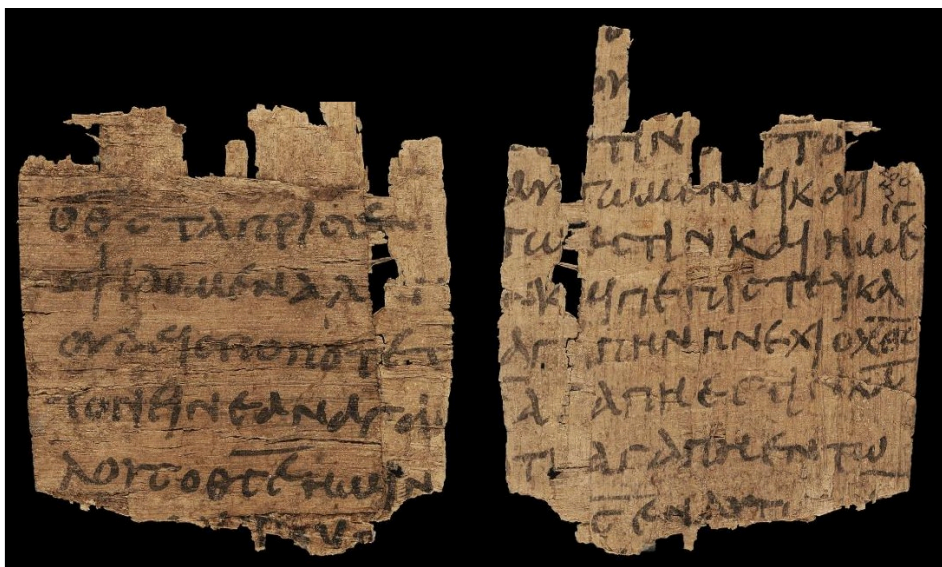


1 JOHN

God Is Love

AUTHOR	John the apostle, the disciple Jesus loved, though the letter never names him. Some think John the Elder or a circle of John's followers wrote it.
WRITTEN FROM	Ephesus, where early writers say John spent his last years.
DATE WRITTEN	About AD 85 to 95.
WRITTEN TO	Churches John cared for, probably around Ephesus in what is now Turkey. He calls them little children.
WHY HE WROTE	Teachers had left the church saying Jesus did not really come in the flesh. John writes so believers can know they have eternal life, 5:13.
KEY VERSE	1 John 4:8. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.



THE OLDEST COPY OF 1 JOHN

Papyrus 9, copied in the 200s and found at Oxyrhynchus, Egypt. The two sides of this small scrap hold parts of 1 John 4:11 to 12 and 4:14 to 17, the chapter that says God is love. Kept at Harvard University's Houghton Library. Public domain.

Historical Setting

John was the last of the twelve apostles still alive, an old man living in Ephesus, early writers say. A group of teachers had walked out of the churches, 2:19. They claimed special knowledge, acted like sin did not matter, and denied that Jesus the Christ had really come in a human body, 4:2 to 3. The people left behind were shaken. Were they really saved? John writes like a grandfather to his little children: here is how you can know.

What Was Going Wrong

THE WALKOUT. False teachers left the church and pulled others with them, 2:19 and 2:26.
ALL TALK. People said they knew God but did not obey Him, 2:4.
DENYING JESUS. They denied Jesus is the Christ come in the flesh, 2:22 and 4:3.
NO SIN. Some claimed they had no sin at all, 1:8 and 1:10.
HATE. Claiming to love God while hating a brother, 2:9 and 4:20.
THE WORLD. The pull of the flesh, the eyes and pride, 2:15 to 16.

The Idiot Proof Summary

1 John is a letter about being sure. John gives three tests of real faith: do you believe Jesus is the Christ who came in the flesh, do you obey Him, and do you love other believers? People who pass are not perfect; they confess their sins. But they belong to God. And at the center of it all is the shortest description of God in the Bible: God is love.

1 John at a Glance

- CH 1

WALK IN THE LIGHT
Seen and touched, light and darkness, confess your sins.
- CH 2

KNOW HIM, OBEY HIM
Our advocate, the new commandment, do not love the world, antichrists.
- CH 3

CHILDREN OF THE FATHER
What manner of love, no peace with sin, Cain, love in action.
- CH 4

LOVE ONE ANOTHER
Test the spirits, He first loved us, perfect love drives out fear.
- CH 5

SO THAT YOU MAY KNOW
Faith overcomes, eternal life in the Son, prayer, keep away from idols.

Where Jesus Shows Up

- 1 JOHN 1:1 TO 2 The Word of life whom John heard, saw and touched.
- 1 JOHN 2:1 TO 2 Our advocate with the Father and the atoning sacrifice for our sins.
- 1 JOHN 3:8 The Son of God was revealed to destroy the works of the devil.
- 1 JOHN 5:20 The true God and eternal life.

What to Watch for in 1 John

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES	1:7, 2:2, 3:5, 3:8, 4:10, 5:6
END TIMES PROPHECIES	2:18, 3:2
THE HEART	3:19-21
DEMONIC	2:13-14, 3:10, 3:12, 4:1-4, 5:18-19, 5:21
NOTABLE	1:5, 1:9, 2:1, 2:15-17, 2:20, 2:27, 3:1 and 6 more
JESUS SPEAKING	Words in red are Jesus speaking, or God the Father speaking from heaven.

Cool Stuff Most People Miss

- NO NAME**
John never names himself in this letter. Early Christians knew who wrote it by his voice and by tradition.
- SOUNDS LIKE HIS GOSPEL**
Light, life, love, truth, abide, little children: the same words fill the Gospel of John.

THE SHORTEST DEFINITION

Only this letter says it in these exact words, 4:8 and 4:16.

ANTICHRIST

John is the only Bible writer who uses the word antichrist.

THE MISSING WORDS

5:7 to 8 holds the most famous added words in the KJV. See The Big Question pages.

What Happened Next?

Early writers say John lived in Ephesus until the time of the emperor Trajan, who began to rule in AD 98, and tradition says he was the only one of the twelve to die of old age. His disciple Polycarp quoted this letter; see What Polycarp Wrote. Centuries later a huge church was built over his traditional grave; see The Basilica of St John.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES | NOTABLE

1

CHAPTER 1 IN 30 SECONDS

John starts like a witness in court: we heard Him, saw Him and touched Him. God is light, so walk in the light. And do not pretend you never sin. Confess it, and He forgives you and cleans you up. Simple, but not easy.

THE WORD OF LIFE // LUKE 24:36-49; JOHN 20:19-23

¹That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our own eyes, which we have gazed upon and touched with our own hands—this is the Word of life. ²And this is the life that was revealed; we have seen it and testified to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us.

³We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And this fellowship of ours is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We write these things so that our joy may be complete.

WALKING IN THE LIGHT // JOHN 8:12-29

⁵And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you: God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say we have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. ⁷But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

⁸If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say we have

■ **1JN 1:1 [NOTE]** SEEN AND TOUCHED. John stresses that Jesus had a real body you could touch. Some false teachers said He only seemed human. See What Irenaeus Wrote. WHO WROTE IT? The letter names no author; the church has always said John the apostle.

■ **1JN 1:5 [NOTABLE]** No shadow, no dark side. That is why walking in the light matters, 1:7.

■ **1JN 1:7 [FULFILLS]** It is the blood that makes atonement ← LEV 17:11 p. –

■ **1JN 1:7 [FULFILLS]** In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness ← ZECH 13:1 p. –

■ **1JN 1:9 [NOTABLE]** The promise every believer leans on when they fail.

■ **1JN 1:9 [NOTE]** CONFESSION. Most Protestants read this as confessing straight to God. Catholics and Orthodox

not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar, and His word is not in us.

FIELD NOTES · ARCHAEOLOGY · CONFIDENCE: HIGH FOR THE CHURCH · THE TOMB IS TRADITION

THE BASILICA OF ST JOHN

1 JOHN 1:1 TO 4 · JOHN 21:20 TO 24 · REVELATION 1:9 TO 11



Ruins of the Basilica of St John on Ayasuluk Hill, Selcuk, Turkey, with the later castle behind. Photo Bernard Gagnon, CC BY SA 3.0.

WHAT IT IS

The ruins of one of the biggest churches of the ancient world, on a hill just outside old Ephesus. It was built in the shape of a cross over the place where Christians said the apostle John was buried.

HOW OLD IT IS

The emperor Justinian built this church about AD 548 to 565. It replaced a smaller church from the 300s over the same grave. Earthquakes and raids later wrecked it. Greek archaeologists began digging in 1921, and later work rebuilt some walls and columns, so not every column standing today is where it fell.

JOHN IN EPHEBUS

Irenaeus, about AD 180, says John lived in Ephesus until the time of Trajan, AD 98 to 117. Polycrates, a bishop of Ephesus about AD 190, wrote that John sleeps at Ephesus. Eusebius quotes him.

TWO TOMBS?

About AD 250 Dionysius of Alexandria said people showed two tombs of a John at Ephesus. Some think one was John the apostle and one John the Elder, the name Papias used. Others think it was just two rival spots for the same man.

THE TOMB TODAY

Under the old altar a square of modern

also see it in confession to a priest, John 20:23 and James 5:16. All agree God forgives the one who confesses.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

DEMONIC

NOTABLE

marble with four columns marks the traditional grave. No bones or inscription naming John have been found.

WHY IT MATTERS HERE

1 John was most likely written to the churches around Ephesus. John says, we have seen Him and touched Him, 1:1, and Christians in this city remembered the old man who said it.

WHAT IT DOES NOT PROVE

The church proves Christians honored this spot as John's grave by the 300s. It cannot prove John is buried here.

2

CHAPTER 2 IN 30 SECONDS

Jesus speaks up for us when we blow it. Say you know Him? Then obey Him, and love your brother. Do not love the world and its stuff; it is all passing away. Many antichrists have already shown up, people who deny that Jesus is the Christ. Stay with what you heard from the beginning.

JESUS OUR ADVOCATE

1 My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate before the Father—Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. **2** He Himself is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.

3 By this we can be sure that we have come to know Him: if we keep His commandments. **4** If anyone says, "I know Him," but does not keep His commandments, he is a liar, and the truth is not in him. **5** But if anyone keeps His word, the love of God has been truly perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him: **6** Whoever claims to abide in Him must walk as Jesus walked.

■ **1JN 2:1 [NOTABLE]** When we sin, Jesus speaks up for us like a defense lawyer who already paid the fine.

■ **1JN 2:2 [FULFILLS]** The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all ← IS 53:6a p.~

■ **1JN 2:2 [FULFILLS]** Stricken for the transgression of the people ← IS 53:8d p.~

■ **1JN 2:2 [NOTE]** THE WHOLE WORLD. Atoning sacrifice, the KJV says propitiation, is the sacrifice that turns away God's anger and covers sin. Arminians say the whole world means every person. Calvinists say it means people from every nation, not only Jews, John 11:51 to 52, or that it is enough for all but applied to those who believe.

A NEW COMMANDMENT

7 Beloved, I am not writing to you a new commandment, but an old one, which you have had from the beginning. This commandment is the message you have heard. **8** Then again, I am also writing to you a new commandment, which is true in Him and also in you. For the darkness is fading and the true light is already shining.

9 If anyone claims to be in the light but hates his brother, he is still in the darkness. **10** Whoever loves his brother remains in the light, and there is no cause of stumbling in him. **11** But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness. He does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

12 I am writing to you, little children, because your sins have been forgiven through His name.

13 I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning.

I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.

14 I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who is from the beginning.

I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

DO NOT LOVE THE WORLD

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. **16** For all that is in the world—the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not from the Father but from the world. **17** The world is passing away, along with its desires; but whoever does the will of God remains forever.

■ **1JN 2:13 [DEMONIC]** Young men, you have overcome the evil one

■ **1JN 2:15 [NOTABLE]** Three pulls of the world: the desires of the flesh, the desires of the eyes and the pride of life.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES END TIMES PROPHECIES NOTABLE

Beware of Antichrists

¹⁸ Children, it is the last hour; and just as you have heard that the antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have appeared. This is how we know it is the last hour. ¹⁹ They went out from us, but they did not belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us. But their departure made it clear that none of them belonged to us.

²⁰ You, however, have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth. ²¹ I have not written to you because you lack knowledge of the truth, but because you have it, and because no lie comes from the truth. ²² Who is the liar, if it is not the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, who denies the Father and the Son. ²³ Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father, but whoever confesses the Son has the Father as well.

Remain in Christ

²⁴ As for you, let what you have heard from the beginning remain in you. If it does, you will also remain in the Son and in the Father. ²⁵ And this is the promise that He Himself made to us: eternal life.

²⁶ I have written these things to you about those who are trying to deceive you. ²⁷ And as for you, the anointing you received from Him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you. But just as His true and genuine anointing teaches you about all things, so remain in Him as you have been taught.

²⁸ And now, little children, remain in Christ, so that when He appears, we may be con-

fident and unashamed before Him at His coming.

²⁹ If you know that He is righteous, you also know that everyone who practices righteousness has been born of Him.

3**CHAPTER 3 IN 30 SECONDS**

Look how much the Father loves us: we are His kids. His children do not make a hobby out of sin. Do not be like Cain, who killed his brother. Love is not just talk; it opens its wallet. And when your own heart beats you up, remember God is greater than your heart.

CHILDREN OF GOD

¹ Behold what manner of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. ² Beloved, we are now children of God, and what we will be has not yet been revealed. We know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as Christ is pure.

⁴ Everyone who practices sin practices lawlessness as well. Indeed, sin is lawlessness. ⁵ But you know that Christ appeared to take away sins, and in Him there is no sin. ⁶ No one who remains in Him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has seen Him or known Him.

⁷ Little children, let no one deceive you: The one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as Christ is righteous. ⁸ The one who practices sin is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the very start. This is why the Son of God was revealed, to destroy the works of the devil.

■ **1JN 2:18 [PROPHECY]** Little children, it is the last hour; and as you have heard that the Antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have come, by which we know that it is the last hour → STILL TO COME

■ **1JN 2:20 [NOTABLE]** The believer's anointing from Christ — every believer, not just clergy, has this anointing

■ **1JN 2:22 [NOTE] ANTICHRIST.** John is the only Bible writer who uses the word, 2:18, 2:22, 4:3 and 2 John 7. He says many already exist: anyone who denies that Jesus is the Christ. Many also expect one final Antichrist, the man of lawlessness, 2 Thessalonians 2:3 to 4. See the 2 Thessalonians pages, p.~

■ **1JN 2:23 [NOTE] TEXT.** The KJV prints the second half in italics because it was missing from the Greek text its translators used. The oldest copies have it.

■ **1JN 2:27 [NOTABLE]** The abiding anointing — the Holy Spirit as the believer's ongoing teacher

■ **1JN 3:1 [NOTABLE]** Not just called His children. That is what we are.

■ **1JN 3:1 [NOTE] TEXT.** And that is what we are in the oldest copies but missing from the KJV.

■ **1JN 3:2 [PROPHECY]** It has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is → STILL TO COME

■ **1JN 3:5 [FULFILLS]** Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world ← JN 1:29 • MEDIUM p.~

■ **1JN 3:8 [DEMONIC]** The Son of God appeared to destroy the works of the devil

■ **1JN 3:8 [FULFILLS]** He would crush the head of Satan ← GEN 3:15 p.~

THE HEART DEMONIC NOTABLE

⁹ Anyone born of God refuses to practice sin, because God's seed abides in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰ By this the children of God are distinguished from the children of the devil: Anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is anyone who does not love his brother.

LOVE ONE ANOTHER // JOHN 13:31-35; ROMANS 12:9-13

¹¹ This is the message you have heard from the beginning: We should love one another. ¹² Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did Cain slay him? Because his own deeds were evil, while those of his brother were righteous. ¹³ So do not be surprised, brothers, if the world hates you.

¹⁴ We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. The one who does not love remains in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that eternal life does not reside in a murderer.

¹⁶ By this we know what love is: Jesus laid down His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. ¹⁷ If anyone with earthly possessions sees his brother in need, but withholds his compassion from him, how can the love of God abide in him?

¹⁸ Little children, let us love not in word and speech, but in action and truth. ¹⁹ And by this we will know that we belong to the truth, and will assure our hearts in His presence: ²⁰ Even if our hearts condemn us, God is greater than our hearts, and He knows all things.

²¹ Beloved, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God, ²²

and we will receive from Him whatever we ask, because we keep His commandments and do what is pleasing in His sight. ²³ And this is His commandment: that we should believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ, and we should love one another just as He commanded us. ²⁴ Whoever keeps His commandments remains in God, and God in him. And by this we know that He remains in us: by the Spirit He has given us.

DEBATED THE BIG QUESTION

CAN A CHRISTIAN KEEP SINNING?

What Did John Mean?

1 JOHN 1:8 TO 10 · 2:1 · 3:6 TO 9 · 5:18 · ROMANS 7:15 TO 25

THE PUZZLE

John says if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, 1:8, and if anyone does sin, we have an advocate, 2:1. Then he says no one born of God keeps on sinning, he cannot go on sinning, 3:6 and 3:9. How can both be true?

THE BACKGROUND

The false teachers seem to have said two things: some claimed they had no sin at all, and others said what you do in the body does not matter. John fights both.

THE TENSE

Most scholars point to the Greek present tense in 3:6 and 3:9: it means keep on sinning as a way of life, which is how this Bible translates it. A believer can fall into sin, but does not make peace with it. Best case: it fits 1:8 to 2:1 and the whole letter.

CHRISTIAN PERFECTION

John Wesley, in *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, 1766, taught that God can fill a believer with perfect love so that he no longer sins on purpose, though he still makes mistakes. The Holiness and many Pentecostal churches grew from this. Best case: it takes 3:9 at full strength and expects real change.

REFORMED AND LUTHERAN

Luther said a believer is at the same time righteous and a sinner. Sin stays in us

■ 1JN 3:9 [NOTE] THE SEED. The Greek word is sperma: God's own life planted in the believer, like a seed that grows, 1 Peter 1:23. See Can a Christian Keep Sinning?

■ 1JN 3:10 [DEMONIC] Children of the devil; Cain belonged to the evil one

■ 1JN 3:12 [DEMONIC] Children of the devil; Cain belonged to the evil one

■ 1JN 3:12 [ALLUDES TO] Refers to ← GEN 4:8 p.~

■ 1JN 3:16 [NOTABLE] Jesus laid down His life. Real love opens its wallet and its hands.

■ 1JN 3:19 [HEART] We assure our hearts before God.

■ 1JN 3:20 [HEART] Even when our heart condemns us, God is greater and knows everything.

■ 1JN 3:21 [HEART] A heart that does not condemn us gives confidence.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES DEMONIC NOTABLE

until death, Romans 7, but it no longer rules, Romans 6:14. Best case: it is honest about daily struggle and keeps grace central.

CATHOLIC AND ORTHODOX

There is sin that kills grace in the soul and lesser daily sin that does not, 5:16 to 17. Believers can grow in holiness by grace and the sacraments. Best case: it reads 1:9 and 5:16 to 17 together.

THE NEW NATURE

Some say John speaks of the new nature, God's seed, which cannot sin, while the old nature still can. Best case: it explains cannot in 3:9.

WHAT ALL SIDES AGREE ON

Christians still sin and must confess it, 1:9. But being born of God changes a person, and a life that happily keeps sinning is a warning sign, 3:10.

4

CHAPTER 4 IN 30 SECONDS

Test the spirits, because not every voice is from God. Greater is He who is in you. Then the big one: God is love. He loved us first and sent His Son, so we love each other. Perfect love drives out fear. You cannot love God and hate your brother.

TESTING THE SPIRITS

¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God. For many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you will know the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and which is already in the world at this time.

⁴You, little children, are from God and have overcome them, because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. ⁵They are of the world. That is why they speak from the world's perspective, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to

us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. That is how we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deception.

LOVE COMES FROM GOD

⁷Beloved, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. ⁸Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

⁹This is how God's love was revealed among us: God sent His one and only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰And love consists in this: not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

¹¹Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. ¹²No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God remains in us, and His love is perfected in us. ¹³By this we know that we remain in Him, and He in us: He has given us of His Spirit. ¹⁴And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world.

¹⁵If anyone confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. ¹⁶And we have come to know and believe the love that God has for us. God is love; whoever abides in love abides in God, and God in him. ¹⁷In this way, love has been perfected among us, so that we may have confidence on the day of judgment; for in this world we are just like Him.

¹⁸There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear involves punishment. The one who fears has not been perfected in love. ¹⁹We love because He first loved us.

²⁰If anyone says, "I love God," but hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. ²¹And we have this commandment

■ 1JN 4:1 [DEMONIC] Test the spirits; greater is He who is in you

■ 1JN 4:3 [NOTE] TEXT. The KJV adds Christ is come in the flesh; the oldest copies say does not confess Jesus. Polycarp quotes this verse.

■ 1JN 4:7 [NOTABLE] The shortest definition of God in the Bible.

■ 1JN 4:10 [FULFILLS] The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of us all ← IS 53:6a p.~

■ 1JN 4:16 [NOTABLE] Living in love is living in God.

■ 1JN 4:18 [NOTABLE] Knowing God's love takes away the fear of punishment.

■ 1JN 4:19 [NOTABLE] Our love is always an answer to His.

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES DEMONIC NOTABLE

from Him: Whoever loves God must love his brother as well.

5

CHAPTER 5 IN 30 SECONDS

Faith in Jesus overcomes the world, and John writes so you can know you have eternal life. Pray with confidence. Then one last line, like a dad at the door: little children, keep yourselves from idols.

OVERCOMING THE WORLD

¹Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father also loves those born of Him. ²By this we know that we love the children of God: when we love God and keep His commandments. ³For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome, ⁴because everyone born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith.

⁵Who then overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. ⁶This is the One who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ—not by water alone, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who testifies to this, because the Spirit is the truth. ⁷For there are three that testify [in heaven: The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. And there are three that testify on earth:] ⁸the Spirit, the water, and the blood—and these three are in agreement.

GOD'S TESTIMONY ABOUT HIS SON

⁹Even if we accept human testimony, the testimony of God is greater. For this is the testimony that God has given about His Son. ¹⁰Whoever believes in the Son of God has this testimony within him; whoever does not believe God has made Him out to be a liar, because he has not be-

lieved in the testimony that God has given about His Son.

¹¹And this is that testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. ¹²Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life.

EFFECTIVE PRAYER

¹³I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. ¹⁴And this is the confidence that we have before Him: If we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. ¹⁵And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we already possess what we have asked of Him.

¹⁶If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he should ask God, who will give life to those who commit this kind of sin. There is a sin that leads to death; I am not saying he should ask regarding that sin. ¹⁷All unrighteousness is sin, yet there is sin that does not lead to death.

THE TRUE GOD

¹⁸We know that anyone born of God does not keep on sinning; the One who was born of God protects him, and the evil one cannot touch him. ¹⁹We know that we are of God, and that the whole world is under the power of the evil one. ²⁰And 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. He is the true God and eternal life.

²¹Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

■ 1JN 5:4 [NOTABLE] Faith in Jesus is the win.

■ 1JN 5:6 [FULFILLS] In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness ← ZECH 13:1 p. –

■ 1JN 5:6 [NOTE] WATER AND BLOOD. Many read it as His baptism and His death, against Cerinthus. Others see John 19:34.

■ 1JN 5:7 [NOTE] THE MISSING WORDS. The [bracketed] words are in no Greek copy before about AD 1300. See The Big Question pages.

■ 1JN 5:11 [NOTABLE] Written so believers could be sure.

■ 1JN 5:14 [NOTABLE] Bold prayer lines up with what God wants.

■ 1JN 5:18 [DEMONIC] The evil one cannot touch him

■ 1JN 5:20 [NOTE] THE TRUE ONE. He may mean Jesus, John 20:28, or the Father. The Greek allows both.

■ 1JN 5:21 [DEMONIC] Little children, keep yourselves from idols

DEBATED THE BIG QUESTION

THE MISSING WORDS

Three That Testify in Heaven

1 JOHN 5:7 TO 8 · KJV · MATTHEW 28:19 · 2 CORINTHIANS 13:14

WHAT IT SAYS

The KJV reads: For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood. Most Bibles today print only: there are three that testify, the Spirit, the water and the blood. Scholars call the extra words the Johannine Comma. Comma here means a short phrase.

THE GREEK COPIES

There are more than 500 Greek copies of 1 John. The extra words are in fewer than ten, all made after about AD 1300, and in several they are only written in the margin. None of the old Greek Bibles, like Sinaiticus, Vaticanus or Alexandrinus, has them.

THE CHURCH FATHERS

In the 300s, when the church argued fiercely about the Trinity, no Greek writer ever quoted these words, though they would have been perfect proof.

THE LATIN TRAIL

The words first appear in Latin. A Spanish writer, Priscillian, has a form of them about AD 380. Augustine read the Spirit, the water and the blood as a picture of the Trinity, and a note like that seems to have slipped from the margin into the text. The oldest Latin Vulgate copies, from the 500s and 700s, do not have them; many later ones do.

ERASMUS

In 1516 Erasmus printed the first Greek New Testament, without the words. Critics attacked him. Then a Greek copy that had them turned up in England, now called Codex Montfortianus, made about 1520. Erasmus added the words in his third edition, 1522, while writing that he suspected the copy was made to fit the Latin.

INTO THE KJV

Later Greek editions kept the words, and

the KJV translators of 1611 followed them. In 1897 the Catholic Church's Holy Office said Catholics could not deny the words were genuine; in 1927 it allowed scholars to study the question freely.

IN THIS BIBLE

This Bible prints the words in [brackets], the way it marks every passage missing from the oldest copies. The next page gives every view.

The Case Each Side Makes

1 JOHN 5:6 TO 9 · MATTHEW 28:19 · JOHN 1:1 · ACTS 5:3 TO 4

A LATER ADDITION

Almost all scholars, Protestant and Catholic, say John did not write these words. Best case: no early Greek copy, no early translation outside Latin, and no Greek church father has them, even when they needed them most.

JOHN WROTE THEM

Some defenders of the KJV say the words are original and were lost by accident or removed by heretics who denied the Trinity. They point to the grammar of verse 8: three is masculine in Greek though Spirit, water and blood are not, which they say fits better if the Father, the Word and the Spirit came first. Best case: the grammar question is real, and the words are very old in Latin.

A PREACHER'S NOTE

Many think a Latin reader wrote a note in the margin explaining the three witnesses as the Trinity, and a later copyist put it into the text. Best case: it explains where the words came from and why they show up first in Latin.

WHAT IT DOES NOT CHANGE

The Trinity does not depend on this verse. The Father, Son and Spirit are named together in Matthew 28:19 and 2 Corinthians 13:14; the Word is God in John 1:1; the Spirit is God in Acts 5:3 to 4. The church taught the Trinity for over a thousand years before Erasmus printed these words in Greek.

WHAT ALL SIDES AGREE ON

God gives testimony about His Son, 5:9, and whoever has the Son has life, 5:12. That is John's point in this chapter, with or without the bracketed words.

DEBATED THE BIG QUESTION

THE SIN THAT LEADS TO DEATH

What Is It?

1 JOHN 5:16 TO 17 · MARK 3:28 TO 29 · HEBREWS 6:4 TO 6 · 1 CORINTHIANS 11:30

WHAT JOHN SAID

There is a sin that leads to death; I am not saying he should ask regarding that sin. All unrighteousness is sin, yet there is sin that does not lead to death, 5:16 to 17. John never names it. His readers must have known.

PHYSICAL DEATH

Some believers sinned so badly that God took their life as discipline, like Ananias and Sapphira, Acts 5:1 to 11, and those who abused the Lord's Supper, 1 Corinthians 11:30. Best case: brother in 5:16 suggests a believer, and death can mean the body.

WALKING AWAY FROM JESUS

The false teachers in this letter denied that Jesus is the Christ and left the church, 2:19 and 2:22. Rejecting Jesus for good leads to eternal death. Best case: it fits the whole letter's fight. Compare Hebrews 6:4 to 6, see the Hebrews pages, p. ...

BLASPHEMY AGAINST THE SPIRIT

Jesus said one sin will never be forgiven, Mark 3:28 to 29. Some think John means the same thing. Best case: both speak of a sin beyond prayer.

MORTAL AND VENIAL SIN

The Catholic Church teaches that a grave sin done with full knowledge and consent is mortal, killing the life of grace, while lesser sins are venial, Catechism 1854 to 1864, which cites these verses. Mortal sin can still be forgiven through repentance and confession. Best case: it takes John's two kinds of sin at face value.

THE EARLY CHURCH

Tertullian, about AD 210, used this verse to say some sins, like idolatry, murder and adultery, could not be forgiven by the church. Most other churches disagreed and welcomed sinners back after repentance.

WHAT ALL SIDES AGREE ON

Every sin is serious, 5:17. Christians should pray for each other, and God gives life when they do, 5:16. Anyone worried that they committed the sin that leads to death is showing a tender heart, which is a good sign.

FROM HISTORY

WHAT POLYCARP WROTE

The Oldest Quote of 1 John

POLYCARP, TO THE PHILIPPIANS 7 · 1 JOHN 4:2 TO 3 · 2 JOHN 7

WHO POLYCARP WAS

Polycarp was bishop of Smyrna, a city near Ephesus. His student Irenaeus says Polycarp was taught by apostles and knew John. He was burned alive about AD 155, at 86 years old, after saying he had served Christ 86 years and would not deny Him.

HIS LETTER

Polycarp wrote to the church at Philippi, in Greece, about AD 110 to 135. In chapter 7 he warns against false teachers using words that come straight from 1 John 4:2 to 3 and 2 John 7. It is the oldest quote of 1 John that we have.

WHAT HE WROTE

Here is the whole of chapter 7, in the English translation by J. B. Lightfoot, 1891.

TO THE PHILIPPIANS 7

For every one who shall not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is antichrist: and whosoever shall not confess the testimony of the Cross, is of the devil; and whosoever shall pervert the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts and say that there is neither resurrection nor judgment, that man is the first-born of Satan. Wherefore let us forsake the vain doing of the many and their false teachings, and turn unto the word which was delivered unto us from the beginning, being sober unto prayer and constant in fastings, entreating the all-seeing God with supplications that He bring us not into temptation, according as the Lord said, The Spirit is indeed willing, but the flesh is weak.

COMPARE

Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, 1 John 4:2 to 3.

John and Cerinthus

IRENAEUS, AGAINST HERESIES 3.3.4 · 1 JOHN 2:19 · 2 JOHN 10 TO 11

WHO IRENAEUS WAS

Irenaeus grew up in Smyrna, where as a boy he heard Polycarp teach. Later he became bishop of Lyons in France. About AD 180 he wrote *Against Heresies*, a long book against the false teachers of his day.

WHAT HE WROTE

Here is the whole passage, book 3, chapter 3, section 4, in the English translation by Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut, *Ante Nicene Fathers*, 1885. Words in [square brackets] were added by the translators.

AGAINST HERESIES 3.3.4

But Polycarp also was not only instructed by apostles, and conversed with many who had seen Christ, but was also, by apostles in Asia, appointed bishop of the Church in Smyrna, whom I also saw in my early youth, for he tarried [on earth] a very long time, and, when a very old man, gloriously and most nobly suffering martyrdom, departed this life, having always taught the things which he had learned from the apostles, and which the Church has handed down, and which alone are true. To these things all the Asiatic Churches testify, as do also those men who have succeeded Polycarp down to the present time,—a man who was of much greater weight, and a more steadfast witness of truth, than Valentinus, and Marcion, and the rest of the heretics. He it was who, coming to Rome in the time of Anicetus caused many to turn away from the aforesaid heretics to the Church of God, proclaiming that he had received this one and sole truth from the apostles,—that, namely, which is handed down by the Church. There are also those who heard from him that John, the disciple of

the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, "Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within." And Polycarp himself replied to Marcion, who met him on one occasion, and said, "Dost thou know me?" "I do know thee, the first-born of Satan." Such was the horror which the apostles and their disciples had against holding even verbal communication with any corrupters of the truth; as Paul also says, "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself." There is also a very powerful Epistle of Polycarp written to the Philippians, from which those who choose to do so, and are anxious about their salvation, can learn the character of his faith, and the preaching of the truth. Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the times of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles.

The Fake Jesus

1 JOHN 2:22 · 4:2 TO 3 · 5:6 · 2 JOHN 7

A CHAIN OF WITNESSES

John taught Polycarp, and Polycarp taught Irenaeus. So Irenaeus is only two steps from the apostle who wrote this letter.

WHO CERINTHUS WAS

Irenaeus says Cerinthus taught that Jesus was just a man, the son of Joseph and Mary, that the Christ came down on Him like a dove at His baptism, and that the Christ left Him before the cross, so only the man Jesus died and rose, *Against Heresies* 1.26.1.

JOHN'S ANSWER

That sounds like the teachers John fights: they denied that Jesus is the Christ, 2:22, and that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, 4:2. John insists He came not by water only, His baptism, but by water and blood, His death, 5:6.

SEEN AND TOUCHED

Others, later called Docetists, from the

Greek word for to seem, said Jesus only seemed to have a body. John opens the letter with we have seen Him and touched Him, 1:1.

THE BATHHOUSE STORY

Irenaeus heard it from people who heard it from Polycarp, so it is secondhand. Many scholars think it is true to John's character; some think it grew in the telling. Either way it matches 2 John 10 to 11: do not welcome false teachers.

FIRST BORN OF SATAN

Polycarp used the same words for false teachers in his letter, chapter 7, and Irenaeus says he called Marcion that to his face. It is strong language, borrowed from John: the one who practices sin is of the devil, 1 John 3:8.

WHY IT MATTERS

Within a lifetime of John, his student was quoting his letter and his student's student was telling stories about him. 1 John was known and used very early.