



The Epistles of John

Introduction to the First Epistle General of John

I. THE STATISTICS

A. General Book Breakdown

1. Five chapters, 105 verses, and 2,517 words
2. Sixty-second book in the Bible and twenty-third in the New Testament
3. The punctuation
 - a. 120 sentences
 - (1) 115 telling sentences
 - (2) Five questions
 - b. 204 commas
 - c. Forty-one colons
 - d. Twenty-one semicolons

B. Key Words

1. Love (love = thirty-three times; loved = four times; loveth = nine times)
2. Know (knew = one time; know = twenty-seven times; knoweth = six times; known = five times); Note: Obviously John's intention was that his audience would gain assurance from the epistle.
3. Because (twenty-five times); Note: John spent a great deal of time explaining truths in this epistle.

II. THE HUMAN AUTHOR

A. His Name

1. Never named in the gospel of John
 - a. The disciple who leaned on Jesus' breast (John 21:20-24)
 - b. The disciple whom Jesus loved; often called the beloved disciple
 - (1) At the Lord's Supper (John 13:23-26)
 - (2) At the cross (John 19:26-27)
 - (3) At the tomb (John 20:1-8)
 - (4) On the fishing boat (John 21:3-7)
2. Never named in the epistles of John
 - a. Paul's epistles (except for Hebrews) all begin with his name.
 - (1) Paul did not begin with his name in his epistle to the Hebrews.
 - (2) Remember when Moses did not want to go deliver the children of Israel in his own name (Exodus 3:11-14).
 - b. James' epistle begins with his name.
 - c. Peter's epistles begin with his name.
 - d. Jude's epistle begins with his name.



B. His Life

1. His name, John, corresponds to the Old Testament name *Jonah* which means *a dove*.
2. His parents were Zebedee and Salome (Luke 5:10; Matthew 27:56 with Mark 15:40).
3. He was brother to James (Mark 1:19) who died as a martyr early (Acts 12:1-2). Interestingly, it was John's mother who asked about her sons sitting on the right and left hand of the Lord (Matthew 20:20-23) only to learn that they would suffer greatly for the Lord. Indeed they did!
4. He was a fisherman (Mark 1:19).
5. Jesus named James and John "Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17).
6. He had been a disciple of John the Baptist (Acts 1:22-23).
7. He was one of the inner circle of three (with James and Peter).
 - a. As a witness of the raising of the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:37)
 - b. As a witness of the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9)
 - c. As an inquirer of the things to come (Mark 13:3-4)
 - d. As a witness to the agonies of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-34)
8. He was considered a pillar of the early church (Galatians 2:9).

C. His Writings

1. A general overview of his writings
 - a. In number
 - (1) Paul—100 chapters (38.5%); includes Hebrews
 - (2) Luke—fifty-two chapters (20.0%)
 - (3) John—fifty chapters (19.2%)
 - (4) Matthew—twenty-eight chapters (10.8%)
 - b. In classifications
 - (1) John wrote of the Holy Ghost's provision for three categories of New Testament writings.
 - a) History—He will "bring all things to your remembrance" (John 14:26).
 - b) Teachings—He will "teach you all things" (John 14:26) and will "guide you into all truth" (John 16:13).
 - c) Prophecy—He will "shew you things to come" (John 16:13).
 - (2) This corresponds to the three major categories of writing in the New Testament:
 - a) Things brought to remembrance are books of **History** (Matthew through Acts).
 - b) The teaching of all things and guidance into all truth are the books called the **Epistles** (Romans through Jude).
 - c) The things to come would refer to the New Testament book of **Prophecy** (Revelation).



- (3) Of the New Testament authors, only John wrote major books in all three categories:
 - a) History—the gospel of John
 - b) Teaching—the epistles of John
 - c) Prophecy—the book of Revelation
2. An association of his writings
 - a. Truth
 - (1) Found twenty-seven times in the gospel of John
 - (2) Found five times in Luke
 - (3) Found three times in Matthew and Mark
 - (4) **Found ten times in 1 John**
 - b. Commandment
 - (1) Found seven times in the gospel of John
 - (2) Found two times in Luke
 - (3) Found five times in Matthew and Mark
 - (4) **Found seven times in 1 John; Note: *Commandments* is also found seven times in 1 John.**
 - c. Love
 - (1) Found twenty-two times in the gospel of John
 - (2) Found eleven times in Matthew
 - (3) Found six times in Mark
 - (4) Found twelve times in Luke
 - (5) **Found thirty-three times in 1 John**
 - d. Love one another.
 - (1) Found five times in the gospel of John
 - (2) Found zero times in Matthew, Mark, and Luke
 - (3) **Found five times in 1 John**
 - e. Father and Son connected in a single verse
 - (1) Found thirteen times in the gospel of John
 - (2) Found three times in Matthew
 - (3) Found two times in Mark and Luke
 - (4) **Found five times in 1 John**
 - f. Joy may be full
 - (1) Found only in John’s writings
 - (2) “Joy might be full” is found in John 15:11.
 - (3) “Joy may be full” is found in John 16:24; 1 John 1:4; 2 John 1:12.

III. THE TIME OF AUTHORSHIP

A. Related to the Truth Revealed

1. Some say that John’s writings were the last writings to be completed in the New Testament.
2. Whether this is true or not, we know this epistle contains many evidences that it was penned post-resurrection.
 - a. The life was manifested unto us (1 John 1:1-2).
 - b. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin (1 John 1:7).



- c. We have an advocate with the Father (1 John 2:1).
 - d. The fathers have known Him that is from the beginning (1 John 2:13).
 - e. He was manifested to take away our sins (1 John 3:5).
 - f. The Son of God was manifested (1 John 3:8).
 - g. He laid down His life for us (1 John 3:16).
 - h. The Spirit has been given (1 John 3:24; 1 John 4:13).
 - i. God sent His Son into the world (1 John 4:9).
 - j. People are to believe on the name of the Son of God (1 John 5:13).
3. Several thoughts above would lead us to believe that John's writings took place later because of the advanced revelation found in his epistles.

B. Related to the Age of the Author

1. No introduction is given of John in this epistle.
2. However, the apostle who seemingly began his discipleship as a young man called himself "the elder" in both 2 John and 3 John.

IV. THE EMPHASIS OF THE BOOK

A. Its Division

1. Divine fellowship (1 John 1-2)
2. The children of God identified (1 John 3-4)
3. The witness of our identity (1 John 5)

B. Its Theme

1. Scriptural fellowship
 - a. With the Lord (1 John 1:3, 6; 1 John 2:6)
 - b. With others (1 John 1:3; 1 John 2:9-11; 1 John 3:11, 14-16; 1 John 4:7)
2. Considering the author
 - a. John was well acquainted with the concept of fellowship.
 - (1) He saw Christ in the flesh.
 - (2) He beheld Him on the mount of transfiguration (Mark 9:2).
 - (3) He was called the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 20:2; John 21:7).
 - (4) He laid his head on the breast of the Lord (John 13:23; John 21:20, 24).
 - (5) He saw Him on the cross (John 19:25-26).
 - (6) He saw Him after His resurrection and ascension.
 - (7) He saw Him in a vision after His ascension (Revelation 1:9-18).
 - b. Who better to tell us about fellowship than the disciple who truly walked with God?



The First Epistle General of John

John's Opening Words

1 John 1:1-4

- I. JOHN'S WITNESS (1 John 1:1-2)
 - A. The Object of His Witness (1 John 1:1)
 1. That which was from the beginning; Note: This speaks of Christ outside of time.
 - a. Christ referred to as "that" (Luke 1:35)
 - b. From the beginning
 - (1) Christ was "from the beginning" (1 John 1:1; 1 John 2:13).
 - (2) Christ was already "with God" (John 1:1-2).
 - (3) Christ is "the beginning" (Colossians 1:18; Revelation 1:8; Revelation 21:6).
 2. The Word of life
 - a. Christ as the "Word"
 - (1) Christ is "the Word" (John 1:1, 14; 1 John 5:7).
 - (2) Christ is "the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).
 - (3) Christ is "The Word of God" (Revelation 19:13).
 - (4) Note: All of these references occur in John's writings.
 - b. The fourfold work of the Word
 - (1) Thought
 - a) Although this is debated by some, a word is the most basic unit of language that expresses thought. By doing so, it reveals the hidden thought of the speaker.
 - i) It declares the mind (Proverbs 29:11).
 - ii) It declares the heart (Luke 6:45).
 - b) Christ, as the Word, expresses the hidden thoughts of God. The Word declared the unseen God (John 1:18).
 - (2) Revelation
 - a) A word opens a window to the understanding of the speaker. It reveals his character, personality, and intellect.
 - b) Christ, as the Word, revealed the nature of God to man. The only way for man to know the Father is for the Son to reveal Him (Matthew 11:27). In seeing the Son, we see the Father (John 14:6-9). The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is seen in Christ's face (2 Corinthians 4:6).
 - (3) Communication
 - a) A word imparts knowledge and truth to the listener. Through words, we understand what someone is saying.
 - b) Christ, as the Word, helps us understand the Father and His truth for us. The words Christ spoke were not of Himself,



but of the Father (John 3:34; John 8:28; John 12:49; John 14:10; John 17:8). The Father speaks to us through the Son (Hebrews 1:1-2).

- (4) Transformation
 - a) The active listener understands the word spoken to him and is changed by the experience. He may increase his knowledge or understanding. He may change his opinion or beliefs. But, in some way, he is changed.
 - b) Christ, as the Word, transforms those who listen to Him. He may be rejected (John 1:10-11) or received (John 1:12). The believer who beholds the Word will be changed into the same image he beholds (2 Corinthians 3:18).
- c. Christ as “the Word of life”
 - (1) The Lord Jesus Christ is the expression of true life. Every facet of His being exemplifies the nature of living.
 - a) Christ had life within Himself (John 1:4; John 5:26).
 - b) Life is only available through the Son (John 3:36; John 5:40; John 6:33; John 6:53).
 - c) The words of Christ are life (John 6:63).
 - d) Christ came that we might have life (John 10:10).
 - e) Jesus Christ is “the life” (John 11:25).
 - f) Life is found through the name of Christ (John 20:31).
 - g) Jesus Christ is called the “Prince of life” (Acts 3:15).
 - h) Jesus Christ is our life (Colossians 3:4).
 - (2) Note: Nothing could die or stay dead around the Saviour. Even the thieves on the cross had to wait until the Lord had given up the ghost before they could pass. Christ Himself could not have died except that He laid down His life (John 10:17).
 - (3) The life of Jesus Christ is to be manifested through us (2 Corinthians 4:8-11; Galatians 2:20).
 - a) Benefits are reaped now and in eternity (1 Timothy 4:8).
 - b) Our life is hid with Christ (Colossians 3:3; Psalm 83:3).
 - (4) Everything in the New Jerusalem is connected to life (Revelation 21:4).
 - a) A book of life (Revelation 21:27; Revelation 22:19)
 - b) A tree of life (Revelation 22:2, 14)
 - c) A river of life (Revelation 22:1, 17)

B. The Nature of His Witness (1 John 1:1; 2 Peter 1:16-18)

1. The four areas of witness—inside of time
 - a. Which we have **heard**
 - b. Which we have **seen** with our eyes
 - c. Which we have looked upon
 - d. Which our hands have **handled**
2. Each point emphasizes the humanity of Christ.
 - a. A great debate was taking place in the early church.



- (1) Arianism
 - a) Denied the deity of Christ
 - b) Jesus was human and flesh is evil; Jesus could not be God.
 - c) Therefore, Jesus was indwelt by Christ at his baptism.
 - d) Scripture references: Galatians 4:4; 1 Timothy 3:16
- (2) Docetism
 - a) Denied the humanity of Christ
 - b) The flesh is evil, hence Christ did not have a human body.
 - c) Scripture references: 1 John 1:1-2; 1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 1:7
- b. The rejecter of this truth is a deceiver and an antichrist (2 John 1:7).

C. The Explanation of His Witness (1 John 1:2)

- 1. The life was manifested (John 1:1-14).
- 2. The life was seen (1 John 4:14).
- 3. The life was now declared.
 - a. John bore witness.
 - b. John showed the audience “that” eternal life.

II. JOHN’S DECLARATION (1 John 1:3)

A. The Knowledge of His Declaration

- 1. What he saw
- 2. What he heard
- 3. That he declared

B. The Benefit of His Declaration

- 1. That we may have fellowship with believers
- 2. Our fellowship is with the Father and the Son (John 17:20-21).
 - a. The Father and Son are one.
 - b. We are one in the Father and the Son.

III. JOHN’S STATEMENT OF PURPOSE (1 John 1:3-4)

A. Fellowship (1 John 1:3)

- 1. With the Father and Son
- 2. With other believers

B. Fulness of Joy (1 John 1:4)

C. Freedom from Sin (1 John 2:1)

D. Faith and Assurance (1 John 5:13)



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Divine Fellowship

1 John 1:5-10

- I. FELLOWSHIP AND LIGHT (1 John 1:5-7)
 - A. The Man and His Message (1 John 1:5)
 1. The source of the message
 - a. “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you.”
 - b. This places John in the company of great servants of God.
 - (1) The Lord Jesus (John 7:16; John 8:28; John 12:49; John 17:8)
 - (2) The apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 11:23; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 Thessalonians 4:2)
 - (3) The constant cry of the Old Testament—“Thus saith the Lord”
 2. The faithfulness of declaration
 - B. The Content of the Message (1 John 1:5)
 1. The positive—“God is light.”
 - a. A declaration of the essence of God
 - (1) Light is good.
 - a) This is declared by the Lord at creation (Genesis 1:3-4).
 - b) It is greater than darkness (Genesis 1:4; Ecclesiastes 2:13).
 - c) It has no fellowship with darkness (2 Corinthians 6:14).
 - d) It is sweet to the eyes (Ecclesiastes 11:7).
 - (2) The Lord is light.
 - a) His countenance is light (Psalm 4:6; Psalm 89:15; Psalm 90:8).
 - b) He is adorned in light (Psalm 104:2; 1 Timothy 6:16).
 - c) He is the light of His people (Psalm 27:1).
 - d) Darkness is light before Him (Psalm 139:11-12).
 - e) He will be the light of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:23; Revelation 22:5).
 - (3) Light is connected to attributes and extensions of God.
 - a) The goodness of God (Psalm 4:6)
 - b) The righteousness of God (Micah 7:9)
 - c) The justness of God (Psalm 36:9; Psalm 43:3; Psalm 90:8)
 - d) The glory of God (Isaiah 60:1, 19; Matthew 17:2; 2 Corinthians 4:6)
 - e) The word of God (Psalm 119:105, 130)
 - f) The judgment of God (John 3:19-21)



- b. Manifested in Christ's incarnation
 - (1) People in darkness saw great light (Isaiah 9:2; Matthew 4:16).
 - (2) The Lord Jesus was the Light of men (John 1:4-9).
 - (3) He was the Light of the world (John 8:12; John 9:5).
 - c. Manifested presently in the people of God
 - (1) We are called children of light (Luke 16:8; John 12:36; Ephesians 5:8; 1 Thessalonians 5:5).
 - (2) We are the light of the world in Christ's absence (Matthew 5:14).
 - (3) Light associates us with Christ (Matthew 5:16; 1 John 1:7).
 - (4) Light is connected to salvation (Acts 26:18; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 Peter 2:9).
 - d. Manifested in the future
 - (1) Our view of the Lord
 - a) As He is (1 John 3:2)
 - b) In righteousness (Psalm 17:15)
 - c) Face to face (1 Corinthians 13:12)
 - (2) Our nature in His presence
 - a) Consider Moses when he was in the presence of God (Exodus 34:28-35).
 - b) The righteous will shine in the kingdom (Matthew 13:43).
 - c) The wise will shine as the firmament (Daniel 12:3).
 - d) Those who turn others to righteousness will shine (Daniel 12:3).
2. The negative—"in him is no darkness at all."
- a. In Him is no darkness.
 - (1) Darkness has connotations of God's judgment (Exodus 10:21; 1 Samuel 2:9; Proverbs 4:19; Matthew 8:12).
 - (2) Notice the wording. The Bible does not say that He is in no darkness at all; rather, it says, "**in him** is no darkness at all."
 - (3) It would be contrary to scripture to say that He is in no darkness, because thick darkness is associated with God's presence (Exodus 20:21; Deuteronomy 4:11; Deuteronomy 5:22-23; 2 Samuel 22:10, 12; 1 Kings 8:12; Psalm 18:9, 11; Psalm 97:2).
 - b. The truth reaffirmed (John 18:38)
 - (1) No darkness at all
 - (2) If darkness is associated with sin and the judgment of God, then it is of the utmost importance that people understand that God has absolutely no sin or appearance of sin within His nature (Isaiah 53:9; Luke 23:41; John 8:46; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 1:9; Hebrews 4:15; Hebrews 7:26; Hebrews 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 Peter 2:22; 1 John 3:5).
 - (3) This was crucial in the battle over the deity of Christ. He was indeed man and God, but He was both without sin.
 - a) As God, Christ could not have sinned (James 1:13).
 - b) As man, He was able to understand the nature of temptation (Hebrews 2:18; Hebrews 4:15).



C. The Proof of the Message (1 John 1:6-7)

1. A false claim (1 John 1:6)
 - a. A claim of fellowship with the Lord
 - (1) This epistle deals with assurance.
 - (2) Therefore, the reader will find several statements like the one found in the beginning of verse 6 (1 John 1:8; 1 John 2:4; 1 John 4:20).
 - (3) It is scriptural for a man to examine his own position in Christ (2 Corinthians 13:5).
 - (4) The greatest danger is for a man not to know his own condition (Revelation 3:14-18).
 - (5) Believers are not of the night (1 Thessalonians 5:5), but they can **walk** in darkness (1 John 1:6).
 - b. A denial of fellowship with the Lord
 - (1) Walking in darkness
 - a) Walking in darkness is associated with being alienated from God (Psalm 82:5; Proverbs 2:13; Proverbs 4:18-19; John 3:19; John 11:10; John 12:35, 46; 1 John 2:9-11).
 - b) Therefore, if a man walks in darkness, he is not walking with God (Psalm 5:4-6; Amos 3:3; 2 Corinthians 6:14-16).
 - c) Remember that the passage is dealing with fellowship.
 - d) Fellowship is a matter of colabouring with the Lord (Matthew 16:24; 1 Corinthians 3:9).
 - (2) Deceit
 - a) We lie (1 Timothy 4:1-2).
 - b) We do not the truth.
2. A true walk (1 John 1:7)
 - a. Walking with the Lord
 - (1) If we walk in the light
 - a) We are children of light (Ephesians 5:8).
 - b) We still must choose to **walk** in the light.
 - (2) As He is in the light
 - a) God is light (1 John 1:5).
 - b) God is in the light (1 John 1:6; 1 Timothy 6:16).
 - c) God is called the Father of lights (James 1:17).
 - b. Fellowship one with another
 - (1) Two options of interpretation
 - a) Fellowship with other believers
 - b) Fellowship with the Lord
 - (2) Though both options of interpretation would be accurate, it would seem most likely that this phrase is speaking of fellowshiping with the Lord.
 - c. The cleansing of the blood
 - (1) The conditional cleansing
 - a) If we walk in the light...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.



- b) This verse seems to suggest that the cleansing of the blood of Christ is conditional upon our walk.
- c) Other passages seem to indicate the believer is already cleansed by the blood of Christ (Romans 5:8-11; 1 Corinthians 6:11; Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14, 20; Hebrews 9:12; Revelation 1:5-6).
- (2) The context of the cleansing
 - a) The context of this passage is fellowship with the Lord.
 - b) Fellowship is not salvation and salvation is not fellowship.
 - i) Fellowship = Practice
 - (a) A believer's practice or state refers to his present relationship with Christ.
 - (b) Although his practice changes continually, his position in Christ always remains the same (Colossians 2:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:5-6; Hebrews 10:10 with 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 10:14 with Philippians 3:12).
 - ii) Salvation = Position
 - (a) A believer's position or standing refers to his perfect position in Christ.
 - (b) In Christ, he is pure, sanctified, and complete in every way (Romans 6:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:5-7; Ephesians 2:4-6; Colossians 2:10; Hebrews 10:10, 14).
 - iii) This truth exemplified (Colossians 3:1-17)
 - (a) Our position in Christ (Colossians 3:1-4)
 - (i) We are risen with Christ (Colossians 3:1, 3).
 - (ii) We are seated in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:4-6).
 - (iii) Our conversation is in heaven (Philippians 3:20).
 - (b) Our practice on earth (Colossians 3:5-17)
 - (i) The negative practice (Colossians 3:5-9)
 - (ii) The positive practice (Colossians 3:12-17)
 - (c) The challenge given (Colossians 3:1)
 - (i) "If" you are
 - (ii) Then, act like it.
 - c) This contrast shows us that the conditional cleansing has to do with our daily walk with the Lord rather than our eternal position in Christ.
 - d) We are already cleansed, but we need to be cleansed on a daily basis.
 - e) Failure to understand the difference between position and practice will lead to belief in false doctrine such as loss of salvation.