

# Journeys into the Epistles of John

**AUTHOR:** – Over the years there has been some question over the authorship of the Biblical: The Gospel of John, 1 John, 2 John, 3 John and the book of the Revelation. The general consensus is that the Apostle John, one of the twelve disciples that Jesus called is the author of each of these five books in the New Testament. The early church fathers, Papias, Polycarp and Irenaeus that these were the works of the John, the Apostle of Jesus.

**BACKGROUND:** John was born at Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee to Zebedee and Salome. His older brother was named James. John and James were called by Jesus as Apostles and due to their fiery dispositions; Jesus nicknamed them the “sons of thunder.” It is believed by some that Salome was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. John’s brother James was the first disciple martyred.

While a lot of attention is given to the writings of the Apostle Paul, and more particularly his *prison epistles*, it should be noted that Paul had been dead (AD 67) nearly twenty years before John wrote the Gospel and some years before John wrote the Epistles that we are going to study. The Apostle Paul is not the only one that wrote to instruct believers. Therefore, since the Apostle John, the last of the Twelve, was writing towards the end of the first century, he was chosen by God to write about the *apostolic age*.

**WHEN:** This date cannot be fixed with certainty. It was probably written from the city of Ephesus. The letter was written after the Gospel and before the book of the Revelation, sometime around AD 81-96.

**WHY:** Why was 1 John written? In the closing chapters of the Gospel of John, we find the reason the Gospel was written:

*John 20:30-31* And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name. (KJV)

---

Notice the three important points the Apostle makes in verse 31 concerning the reason for writing the book. 1) That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ. 2) That ye might believe that Jesus is the Son of God. 3) That believing ye might have life through his name.

Likewise, John tells us why this first Epistle is written:

*1 John 5:13* These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (KJV)

---

# Journeys into the Epistles of John

The epistle was centrally written to counter the Docetism (doe-see-tism; the idea that Jesus did not come in the flesh, but as a spirit, Christ only seemed to have a human body and to suffer and die on the cross). This movement was gaining ground through the church. The Gnostic's had infiltrated the church with their impression that they know more than the average believer. The Gnostic's attitude and Docetism was a plague in the church.

Gnostics vs agnostics – the Gnostic says “I know” and the agnostic says “I don't know”. The Gnostic's say, “Jesus was simply naturally born to Mary and Joseph and at His baptism the Holy Spirit took possession of Him and then left Jesus while He was on the cross.”

Charles Spurgeon said, “agnostic is but the Greek word for the Latin word ignoramus.”

Also, at the time that John was writing, the Roman persecutions of Christians were widespread. The readers of this letter would need encouraging. John reminds those that have put their trust in Jesus 1) that there is life beyond the grave and it is eternal. 2) That they can put their faith and trust in Jesus for He was the Son of God.

Throughout this letter, John emphasizes “fellowship”, “joy”, “ye know”, “we know”, “believe”, “light” and “love”.

There are three distinct “beginnings” in the bible.

***Genesis 1:1*** *In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth. (KJV)*

***John 1:1-4*** *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. (KJV)*

***1 John 1:1-4*** *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. (KJV)*

---

**WHO:** Who was it written to? 1 John was probably a circular letter to believers throughout the province of Asia. This would have included the seven churches addressed in the Book of the Revelation, chapters 2-3.

*Robert C. Crowder*