

So That You May Know

An Expository Journey through **1John**

Chapter 1- An Introduction to **1John**

3. An Introduction to **1John** Part 3

WAOY Wednesday 04/04/07; WOSM Monday 09/29/08; Wednesday 10/05/22

Welcome again, my beloved in Jesus Christ. Now on the last broadcast, I was giving you the parameters that I will be following on this new Journey through **1John** and today I want to continue discussing that with you.

This Epistle of **1John** is the first and largest of a three Epistle set and the majority of theologians suggest that this Book was written by the Apostle John sometime late in the first century- even though there are some who believe that John wrote this Book in or around 56 AD.

Now at the time of this writing- John was living in Ephesus, in what is now called modern day Turkey. And John held apostolic authority over many of the Churches of that region and was well loved and well respected by the Christian Church.¹

Now John was the last of a very special and unique group of men called “Apostles”, who were men who had been personally handpicked by Jesus Christ Himself to *receive* the Divine Revelation of the New Covenant and record it for us in the New Testament which had the effect of establishing the Christian Church on the earth. In addition- these men were specially ordained and anointed to validate the authority of New Testament Scripture through the manifestation of powerful apostolic signs and wonders and to correctly interpret what God the Holy Spirit had moved upon the Prophets to write in the 39 Books of the Old Testament.

Now today there are some people who “self- appoint” themselves as Apostles- but with all due respect to these men- who may be very sincere in calling themselves Apostles- they use this term loosely and wrongly. An Apostle is not somebody who sets up *a* Church- like I did here on John Clark Road and like many other men have down all

¹ John MacArthur, The MacArthur Bible Handbook (Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville TN, 2003) pages 495-503

through the 2,000 year history of the Church. But a true Apostle is someone who has been personally handpicked and chosen by Jesus Christ Himself to set up and establish *the* Church- the one single Christian Church. Apostles were ordained and equipped to be able to directly receive the final, full, and completed Revelation of God that makes up the 27 Books of the New Testament. And these men were uniquely gifted to be able to perform amazing signs and wonders which gave Divine Credibility to the Radical Revelation that God has given them so that people would have confidence that what they received was from God and not Man.

Now the Apostles were different from Pastors or Teachers or Evangelists. The Apostle's duty and responsibility and calling was very narrow and unique in that God chose them to establish Christianity on the earth and to formulate the body of teaching that would define Christian Doctrine.

So since that is true and the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ has already been established in the earth; and since it is true that Christianity has already been established in the earth and since it is true that all Christian Doctrine has already been formulated and since it is true that the canon of Scripture is now closed- there is no further need or use of the office of Apostle.

Now I'm not saying that because I think God has lost His Power or that I am trying to quench the Spirit or any of that. I am saying that the Office and Ministry of the Apostle has ceased simply because they succeeded in what God called them to do. Remember Jesus didn't sit down at the Right hand of the Father when He ascended up into Heaven because He was tired- but because He was finished. He accomplished everything that God told Him to do while He was on the earth. And the Apostles are no longer needed on the earth, dear friends because what God told them to do is also finished.

Christianity will never be established again- it has already been established. And so the Offices and the gifts and the anointing that we need today are different from what the Apostles had. So while Christianity does not need to ever be established again- it does need to be preached and taught and believed on and defended and propagated around the world.

And while we have absolutely no need at all for any additional Revelation from God- what we *do* need is to study and learn and teach

and believe and obey and defend the *already existing* Revelation that God gave to the Apostles. As we discovered in our journey through Jude that we just finished- what we are told to do today is to:

Jude 3

contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.

So with all due respect- those who claim to be modern day Apostles are either unbelievably naïve or they are trying to falsely give themselves spiritual credibility that they are not entitled to. Either way- they are wrong; so we are safe to say that there are no living Apostles on the earth today- none.

But even though we no longer have need of Apostles today- we *do* have need to fellowship with them and to be taught by them and we do this by studying what these men were inspired to write down. So it is true to say that the Christian Church is established upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets with Jesus Christ Himself being the Cornerstone as **Ephesians 2:20** declares even though we no longer have Apostles or Prophets alive today.

You see, brothers and sisters, our job today is not to set up or establish the Church in the earth. Our job today is not to formulate or create new Christian Doctrine. Our job today is not to write new inspired Scripture. Our job today is not to come up with new revelation or fresh new Truths. Our job today is to become a part of the already set up and already established visible Christian Church on the earth. Our job is to study and learn the already existing Christian Doctrine that the genuine Apostles have already formulated for us. Our job today is to faithfully proclaim and teach and live the already established inspired Scriptures. Our job today is to disciple God's people in the already given and already established Truths of the Christian Faith. Our job today is to make sure that we are faithful to what Christ and His Apostles have already set up and taught. And our job today is to actively and radically reform the visible Church so that it comes into alignment with that pattern that the Holy Spirit inspired in Scripture.

Our job today is to remain faithful to Christ in all things and in all circumstances regardless of the consequences and to be fully

surrendered and submitted to His Word and to earnestly contend for that one single Christian Faith that was one time given to the Church and to be eagerly awaiting the imminent return of the Lord Jesus Christ and to hear the most blessed words that could ever be heard,

Matthew 25:21

Well done, good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.'

Now **1John** is part of what is called, the “Didactic Books” of the Bible. These are the Epistles or the teaching Books of the Bible from where all Christian Doctrine is formulated. So **1John** is very important for us to learn and study and understand so that our Doctrine may be found true and in line with the rest of Scripture.

John was the last of the men who physically walked with Jesus Christ. All of the other Apostles had died the martyr’s death. John’s brother, James had been killed by the edge of the sword very soon after Jesus’ Resurrection as recorded in **The Acts 12:2**. According to history, Peter, who had been the Bishop of Antioch, was crucified upside down. It took him four days to die- all the while he was preaching for men to repent and serve the living God. The great Apostle Paul has been beheaded as was John the Baptist. Bartholomew was flayed alive with knives. Timothy was beaten to death with clubs for denouncing a Mardi Gras type parade. Stephen was stoned to death- Matthew, John Mark, Luke, all were now dead and John only remained alive.

But it wasn’t their fault that John as still living- they had tried to kill him- twice. According to history, John was arrested; thrown in jail; beaten; and then boiled in oil- and when he just wouldn’t die- they banished him to a barren island called Patmos to starve to death. And it was on that barren island where he was sentenced to die that God came down and visited John and gave him the final vision of Jesus Christ and John wrote his vision down in **The Book of the Revelation** and in **Chapter 1:10** John says that rather than being discouraged and bitter about his banishment he said,

I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, ...

...which tells us a little about John’s personality and his trust in God.

It was in that same Revelation that John wrote down the Promise that God made to him that he was somehow going to get off that island and was going to preach the Gospel again. Look at **The Revelation 10:11:**

And they said to me, "You must prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings."

So John *did* get off that island and here at the end of the first century- this old man- the last living Apostle on earth; the last man who actually saw and touched Jesus Christ; the last man who literally placed his head on Jesus' breast and heard the heartbeat of the incarnate God- this man sat in a chair in Ephesus and dictated to his disciple who was also named John, this Epistle that we are now studying some 2,000 years later.

Now the Church was facing serious challenges at the time that John wrote this Epistle. You see, it was still illegal to be a Christian in most countries and so most believers were not safe anywhere they went. Christians were hunted down and arrested and had their goods and possessions confiscated from them by both Gentiles and Jews. All of the men who actually walked with Jesus were either dead or very old and ready to die. And the original two main groups of heretics- the Judaizers and the Antinomians- were hard at work, trying to pervert the right way of the Lord.

Now as we have studied in our "journey through Jude" the Judaizers taught that in order to become a good Christian- Gentile believers had to first become good Jews and keep the ceremonial and dietary laws that God had given to the Jews- so by their legalism- they *ignored* the Grace of God whereby men are truly saved.

The Antinomians, on the other hand, taught that good works and godly fruit and humble obedience after Salvation were unimportant and by their false teaching- they were *abusing* Grace. The Apostle Paul had led the fight along with Peter and James against these heretics and Jude had cried out to the Church to earnestly contend for the one true Christian Faith that was once and for all handed down to the saints.

But now, in the last days of John's life, a new strange heresy was creeping into the Church. This new false teaching was called "Gnosticism" and had many facets. One group of Gnostics denied the full Deity of Christ; while another group of Gnostics denied His full

Humanity. Still another group of Gnostics taught that we need to blend or “synchronize” all pagan beliefs and celebrations with the Church’s teaching; while still another group of Gnostics taught that Jesus had secretly married Mary of Magdalene and had fathered a child.

At the time of John’s writings of his five inspired Books- his Gospel account; his three Epistles that bear his name and his great Revelation of Jesus Christ- it was this new heresy of Gnosticism that was beating on the door of the Church trying to get in, and so we shall see in our study how the Apostle John was inspired by God the Holy Spirit to confront Gnosticism in all of its forms and defeat it by clearly teaching both the full Humanity and the Deity of Jesus Christ.

Also in this Epistle, we will see how that John uses great contrasts to describe the obvious difference between believers and lost people and we will see just how clearly John taught that if you are saved- you are a new creature- with a new heart and a new nature and that saved people serve God and no longer dwell continually in sin.

1John is called a “General Epistle” in that it is not specifically addressed to certain group of people or to a particular person. That means that its Truths are good and right for all believers to adopt and teach today.

There are two key figures that John deals with in **1John**- himself and Jesus. Because John was so well known and so well loved- it was not needed for him to say that he wrote it- everybody who knew him and who knew how he preached would immediately recognize that he was the writer. Also, the reason that John describes himself and refers to himself in this Epistle was also to give this Book the credibility that it needed to be included in the canon of Scripture.

Well I’m excited about this study on **1John** and I am looking forward to delving into the heights and depths of Gods’ Word with you as we study the great Epistle of **1John**. But I have to stop right now so please join with me on the next broadcast as we continue our journey through the Epistle of 1John. May God help us all.

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