

'An Overview of 1 John'

Trinity Baptist Church

'I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life'. — 1 John v.13

Author. While the First Letter of John is anonymous, the author is understood to be the Apostle John. This is clear from, most importantly, internal evidence - that is, from the text of Scripture itself, which is the 'only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him'. When comparing this epistle (meaning letter) with the Gospel of John, it is apparent the authors are the same. Both share congruency in thematic material and language, using simple contrasts, logical sentence structures, and purpose statements. Subordinately, John's authorship is attested by the witness of the early church. The Holy Spirit, having inspired this letter, uses the personality of the author in three primary ways to convey exactly what He wanted to say. First, John is '*the disciple whom Jesus loved*' (John xxi.7, 21). As Christians today read John's first epistle, we are reading the Spirit-breathed writings of someone who heard, saw, and touched the Saviour (1 John i.1) - a man zealous for the glory of the risen King, Whom he so affectionately loved, and by Whom he was loved (1 John iv.19). Second, John is a *servant, disciple, and apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ* (Revelation i.1, Luke vi.13-14). John speaks with the authority of an apostle - one chosen by the Lord Jesus, who accompanied Him all of His ministry from His baptism through His resurrection (Acts i.21-22). Lastly, John is '*the Elder*' (2 John 1, 3 John 1). The apostle John was a shepherd of the Church and the eldest apostle to live. He writes with love for the Bride of his Master, the Body to which he himself belongs and serves, that She (that is, the Church) would abide in the truth and walk in love.

Purpose. The author himself informs the Church of the purpose of His letter:

- 1) So that the Church would have true fellowship with one another, and with God (i.3).
- 2) So that the Church's joy would be full because of their faithful obedience to God (i.4).
- 3) So that the Church would not sin (ii.1).
- 4) So that those who are at different levels of spiritual maturity may be encouraged (ii.12-14).
- 5) So that the Church may persevere in the truth even in the last days (ii.21).
- 6) So that the Church may be warned against false teachers who are trying to deceive them (ii.25).
- 7) So that those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ may know that they have eternal life (v.13).

Thesis. The message of 1 John may be summed up in the following way: *as believers examine themselves in light of Scripture, abide in true faith in Christ, walk in righteousness, and love one another, they will, by God's grace, mature and persevere in the fellowship, joy and confidence that they have in God.*

Preparations for Study. As we prepare to study 1 John, be mindful of four particular aspects. *First*, throughout the letter, the Gospel is central to everything John writes. *Second*, the Scriptures call us to examine ourselves in light of God's Word. In 1 John, there are three particular 'tests' repeated throughout: Theological (true faith), Moral (true repentance) and Social (true love). *Third*, 1 John is filled with both theological implications and practical applications for everyday Christian life. *Fourth*, the purpose of 1 John is to strengthen the faith and maturity of the Church.