion is that the Word of life which already existed in the beginning assumed visible form in physical existence (v.1). "From the beginning" refers to the initial point of creation, but the Word of life already was when creation came into being. John did not say that the Word of life came into being but that it already existed when the succession of created life began. The eternal Word of life assumed physical form which could be seen, gazed upon, and touched (v.1). The heavenly Christ who is the Son of God was no earthly phantom which appeared without real physical being. His earthly body was like that of other men. It could be touched as well as seen. The Docetic doctrine which held that the heavenly Son of God only seemed to have a human form but did not actually take upon Himself a human body contradicted the experience of the Apostle John.

Are these statements true or false?

John stated that the Word of life already existed when the succession of created life began.

Jesus' earthly body could be seen but not touched.

(true, false)

Although man cannot know the invisible God through sensory experience, the Word of life was visibly manifested (v.2). The purpose of this manifestation was twofold: to enable man to behold God and to help him understand the divine truth concerning eternal life. The Word of life's becoming incarnate meant that man not only saw a person but received a message from the Father through that person. Communication is not limited to words, especially in human relationships. A person makes himself known through his words, actions, and attitudes. Jesus was the Word of communication from the Father, and He manifested the Father through what He said, did, desired, and felt. The full nature of the invisible Father was in the Son and was made known to us.

Physical manifestation of the Word of life was for a twofold purpose:

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

The words which John heard Jesus speak and the actions and attitudes he observed as a result of association with Christ became the essence of his proclamation to us in this Epistle. The first three

verses are one long, complicated sentence with the second verse in parentheses. The main verb of that sentence is in verse 3, and its objects are expressed in four clauses: We declare (1) what was from the beginning, (2) what we have heard, (3) what we have seen with our eyes, and (4) what we have beheld and our hands have handled concerning the Word of life.

The parenthetical statement in verse 2 explains the Word of life and emphasizes the humanity of Jesus who is eternal life rather than His divinity which was emphasized in the Gospel. The beginning words of verse 3 pick up and repeat the thought in verse 1 before stating the purpose of the Epistle: to enable the readers to continue to have fellowship with God. The Christian life is not lived in isolation but is shared by all believers. Basically the Church is a fellowship which means participation together of Christians with their Lord. The Church as a fellowship includes believers, the presence of the Father, and the presence of the Son (v.3). The repeating of the preposition (with) and definite article (the) marks emphatically the distinction and equality of the Son and the Father. As Son, Jesus is the essence of the Father and has the capacity to reveal Him.

John further elaborated the purpose of the Epistle in verse 4. He stated that his declaration of the Word of life was to bring about fellowship. That fellowship would bring full and complete joy. The text could read either "your" or "our" joy. Either one makes good sense. The author's joy would be completed by his opportunity to share with and help his readers. The reader's joy would be made full by participation in the fellowship of the Church.

The hindrance to fellowship (1:5-6)

Man experiences the mixed emotions of desiring to relate to his Creator and drawing back from the holy God because of his feeling of guilt and unworthiness. Before man can participate freely in fellowship with God, his character has to conform to the character of God; that is, he must be free from sin (v.6). It is impossible for man, whose life is dominated by sin, to please God. The good news Christ brought is that sinful man is accepted by God through God's redemptive work of cleansing man from sin. Sin (darkness) prevents man from having fellowship with God and is defined as failure to practise truth (v.6).

"Light" signifies more than righteousness. The illuminating power of light refers to revelation. To walk in the light requires man to walk in the truth or to practise the truth set forth by Jesus Christ. To reject Him as the Son of God is to commit the basic sin of rebellion against God and is described as walking in darkness. To respond by faith to Jesus as the Son of God is to recognize Him as the Lord who controls one's life in doing the will of God. This way of life is described as walking in the light or practising truth. Truth is both doctrine and practice or the activity of one's life.

READ 1 JOHN 1:3 CAREFULLY.

The purpose of the Epistle is to enable the readers to continue to have _____.

The basis of the Church is fellowship with _____ and with _____.

(divine fellowship, God, one another)

Circle the appropriate word.

The illuminating power of light refers to (righteousness, revelation).

(revelation)

The divine solution to broken fellowship (1:7-10)

Walking in the light refers to a life in conformity with the revealed truth of the Word (Jesus Christ) from God which became flesh (v.7). The Greek word for walking is in the present tense and means continual or habitual activity. To walk in obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ means to walk in the light as He is in the light. This conduct results in fellowship with one another as well as with Christ who is the light. Man in communion with God is in harmony with his fellow-man. Communion with God is possible for man because the blood of Jesus Christ keeps on cleansing him from all sin (v.7).

The redeemed sinner is not delivered from the nature of sin but from the control of sin. His sinful nature still can be tempted. However, by faith he places his life under Christ's control rather than withholding his life from God and being controlled by his own sinful desires. To believe in Jesus as God's Son is to accept Him as the master of life and to receive God's forgiveness and cleansing from all sin.

One who attempts to attain righteousness through his own performance and claims that he has no sin deceives himself (v.8). Such a person is alienated from God because he has not believed the truth illuminated by Christ. On the other hand, whoever confesses his sin is forgiven and cleansed from all unrighteousness (v.9). Forgiveness and cleansing are based on God's promises, and He is faithful and righteous to keep them.

In verse 6, John stated that to claim fellowship with God while walking in darkness is to lie. In verse 8, he said that to deny sin exists as a principle within one's nature is also a false assertion. In verse 10, he stated that if one denies having committed sin he lies. Since God's entire plan for the redemption of man is based on the fact of human sin, to deny sin is to make God a liar.

Relationship with God is Maintained

Through Christ as Advocate

2:1-2

Fellowship with God is impossible apart from Christ our Advocate (Counselor). Man who is sinful in nature does not maintain the righteous standard required for him to walk with God. The Jews were keenly aware of their past history which taught that God's presence had departed from their midst because of sin. The Christian Church cannot expect a righteous God to abide in it unless purity is maintained. The purity required is beyond the potential accomplishment of the Church. Nevertheless, Christians are not without hope.

The encouragement John shared concerning Christ as Advocate was not intended to encourage sin (v.1). However, if any of the "little children" sinned, their

To walk in obedience to the teachings of Jesus Christ means to _____ in the _____.

(walk, light)

To believe in Jesus as God's Son is—
to accept Him _____
and to receive God's _____.

(Compare your answers with the text.)

READ 1 JOHN 1:8, 10 AGAIN. Now explain the difference in the two verses regarding one's denial of sin.

v. 8 _____
v.10 _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

What must be maintained within the Christian Church if the righteous God is expected to abide in the Church?

(purity)

situation was not hopeless (v.2). Christ who had died to forgive their sins did not forsake them when He departed to the right hand of God. His present role with God is to function as an advocate, one who represents another. Christ represents us before the Father as a lawyer represents his client before the judge. When we do wrong, Christ is the propitiation (satisfaction) for our sin (v.2). He is both the ministering priest and the sacrificial victim. Propitiation means to render satisfaction to God. The satisfaction He rendered for our sin was not limited to the Jews nor the people of His day but is adequate for those of the whole world. This does not mean that all will be saved, but Christ's sacrificial death is adequate for all who will be saved.

Relationship with God Requires Obedience

2:3-11

Assurance through obedience (2:3-6)

Assurance of fellowship with God comes through keeping His commandments: "Here is the test by which we can make sure that we know him: do we keep his commands?" (v.3—NEB). To know is to perceive spiritual reality. To keep God's commandments means to be obedient to His will. To claim perception of the reality of God's presence and at the same time to disobey Him is to be contradictory (a liar—v.4).

Apparently a group of heretical teachers were claiming that it was not necessary to keep God's commandments in order to be related to Him. By disregarding specific precepts of the truth, these heretical teachers revealed that they did not know the truth which God revealed about Himself in Jesus. On the other hand, those who do His will by keeping His Word perfect the love of God (v.5). It is uncertain whether "love of God" means God's love for man or man's love for God. Perhaps the phrase is deliberately ambiguous in order to include both. Perfecting of love means to bring it to its full meaning. Godly love is not merely a sentiment; it must be expressed in action. God's love for man is fruitful only when it brings about man's obedience. Man's love for God is genuine only when it is expressed in obedience.

Man is described as abiding in God when his will and actions are controlled by God (v.6). Whoever abides in God is doing God's will; therefore, his daily activities are consistent with the will of God revealed in Christ (v.6).

The perfection of love through obedience (2:7-11)

Love is perfected by keeping God's commandments and is also the commandment to be kept (v.7). When a recognized interpreter of the Law asked Jesus which is the great commandment, Jesus answered that love for God is the greatest and love for one's neighbour is like it (Matt. 22:35ff.). The commandment to love one's brother is not new since it was contained in the Old Testament (v.7). John expected his readers to be familiar with it because it was a command which they

How can Christians hope to attain the standard of purity required?

(Through Christ as their Advocate and the propitiation for sin)

To claim to know the reality of God's presence and at the same time to disobey Him is to be _____ (a _____).

(contradictory, liar)

What does perfecting of love mean? _____

(To bring full meaning by expressing it in action)

had heard from the beginning. When Jesus referred to love as the great commandment, He was referring to Deuteronomy 6:5 and Leviticus 19:18. On the other hand, the commandment of love was new in quality (v.8). Although this commandment had been taught for a long time, men who walked in the world of darkness were incapable of keeping it. Hatred, the opposite of love, characterizes the world of darkness, but love characterizes the New Age of true light which was already shining (v.8).

Actually, sin is the opposite of love. Sin originates in man's self-interest and lustful desires. The man who is controlled by sin seeks things for himself. This way of life is typical of those who are of the world which measures success by what a man accomplishes for himself. The opposite of self-interest is love which is a willingness to sacrifice self for the benefit of others. The realm of darkness does not understand this kind of conduct. Nevertheless, this standard of sacrificing self for the benefit of others characterizes the realm of light. Jesus set the example by refusing the way of personal success as a political messiah and by sacrificing His life for the sins of others. The commandment of love is old because it was embedded in the Law from an early date. Yet the commandment is new because it had not been understood nor kept by men of darkness. It is new because it has become a reality for those who walk in light. In fact, the distinction between those in light and in darkness is that those in light love and those in darkness hate (v.9).

Since a new standard has been set for the New Age, those who love their brothers are part of that age, but those who hate their brothers walk in darkness (vv.10f.). Those whose lives are controlled by self-interest and sin are blinded by desires to possess the immediate things of this world. They cannot see their true destiny but are blinded by selfish ambitions (v.11). The one who walks in the light of God's teachings concerning love experiences fellowship with God and is able to see his true destiny. Conduct characterized by hatred reveals that one abides in the realm of darkness and is without direction or goal in life.

Relationship with God Requires

Spiritual Perception

2:12-27

Spiritual perception concerning the world (2:12-17)

John assured his readers that he was not writing because he considered them to be of the world but in order to encourage them in their struggle against the world. Scholars who believe that 1 John was a cover letter for John's Gospel interpret the expression "I am writing" to refer to this Epistle. They interpret "I have written" to refer to the Fourth Gospel, but others conclude that the tense does not refer to some

The commandment of love was both old and new because it was recorded in the _____ and it characterizes the _____ of true light.

(Old Testament, New Age)

Match the following:

- 1. *life of sin*
- 2. *life of love*

- a. *Man controlled by self-interest and lustful desires seeks things for himself.*
- b. *Man controlled by willingness to sacrifice self for the benefit of others.*

(a-1, b-2)

previous writing, like the Gospel, but is the epistolary aorist (Greek past tense). By this technique, the author was writing from the readers' perspective. "I am writing" refers to the author's act of writing.

John addressed his readers as little children, fathers, and young men. Perhaps he was dividing them into two categories rather than three. "Little children" referred to all who had come to Christ in the experience of the forgiveness of sin (v.12). Some of the little children had known Christ for a longer period of time and had matured in wisdom. Therefore, they could be described as "fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning" (v.13). Others had not matured as much in understanding the Christian faith but were strong in faith and had overcome the evil one (v.13). Fathers and young men could have referred to the same group, describing them first as mature in knowledge and secondly as strong in faith.

After assuring the readers that he had confidence in their understanding of Christianity and in their strong faith, John returned to the instructions concerning how his little children should live. John used the term world to refer to created existence, the whole human race, and the unregenerate part of society under the control of the power of evil. He instructed the little children not to love the world nor the things in the world (v.15). That which a person loves controls him. If a person loves the world in the sense of being controlled by it, he becomes controlled by its evil. It is impossible for a person who is controlled by evil desires to love the Father and be controlled by Him.

The things of the world are identified as lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and boastful pride of life (v.16). The flesh means human nature corrupted by sin. Lust of the flesh refers to sensual appetites produced by that nature and includes man's instincts used to satisfy selfish desires rather than to fulfil the purpose for which they were given. The lust of the eyes refers to the craving for things which one sees. The pride of life speaks of that desire to display arrogantly one's possessions and is evident in bragging and in insolent and vain confidence in one's own resources. These desires and attitudes do not originate with God but belong to that realm which is opposed to God. Since they are opposed to God, they will pass away when the world order comes to an end. Those who have found freedom from them by abiding in God will live forever (v.17).

Spiritual perception regarding false teachers
(2:18-27)

John continued the thought of the world's passing away by speaking of the last time (hour—RSV). Perhaps he meant by this phrase the period of time immediately preceding the end of the world. How long this period will continue is unknown. Apparently Jewish tradition predicted the appearance of antichrists during the last period before the end. An antichrist is one who stands against Christ or who stands in place

Match by drawing lines from the words which John used to address his readers to their possible meanings.

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. fathers | a. strong in faith |
| 2. young men | b. all who had come to Christ |
| 3. little children | c. mature in knowledge |

(1-c, 2-a, 3-b)

Explain briefly the following "things of the world":

1. lust of the flesh— _____
2. lust of the eyes— _____
3. pride of life— _____

(Compare your answers with the text.)

In verse 18, John referred to "the last time" which probably meant the time immediately preceding the _____.

(end of the world)

of Him. Evidence that the Church had entered the last hour was the appearance of many antichrists (v.18). An antichrist appears to be similar to Christ but is actually an opponent in the guise of a similar being. Paul spoke of a man of sin who must be revealed before the coming of the Day of the Lord (2 Thess. 2). Jesus Himself predicted the coming of false Christs (Mark 13:22).

Perhaps the antichrists were to be identified with the false teachers who held a Docetic view of Christ. Since there was more than one antichrist, perhaps the false Jewish teachers who could not accept the divinity of Christ were also included. These antichrists had been identified with the church but had departed from it because they were never really part of the Christian fellowship (v.19). If they had experienced fellowship with God which comes to those who have received Christ as truth, they would never have departed but would have continued in the church. Their separation came as a result of their disagreement with the beliefs of Christians. Their leaving the church made it clear that they were never a part of God's people.

John's Gospel points out that the coming of the Spirit of truth would enable the disciples to understand the message from God. False teachers had been in error because they did not have the anointing of the Holy Spirit to guide them in teaching the truth. Those who are God's chosen people have been given the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth (v.20). The false teachers claimed to know all things, but John refuted that claim and asserted that only those who are guided by the Holy Spirit know the truth (v.21). The emphasis on knowing indicates that the false teachers claimed to be Gnostics (*gnosis*—knowledge).

In addition to the Gnostics who claimed to have received hidden knowledge concerning salvation and who held the Docetic view of Christ, there were those who denied that Jesus is the Messiah (v.22). The purpose of John's Gospel was to show that Jesus is the Suffering Messiah who came from the Father. The signs or miracles which Jesus did were done actually by the Father and proved that the Father was in Him and approved His works. The Jews who were not chosen for the Kingdom refused to accept the teachings of Jesus. They denied that He was the Christ and that He was from the Father (v.22) which meant that they did not know the Father because one who believes in and confesses the Son has the Father (v.23).

Those who received the Word from God by believing Jesus' teachings were exhorted by John to continue in that belief (v.24). The response of faith to Jesus as the Word of God is the means by which Christ comes to abide in the lives of God's chosen. Belief in God's Word means to follow His teachings; therefore, the life of the believer abides in the Son and in the Father (v.24). This relationship of the Word through God's abiding in us and our abiding in the Son and the Father brings the promise of eternal life (v.25).

An antichrist is one who appears _____
to Christ but is actually an _____.

(similar, opponent)

Possible antichrists in John's time were:

_____ who held the
Docetic view and
_____ who could not
accept the divinity of Christ.

(false teachers, Jewish teachers)

Who guides God's chosen people into all
truth?

(Holy Spirit)

Christ abides in the believer through the
response of _____ to Jesus as the Word
of God.

Belief in God's Word means to _____
_____.

(faith, follow His teachings)

The false teachers had not permitted Christ to abide in them nor did they abide in His Word; therefore, they did not have eternal life. If John's teachings were heeded, the "little children" would not be seduced by the false teachers (v.26). The anointing which those who believed had received made it unnecessary for them to have a teacher to impart secret knowledge concerning salvation (v.27).

The Holy Spirit enables the believer to attain spiritual perception with regard to God's plan concerning salvation and His coming Kingdom. This anointing enables the believer to distinguish truth from falsehood. The Holy Spirit gives internal assurance when the believer responds to truth. John did not mean that the believer has received all objective truth, but that the Holy Spirit gives him spiritual insight into truth which comes from God. Teachers can impart true precepts, but they are unable to give insight into truth. The sure way of attaining truth from God is to abide in Christ.

The presence of the Holy Spirit enables the believer to distinguish _____ from _____.

(truth, falsehood)

Home Study Exercise

Basic activity (Levels 1, 2, and 3). After reading the study guide text, answer the following questions.

1. List the internal and external evidences which indicate the same author wrote 1 John and the Fourth Gospel. _____

2. What are the date and probable circumstances for the writing of this Epistle? _____

3. Give the occasion and purpose of the Epistle. _____

4. How did Jewish rabbis and Greek philosophers who influenced Gnostics differ in their views of material existence? _____

5. What did the Gnostics believe about Jesus Christ? _____

6. Name two problems which the Jews had in accepting Jesus as the Christ from God. _____

7. What answers did the Church give to the question of the relation of the material and spiritual and the nature of evil? _____

8. How does 1 John differ from a personal letter? _____

9. Was 1 John written primarily to Jews or Gentiles? _____

10. What does 1:1-4 say about the origin and nature of the Word of life? _____

11. What is the twofold purpose of the manifestation of the Word of life? _____

12. What did John state to be the purpose of the Epistle and the basis of the Church? _____

13. Define "walking in the light." _____

14. What does it mean to believe in Jesus as God's Son? _____

15. Distinguish between the teaching of 1:8 and of 1:10. _____

16. Since the purity required is beyond the potential accomplishment of Christians, how can they have hope? _____

17. What is the meaning of perfecting the love of God? _____
18. Why is the commandment of love old and yet new? _____

19. Contrast the life of sin and the life of love. _____

20. Why did John address his readers as little children, fathers, and young men? _____

21. What did John mean by "the things of the world"? _____

22. What did John mean by "it is the last time"? _____

23. Who were the antichrists? _____

24. How does Christ abide in the believer? _____

Supplementary activity (Levels 2 and 3). Read pages 17-74 in The Epistles of John by Neil Alexander and answer the following questions.

1. List C.H. Dodd's evidences used to argue for a different author for the Epistles and the Fourth Gospel and Alexander's counter-evidences.
2. Summarize what Alexander believes to be the occasion and purpose of the First Epistle, and state the false teachings opposed in 1 John.
3. Define the "Word of life" and "fellowship."
4. List the arguments of the seceders that John was apparently refuting in chapters 1 and 2.

Advanced activity (Level 3)

1. Describe the heretics who had departed from the church. Base your conclusions on specific statements in 1 John 1 and 2.
2. Explain what John meant by "it is the last hour" (2:18).

Seminar Discussion

1. Why are the Epistles usually attributed to the author of the Fourth Gospel?
2. What did the heretics who threatened the purity of doctrine of the church believe?
3. What is conveyed in the designation "Word of life"?
4. Explain the problem of sin and its solution in the life of believers.
5. What did John understand sin to be?
6. Why is the commandment of love described as both new and old?
7. Who were the antichrists and what was the last time in John?