







# 1 John

- Who wrote it?
- To whom did he write it?
- When did he write it?
- Why did he write it?

# Who wrote 1 John?

- NT letters normally tell us (e.g. – Gal. 1:1)
- Many theories / options:
  - John the Apostle
  - *The Elder* (see 2 John 1; 3 John 1)
  - Someone (possibly a group of people) pretending to be John the Apostle
  - Someone else entirely

# Who wrote 1 John?

- The evidence: style, word usage, tradition, attestations
  - Purpose and audience can account for style and wording differences
  - Tradition and attestations can be sketchy or contradictory
- Let's assume: *John the Apostle*



# Who wrote 1 John?

- Who was *John the Apostle*?
  - Son of Zebedee, brother of James (Matt. 4:21)
    - Jesus' cousin? (Matt. 27:56; Mark 15:40-41)
  - Partner with Peter (Luke 5:10)
    - Successful fishermen (cf. Mark 1:20)
  - One of Jesus' *Inner Three* (cf. Matt. 26:37)
  - "The disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23)

# Who wrote 1 John?

- Who was *John the Apostle*?
  - Half of the “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17)
    - Bold (Mark 10:32-45)
    - Brash (Luke 9:54)
  - Learned to love (1 John 4:11)
    - *Love* (in various forms) used over 50 times in 1 John



# Who wrote 1 John?

- Who was *John the Apostle*?
  - He was an *eye-witness*
    - Jesus: “**you shall be My witnesses**” (Acts 1:6; cf. Luke 24:44-49)
    - The Apostles claim this (Acts 1:21-22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32; 10:39-42; 13:26; 26:16; 1 Pet. 5:1; cf. Heb. 2:3-4)

# Who wrote 1 John?

- Who was *John the Apostle*?
  - He was an *eye-witness*
    - “This is the disciple who is testifying to these things and wrote these things” (John 21:24)
    - *heard, seen, looked at, touched* (1 John 1:1); *what we have seen and heard we proclaim* (1 John 1:3; cf. 4:14)



# Who wrote 1 John?

- Who was *John the Apostle*?
  - Outlived other apostles (cf. John 21:20-23)
    - Exiled to Patmos; returned to Ephesus
    - Likely wrote from there
  - Reluctant to write? (see 2 John 12; 3 John 13)
  - Style: *cyclical*





To whom did he write it? And when?

- Most likely churches in Asia
  - Not any one particular church but several in the area (cf. Rev. 1:11; 2:1-3:22)
  - Was he *The Elder* in Ephesus? (cf. 2 John 1)
    - Church Fathers: John 'governed' in Asia
    - Familiarity: *beloved & little children*
- Most likely between AD 85 and 98 (prob. 90ish)





Why did he write it?

- What words or ideas are repeated?
  - *Life/death, light/darkness, truth/lie (error), deceive, sin/ righteousness, love, abide, keep, know, believe, obey, practice, commands, fellowship, confidence*
- What does that tell us about his purpose for writing?



Why did he write it?

- “Therefore many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but **these have been written so that you may believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and **that believing you may have life in His name.** (John 20:30-31)





Why did he write it?

- “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life.” (1 John 5:13)
  - To believers, to give them assurance, because false teacher were trying to deceive them
    - The deceivers were once part of the fellowship (2:18-19)



Why did he write it?

- “These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to **deceive** you.” (2:26)
  - “even now many antichrists have appeared” (2:18)
- Therefore “test the spirits ... because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (4:1)





Why did he write it?

- Errors of the false teachers:
  - *Pre-Gnosticism*
    - Matter – bad! Spirit – good!
      - Denied the Son of God became man (2:22-23; 4:2-3; 5:1)
      - Denial of sin as *sin* (1:6-10; cf. 4:1-10) – i.e. – advanced beyond *good* and *evil*



Why did he write it?

- Errors of the false teachers:
  - *Pre-Gnosticism*
    - Special secret knowledge required to reach higher spiritual levels
    - “I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it...” (2:21; cf. 24, 27)





Why did he write it?

- Errors of the false teachers:
  - Lack of love (i.e. - *hate*) for others (2:9-11; 3:11-20; 4:20-21)
  - Attack on John's authority? (1:1-3; 4:6)



# Why did he write it?

- Errors result in:
  - **Moral failure**: *not practicing the truth; walking in darkness, practicing sin, not keeping His commandments (1:6; 2:3-6; 3:4)*
  - **Deception**: *lying to self or others -- lie, liar, deceive (1:6, 8, 10; 2:4; 3:7)*
  - **Broken/false fellowship** (2:18-19)





Why did he write it?

- Obedience to the **truth** results in **righteousness** and **fellowship** (1:7; 3:7; 4:20-21)
  - *Fellowship* comes from believing the same things (see 1:3) and living them out in community (1:6-7)
  - “what you have heard from the beginning” – i.e. – apostolic **truth** (4:6; cf. 2:7, 23-24; 3:11)



Why did he write it?

- *Drawing a line in the sand*: give assurance to true believers, and expose false professors
  - Three tests:
    - **Doctrinal** – the truth about Christ
    - **Ethical** – the commands of Christ
    - **Social** – true fellowship in Christ
  - *Truth -> right actions -> true fellowship*



## So What?

- It is possible to *know* we have eternal life (5:13)
  - *Confidence, assure our hearts*
  - Comes from knowing the truth and acting on it in the community of faith
    - For example: 1 Cor. 11:17-34
    - Communion: Matt. 26:26-29



# Communion

**“Take, eat;  
this is My body,  
which is for you”**





# Communion

**“this is My blood of the covenant,  
which is poured out for many  
for forgiveness of sins”**