



1 John  
Wednesday in the Word



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## 1 John

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# First Century Heresies

## Gnosticism

Gnosticism is a term applied to many different late 1st Century & 2nd Century groups who called themselves Christian but deviated from apostolic Christianity. Gnostics began around 80 AD and flourished into the second century. All the forms of Gnosticism were dominated by a concern for knowledge.

Below is a simplified, summary of their beliefs compiled from *The Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*, *The Letters of John* by John R.W. Stott, *The Early Church* by Henry Chadwick, and *New Testament History* by F.F. Bruce.

**Authority:** Gnostics paid lip-service to the same authority as mainstream Christianity: Jesus & the apostles. But they claimed only they had secret, reliable knowledge which was conveyed by the apostles from Jesus but that other Christians lacked.

**Salvation:** Gnostics thought evil was a matter of ignorance and distortion. They thought salvation was not a matter of forgiveness, but rather a matter overcoming of defilement through knowledge and enlightenment.

**Sin:** Gnostics believed that the spirit was good and the physical was evil. They sought to release the spirit from the evil body through knowledge. The “elect” contained a “divine spark” within them that allowed this release. This idea led to 3 views:

- 1) Sin does not influence our behavior. We can control sin through asceticism (fasting, celibacy, abstinence, etc.) and rigid control or even physical abuse.
- 2) Sin does not exist in our spirit. Sin is only in our physical bodies. Once we have the right knowledge, it doesn't matter what we do with our bodies. Therefore, all forms of sexual immorality, etc. are permissible.
- 3) Sin does not affect our relationship with God. Since only the body is evil and God would never stoop so low as to have anything to do with anything material, sin in our body is irrelevant to our relationship with God.

**Incarnation:** Gnostics believed Jesus was not really a man. Because the body was evil, God could in no way inhabit something evil and He certainly could not suffer pain or die.

**Other Believers:** Gnostics believed they possessed “superior knowledge” and a “divine spark” which other Christians lacked. Thus as the self-proclaimed “spiritual aristocracy” they despised other Christians.

**Docetism** claimed that Jesus was not both man and God. One form held that the incarnation only “seemed” real. Another form held that Jesus only “seemed” human. Another form that because God has no emotions, Jesus was not God.

**Marcion** rejected the authority of the Old Testament, because he had a profound reverence for the teaching of the Apostle Paul.

## **1 John 1:1-4**

1. What does "from the beginning" mean?
2. What is the content of the truth John heard & saw? Compare with Matthew 16:15-19.
3. When had John seen Jesus clearly? Consider Matthew 17:1-12; John 12:23-33.
4. Why does John insert a parenthetical phrase (v.2)? What does he want to clarify or emphasize?
5. What does it mean for joy to be complete? Look at John 15: 9-11; 16:24; 17:13; Romans 15:13; and 2 John 1:12.
6. Who do you think Jesus Christ was? Why?
7. Do you believe there is such a thing as eternity? Why?

## 1 John 1:5-10

1. What does John mean when he says "God is light"? Compare with 1 Timothy 6:15-16; Psalm 104:1-2; James 1:17; John 1:4 ; John 8:12; John 12:35-36
2. What does darkness symbolize? Why is there no darkness in Christ?
3. What does "walk" mean in this section?
4. What are the three errors of thought that John addresses in this passage (vs. 6, 8, and 10)?
5. A friend tells you she is having an affair with a married man. They are both Christians but his wife is not. She says they do not feel their affair is wrong because they pray together, feel fellowship with the Lord and he has no fellowship with his wife. How would you respond?
6. Your friend tells you she had an abortion and now she feels that God could never forgive her. She says she can't pray and can't even think of confessing her sin to God. What would you tell her?
7. Your friend returns from a "ME" seminar in which she learned to get in touch with her feelings and express herself in whatever way she wants because it cleanses her soul. She says she now has nothing to feel guilty about and is free to follow her heart. She wants you to join her at the next seminar. How would you answer?

## **1 John 2:1-11**

1. What are "these things" (vs 1) and why is John writing them?
2. Define the following in this context: sin; advocate; propitiation; abide
3. What characterizes those who know Christ and those who don't?
4. What is the "old commandment"? What is the "new commandment"?
5. Write a summary paragraph of John 2:1-11 in your own words. Share & compare with the group.
6. One of your co-workers claims to be a believer and literally hates your boss. She is not shy in venting her feelings at the office. One day she tells you how terrible the boss is and wants to know what you think. You listen and say.....
7. Describe a time when you chose to love someone you were tempted to hate. What did you learn?

## "abide" in 1 John, Gospel of John

1Jn\_2:24 As for you, let that **abide** in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will **abide** in the Son and in the Father.

1Jn\_2:27 As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you **abide** in Him.

1Jn\_2:28 Now, little children, **abide** in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming.

1Jn\_3:17 But whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God **abide** in him?

1Jn\_4:13 By this we know that we **abide** in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

Joh\_15:4 "**Abide** in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you **abide** in Me.

Joh\_15:6 "If anyone does not **abide** in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

Joh\_15:7 "If you **abide** in Me, and My words **abide** in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

Joh\_15:9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; **abide** in My love.

Joh\_15:10 "If you keep My commandments, you will **abide** in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and **abide** in His love.

## **1 John 2:12-17**

1. What are the characteristics of little children? Fathers? Young adults?
2. Define: "the world"; "the things in the world" (see next page for help)
3. The word "lust" in the Greek means "desire, craving, longing, desire for what is forbidden"  
What would be included in the "lust of the flesh"? And/or "lust of the eyes"?
4. How is the world's system passing away?
5. Would you say that your life and decisions are guided by the Word of God? Why?
6. From this chapter, what are the marks of a genuine believer?
7. You have a Christian friend who says and does all "the right things" when she is alone with you. But when you are in public she acts completely different in speech, dress and demeanor. Is this a red flag? Should you say something to her?

## "world" in 1 John

1Jn 2:2 and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for *those of the whole world.*

1Jn 2:15 Do not love the **world** nor the things in the **world**. If anyone loves the **world**, the love of the Father is not in him.

1Jn 2:16 For all that is in the **world**, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the **world**.

1Jn 2:17 The **world** is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.

1Jn 3:1 See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and *such* we are. For this reason the **world** does not know us, because it did not know Him.

1Jn 3:13 Do not be surprised, brethren, if the **world** hates you.

1Jn 3:17 But whoever has the **world's** goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?

1Jn 4:1 Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the **world**.

1Jn 4:3 and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; this is the *spirit* of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the **world**.

1Jn 4:4 You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the **world**.

1Jn 4:5 They are from the **world**; therefore they speak *as* from the **world**, and the **world** listens to them.

1Jn 4:9 By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the **world** so that we might live through Him.

1Jn 4:14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *to be* the Savior of the **world**.

1Jn 4:17 By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this **world**.

1Jn 5:4 For whatever is born of God overcomes the **world**; and this is the victory that has overcome the **world**--our faith.

1Jn 5:5 Who is the one who overcomes the **world**, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

1Jn 5:19 We know that we are of God, and that the whole **world** lies in *the power of* the evil one.

## **1 John 2:18-28**

1. Clarify the pronouns in this section: "they"; "us" and "you"
2. What did John mean when he said it is the last hour? (1 Peter 3:7-8; 1 John 2:16-17; 1 Thess 5:1-11; 2 Thess 2:1-12)
3. What is the basic characteristic of "an antichrist" from this passage?
4. Define anointing. Who is the Holy One?
5. "As for you" (vs 24) in contrast to whom? What had they heard from the beginning?
6. Define in this section: abide; eternal life
7. You ask a new friend if she is a Christian and she says she believes "in the ethical spirit of Christ." How would you respond?

## **1 John 2:29-3:12**

1. Clarify the pronouns and groups in this section. Who is "we", "us", "Him"; "you"; "the one", "the world", etc.
2. Who were we before we were called "children of God"? How did they become children of God?
3. What does pure mean and how does a Christian purify herself (vs 3)?
4. What does it mean to practice sin? Lawlessness? (vs 5)
5. Define: abide in him (vs 6)
6. What does it mean to practice righteousness (vs 7)?
7. Would you say your lifestyle as a Christian is a sinless lifestyle? Would you say that you have a lifestyle in which you seek to practice righteousness? Why?
8. Do you believe you are one of the "children of God"? How do you know?

## **1 John 3:13-24**

1. Why should John's readers not be surprised that the world hates them?
2. Define love and hate in this section.
3. What are the characteristics of death?
4. What are the characteristics of life?
5. How does the example of Cain & Abel illustrate John's point?
6. Is 3:18 - "Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth" - possible? What does it look like in our lives today?
7. Does verse 22 promise too much?
8. Define abide in this section.

## **1 John 4:1-6**

1. Clarify the pronouns in this section: they, you, we us
2. Why would it be necessary for John to warn his readers to stop believing every spirit?
3. What does Spirit mean in this context? What kinds of spirits are there?
4. What does it mean to test the spirits? What are the signs of a true prophet?
5. What's the significance of "confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (vs 2)?
6. What is the content of the spirit of truth? Spirit of error?
7. How would you recognize a false prophets today? Who are some?
8. Have you spent any of your "religious life" under a "false prophet?" Who and where?

## 1 John 4:7-19

1. Define love mean in this section. How did (and does) God demonstrate His love to us?
2. What does it mean to know God in this context?
3. Define abide in this section
4. What does it mean to confess that Jesus is the Son of God (vs 15) in practical terms?
5. What does perfected mean in vs 17-18? How is love perfected?
6. What does we love because he first loved us mean (vs 19)?
7. Your roommate returns angry that her Christian boss laid her off due to "lack of work" while others doing the same work kept their jobs. All three of you attend the same church. She thinks it is unloving of her boss to treat her this way. You say???
8. A Christian sister needs to borrow a car for a trip to visit her sick mother. She asks to borrow your new Honda, the one you've been saving for the past 2 years and just bought 2 weeks ago. Must you do it?

## **1 John 4:20-5:12**

1. What do you have to believe to believe that Jesus is the Christ (5:1)?
2. Define born of God without using Christian jargon.
3. What kind of love is John talking about in this section?
4. Define "overcome the world" without using Christian jargon.
5. What does "by water" and "by blood" mean?
6. Do you know you have eternal life (vs 13)? Why?
7. How does one make God a liar?
8. Your friend says she believes in God, but does not believe it is necessary to believe Jesus Christ. She says it is only necessary to believe in God and live a basically good life to get to heaven. She asks what you think? How would you answer?

## **1 John 5:13-21**

1. What are "these things" in verse 13? How do you know that you have eternal life?
2. What does it mean to have eternal life? How do you know that you have it?
3. Explain sin that leads to death and sin that does not lead to death in this context.
4. What does it mean to believe in the name of something (vs 13)?
5. In verse 18, is John saying that a Christian never sins? Why?
6. Write a summary of each chapter in your own words (use the next page).
7. Who do you think Jesus is? Why?

# 1 John Summary

Summary: John is writing to:

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CHAPTER	SUMMARY	KEY VERSE
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		

Congratulations! You've completed your current study. Thank God for all He has taught you through it and ask Him to write its truths upon your heart.