

***Cover to Cover: From Genesis to Maps***  
**Sermon # 62 – “1 John”**  
**September 27, 2009**

***1 John: Some Background Information***

**Authorship:** Traditionally attributed to the Apostle John. The author’s name, however, does not actually appear in the letter. Yet, the letter is written with the same basic style, vocabulary, and doctrinal emphasis as the author of the Fourth Gospel. In addition, the author writes authoritatively, as would an apostle. Furthermore, the author indicates that he himself was an eyewitness of Christ’s life and teachings (1:1-3). Early church fathers Irenaeus (c. a.d. 140–203), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150–215), Tertullian (c. 155–222) and Origen (c. 185–253) all designated the writer as the apostle John.

**Audience:** The letter itself contains no hint as to the identity or location of the readers beyond the fact that they were Christians. Thus, it very likely was a circular letter sent to believers in a number of locales. Early church tradition places the recipients of the letter in the region of Asia Minor (modern day Turkey), probably in the same general area as the seven churches of Revelation.

**Date:** This epistle was very like written around A.D. 85-95. In that I John seems to build on concepts and themes found in the Fourth Gospel, it is reasonable to assume that the First Epistle of John was written sometime after the Gospel of John.

**Occasion:** John’s readers were being confronted with an early form of Gnosticism, one of the most dangerous heresies in the first two centuries of the church. Its central teaching was (a) spirit is entirely good and (b) matter is entirely evil. From this unbiblical dualism flowed five important errors:

- The human body, which is matter, is evil.
- Salvation is the escape from the body, achieved not by faith in Christ but by special knowledge. (The Greek word for “knowledge” is gnosis, hence Gnosticism).
- Christ’s true humanity was denied in one of two ways: (1) Christ only seemed to have a body (Docetism). (2) The divine Christ joined the man Jesus at baptism and left him before he died (Cerinthianism).
- Since the body was considered evil, it was to be treated harshly.
- Paradoxically, since there was a dichotomy of body and spirit, one could cast off all moral restraint and freely sin with their body without moral consequence.

**Purpose:** (1) To expose false teachers (2:26) and (2) to give believers assurance of salvation (5:13).

## *1 John: An Outline*

### **1. Introduction: The Reality of the Incarnation (1:1–4)**

### **2. God is Light: True fellowship with God means walking in the Light (1:5-3:10)**

- Indicators of true fellowship with God (1:6-2:11)
  - Moral likeness (1:6-7)
  - Confession of sin (1:8-2:2)
  - Obedience to God's commandments (2:3-6)
  - Love for fellow believers (2:7-11)
- Digression: Addressing various groups (2:12–14)
- Enemies of authentic fellowship with God (2:15-27)
  - Love for the world (2:15-17)
  - The deceptions of Antichrists (2:18-27)
- Living like Children of God (2:28-3:10)
  - Be confident and ready for His coming (2:28-3:3)
  - Be righteous and do not sin (3:4-10)

### **3. God is Love: Genuine faith is shown by our love for one another (3:11-5:12)**

- What love is not: The negative example of Cain (3:10-15)
- What love is: The positive example of Jesus (3:16-18)
- What love does for believers (3:19-24)
- Discerning the Spirit of Truth (4:1-6)
- You can love others because God loves you (4:7-10)
- You can love others because God lives in you (4:11-21)
- Obedient faith in the Son of God brings victory and life (5:1-12)

### **4. Conclusion: Great Christian Certainties (5:13–21)**