

# The First Letter of John

## \*. **Who wrote the letter?**

The letter itself has no stated author (no name is given in the text). Even though the writer is unknown, tradition strongly indicates that John the Apostle is the author. This is supported by the fact that the author appears to be an eyewitness and a person of authority among the early church.

## \*. **When was it written?**

The letter appears to be written during the late 80's or early 90's. The church is preparing to experience a tremendous persecution. In addition, heresy is a constant threat. The church is in a crisis – and another crisis for this church is on the horizon of which they do not know: soon John the Apostle, their leader, will be exiled to the Isle of Patmos from which he will write the Revelation.

## \*. **To whom was it written?**

The recipients of this letter appear to be Christians living the area of Asia, particularly in the area of Ephesus. John referred to the readers of the letters as “little children.” He was one of the leaders of the “mother church” and hence was one to whom other Christians in the area looked for guidance and encouragement.

## \*. **Why was it written?**

False teachers had infiltrated the churches in the area around Ephesus. These heretics were teaching a false doctrine of salvation based upon one's personal gaining of knowledge (which later became known as the heresy of Gnosticism -- from the Greek work for “knowledge”). John is writing to remind them of the salvation they have experienced and how they can know without question they are saved – based upon God's work for them. Having been reminded of their salvation, John wanted the readers to embrace the fellowship they have with Jesus through walking in the light and living in love.

## \*. **What is the main topic?**

All Christians have fellowship with Jesus based upon His sacrifice on their behalf which results in right living and godly loving.

**1 Jn. 2:3-11** **3** By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. **4** The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; **5** but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: **6** the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked. **7** Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. **8** On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true Light is already shining. **9** The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. **10** The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. **11** But the one who 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.

**1 Jn. 3:16-19** **16** We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. **17** But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? **18** Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth. **19** We will know by this that we are of the truth, and will assure our heart before Him

**1 Jn. 4:1-6** **1** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. **2** By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God; **3** and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. **4** You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. **5** They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. **6** We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

**1 Jn. 4:7-12** **7** Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. **8** The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love. **9** By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. **10** In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. **11** Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. **12** No one has seen God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.

**1 Jn. 5:18-21** **18** We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him, and the evil one does not touch him. **19** We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. **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. This is the true God and eternal life. **21** Little children, guard yourselves from idols.