

Marks of a True Christian: The Book of I John

“...That you may know that you have Eternal Life...” – I John 5:13

When John wrote his Gospel, he expressed his intention near the end, *“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you might have life through His name.”* (John 20:30-31). John is a good example for us to follow. Many people accumulate Bible knowledge, but to what purpose?

The greatest use of the Bible is for knowing Christ personally and for making Him known to others. Some people know **about** Christ, but it is vital that their knowledge turns into saving faith and a living / working relationship with Him (Romans 10:8-11,17; Ephesians 1:12-13; Hebrews 4:1-2; James 1:22; 2:17-18 (cp. Hebrews 9:14; Ephesians 2:8-10); I Peter 1:18-25 cp. Matthew 7:21-23). We need to be about the business of helping others to know Christ and have the assurance of salvation (II Corinthians 5:17-21).

So, the Book of I John is dedicated to the purpose of helping others understand what a real and saving relationship with Christ looks like. *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”* (I John 1:3-4)

Our study will basically be looking for evidence or identifying marks of a true Christian. You will sometimes find the phrase *“we know”* when discovering these identifying marks (I John 2:3-5; 3:14,18-19,24; 4:11-15; 5:1-2,14-15,18).

Introductory Information:

Author: John the disciple / apostle (Luke 6:13-14)

John was the brother of James (who died in Acts 12:2 – not the author the book of James). John and James were the sons of Zebedee (Matthew 10:2-4). Jesus called them “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). Perhaps this title describes the strong, intense personalities that caused them to be outspoken and made them strong leaders (Luke 9:46-56). It is no wonder then, that Jesus combined them with Peter to create an inner-circle within the 12 apostles (Matthew 17:1-3; 26:36-38). As spokesmen and leaders, these men also attracted the enemies of the Gospel (Acts 12:1-3; Revelation 1:9).

John is the author of The Gospel of John; The General Epistles (Letters) of I, II, III, John; and Revelation.

Date and place of writing: It is thought that John wrote this letter in the latter part of his life (perhaps A.D. 90 – 95) after he wrote his Gospel (around A.D. 80 – 90). John was probably in Ephesus when he wrote this letter.

Purpose / Main Theme of the Book:

- **To reveal the evidence of the new birth – the marks of a true Christian.**
“These things have I written...that you may know that you have eternal life...”
(I John 5:13); *“...That your joy may be full.”* (I John 1:4)
- **To reveal the difference between true and false Christianity.**
“...Hereby know we the Spirit of Truth and the Spirit of Error.” (I John 4:6)
- **To reveal the nature of false teachers and their teaching.**
“These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you.” (I John 2:26)

Key Verse: I John 5:13

“These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may [continue to] believe in the name of the Son of God.”

Outline of First John: [Note the operative words: **Obedience, Love, Truth**]

- I. Introduction: Saving faith is fellowship / partnership with God (The Father and His Son) through the testimony of the Apostles. (I John 1:1-4)
- II. We can have true fellowship because **“God is Light”** (I John 1:5-7)
 - Obedience (I John 1:5 – 2:6)
 - Love (I John 2:7-17)
 - Truth (I John 2:18-29)
- III. We can have true sonship because **“God is Love”** (I John 4:7-16)
 - Obedience (I John 3:1-24)
 - Love (I John 4:6-21)
 - Truth (I John 4:1-6; 5:1-21)

This is a modification of Warren Wiersbe’s outline in “The Bible Exposition Commentary” – New Testament, Volume 2, pg. 473, (Victor – Cook Communications Ministries). Also note the following: “Thru the Bible” with J. Vernon McGee, Volume 5, pg. 755, (Thomas Nelson Publishers).

- **God is Light** (I John 1:5-7)
- **God is Love** (I John 4:7-8, 16)
- **God is Life** (I John 5:12, 20)