

## Lesson #22 - 1 John 2019

Before starting this lesson, **read the 5 chapters.**

As we have gone thru the New Testament, we have seen teaching for church **members** and for church **leaders**.

		SALVATION	CHRISTIAN LIFE	RETURN OF JESUS
<b>TEACHING FOR</b>	church members	ROMANS 1-2 CORINTHIANS GALATIANS	EPHESIANS PHILIPPIANS COLOSSIANS	1 THESSALONIANS 2 THESSALONIANS
	church leaders		PHILEMON TITUS 1-2 TIMOTHY	
	Jewish believers	HEBREWS	JAMES 1-2 PETER 1-3 JOHN	

The final teaching is for **Jewish believers** to answer Jewish questions.

**HEBREWS** is about **SALVATION**.

The next series is about the **CHRISTIAN LIFE**.

**JAMES** writes about their **conduct**.

**PETER** writes 2 books about their **suffering**.

**JOHN** is now going to write 3 books about their **common faith**.

### BACKGROUND

#### AUTHOR

We first met John the apostle in the gospels. Back then, he was a teenager learning the fishing trade in the family business. He and his brother James were cousins of Jesus. While still a teenager, Jesus called him to be an apostle. He became part of that inner circle of disciples - Peter, James and John. Altho he was the youngest of the 12 apostles, he had the deepest understanding of Jesus.

After the death, resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, the Church began on the Day of Pentecost. The apostles took the Gospel message to the known world. Over the next 40 years, the Church developed and grew. This led to the formation of local churches.

**Peter** and **Paul** were chosen to be the major leaders, Peter working with the Jews and Paul with the Gentiles.

Each of them was arrested in the late 60's.

Each wrote their final book from a Roman dungeon.

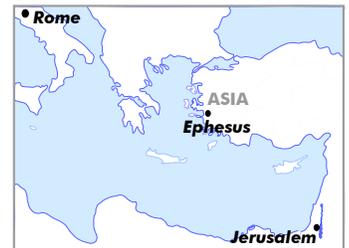
Each warned believers about false teaching that would later appear in their local churches.

In the early '70s, **John** became pastor of the Ephesian church., which met in a private home

During the '80s, traveling teachers went to the home churches in Asia province and spread new ideas about Jesus, about sin and how believers treat each other.

By 90 AD, church members in Asia province are totally confused.

They are not sure whom to believe or what to believe. John is the only apostle still living and continues as pastor in Ephesus. He is about 80 years old. He now writes these confused believers to bring them back to the basics of the Gospel message.



#### READERS

Evidently, the majority of these believers are **Jewish**. John does not say this, but the writing style tells us it is written for Jewish people. There is repetition, picture language combined with contrasts and circular thinking. The style is totally Jewish.

The content also points to Jewish readers. John creates a picture of them as children with God as their Father. The family was an important part of the Jewish culture. Fathers spent time with their children to teach, train and encourage them. The relationship between father and children was one of enjoyment and security. So the picture of them as children of God the Father had great meaning for Jewish believers.

In contrast, with Gentile Roman families, a servant was responsible for raising the children. The father was not involved. There was no father - child relationship. So this picture of spiritual children with God the Father would have no meaning for Gentile believers.

## DEFINITIONS

Because John is writing from a Jewish perspective of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, some of his words will have a meaning different from ours.

### FELLOWSHIP

In our churches, we often say, *after the service there will be a time of fellowship*. Or, *we will meet in fellowship hall*. We are talking about a time of socializing, whether it be coffee and donuts, a potluck, or just a time of getting together.

The Greek word that John uses is **koinonia** which means *to have in common, to have shared ideas, beliefs or goals*. In this letter, John is talking about...

**a faith in common that leads to spiritually enjoying and relating to other believers and to God.**

### LOVE - used 46 times in the original

In our culture, love is always connected with warm feelings and emotions. The Greek word for that kind of love is **phileo**. But in this book, John never uses that word.

He only uses the Greek word **agape**. In the Bible, agape love is always connected with choices - it is never about feeling. Agape love is about choices...

**to obey God and do what is right towards others.**

### WORLD - *cosmos* - used 23 times

Five times John uses the word as we do - humanity; people on the earth.

But 18 times he means **a world system with the values of Satan that are in opposition to God.**

### KNOW - used 42 times. John uses 2 different Greek words

Twenty-six times he uses a word connected with the Greek word **GNOSIS**.

It means **to know progressively thru experience.**

Fourteen times he uses a word connected with the Greek word **EIDO** (ēdō).

It means **to know as a fact; to be sure.**

## WRITING STYLE

Thruout this letter, John uses the words *we* and *us*.

People have wondered if there were other authors involved. The answer is no. John is using the "literary plural" to avoid a lot of *I, me, and my* words.

John writes in Jewish, circular style.

He goes from topic to topic and then comes back to each of them.

In the last chapter, he returns to his first topic so he ends the book as he began.

In the process there is a lot of repetition.

With books of this style, rather than try to make an outline, it is easier to look at his theme and how he breaks it down into 3 topics. We will study what he says about the first topic, then move to the 2<sup>nd</sup> and finally the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### Basics of Their Common Faith

1. Agreement about Jesus
2. Agreement about sin
3. Agreement on how believers treat each other - with love

Writing in 90 AD, John's theme is about *koinonia* - a faith that his readers would have in common with him, with traveling teachers and with other believers.

But they need to know what this faith looks like. They need to know the basics that must be included in a common faith. Thru this book, John develops 3 basics - what they believe about Jesus - about sin - how believers treat each other.

These Jewish believers have heard so many false ideas about Jesus, that now they are not sure what to believe. So John begins, *I lived with Jesus for 3½ years. I saw and heard Him. I have had 60 years to test and reflect on it. Let me tell you what I know for a fact about Jesus.*

Chapter 1:1. *That (or He) who was from the beginning, whom we have **heard**, whom we have **seen** with our eyes, whom we have looked upon and have **touched** with our hands - concerning the Word of Life - (see endnote)*

According to 1<sup>st</sup>-century law, the testimony of a witness could only be accepted if at least 2 of their 5 senses were involved. The five senses are see, hear, touch, taste and smell. As John presents what he knows about Jesus, he says **3** of his 5 senses were used. *We heard Him, we saw Him, we touched Him.*

Having given his credentials, John now explains why he is writing.

*That which, or the One whom we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you, so that you also may have fellowship - a common faith with us. And indeed, our faith and companionship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 1:3*

## FALSE TEACHING ABOUT JESUS

John and his readers already have a common faith about God the Father, but that is not enough. They also need agreement about Jesus. But at the moment some have doubts about Jesus. Others have believed the false teaching. So John deals with wrong ideas - one by one.

### Jesus did not have a real body. Jesus was not really human.

John says, *that is wrong. I know He had a real body. I saw Him; I touched Him; I heard Him speak.*

*The Life (Jesus) was made manifest... (The Greek word means made visible. Jesus was made visible) and we have seen Him and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, who was with the Father and was made visible to us. 1:2*

Jesus came to this earth and was made visible by having a real body.

In addition, when John uses the name *Jesus*, or the phrase *come in the flesh* (4:2), he is pointing to His humanity.

Jesus had a human body of flesh, blood and bone when He lived here on this earth.

Those who heard and saw Jesus knew He was true humanity.

### Jesus was not true deity. John answers this false teaching.

#### > Evidence of Jesus' deity from His Jewish names and descriptive phrases

The deity **names** John uses are: Son, Son of God, Lord and Christ, meaning Messiah.

The deity **phrases** are: *The One from the beginning, the Eternal Life, the Word of Life, the Righteous One.*

For example, in verse **3** John says his faith relationship is with God the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.

Notice that John does not use the name *Jesus* by itself. His spiritual relationship is not just with Jesus in His *humanity*. John adds 2 names of deity along with the name *Jesus* - the names *Son* and *Christ/Messiah*.

For these Jewish readers to have a common faith with John, they have to accept - not just the humanity of Jesus, but also His deity - that He was their promised Messiah.

#### > Evidence of Jesus' deity from His actions

*But you know for a fact that He was made visible so that He might take away our sins.*

*And in Him is no sin. 3:5*

Only deity can take away sin - only deity is without sin.

#### > Consequence of denying His deity

The person is antichrist

*Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ (that Jesus is deity). This is the antichrist - he who denies the Father and the Son. 2:22*

In this context, *anti* means *against*. *Christ/Messiah* is the deity name of Jesus. John uses the term *antichrist*, 5 times in his writings, but is never talking about a future world leader. He only uses it to describe those who deny the deity/Messiahship of Jesus.

> **Consequence** of denying His deity (continued)

The person cannot have companionship with God the Father

*No one who denies the Son - the deity of Jesus - has the Father; whoever confesses the Son - His deity - has the Father also. 2:23*

John says it is impossible for people to have companionship with God the Father if they deny the deity of His Son. They come as a package. You cannot have the Father without the Son.

> **Final statement** to show Jesus' deity

Because John uses the circular writing style, he ends the book as he began, emphasizing the deity of Jesus. John's readers, being Jewish would understand all that John was saying in between the lines. As Gentiles, we will not see it. So let me paraphrase it.

*We know for a fact that Jesus has come as deity. He has given us understanding about God the Father. We can enjoy a relationship with God the Father because we believe correctly about Jesus. Just as we know God the Father is true deity, we also know Jesus is true deity. We declare this by the names we use for Him. He is God's Son. He is Eternal life. 5:20*

In 1:1, John said Jesus was *from the beginning* - meaning eternal. He was the *Word of Life*. Now in these last verses he repeats the idea - Jesus is *Eternal Life*.

Summary

False teachers of the 1<sup>st</sup> century had gone into the local churches. Some said Jesus was not true humanity. Others said He was not true deity. John writes: Jesus is both. He is complete humanity and complete deity.

***Jesus is not Savior. His death has no value. Or, Jesus' death has value, but His payment was only for us Jews.***

John corrects these ideas

*He, (Jesus), is the atoning sacrifice/the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world. ἰλασμοῦς 2:2*

For the Jews, the word **propitiation** was rich in meaning. For us, most have never heard of this word. Of those who have, few can explain it. So let me put it in a context we can understand.

God is perfect; heaven is perfect. Therefore only that which is perfect can live in heaven with God. We are not perfect. That means we cannot get in. We have to be separated from Him. That is the penalty. But God's greatest desire for us is that we can spend eternity with Him. So Jesus who is Deity, came to this earth to become one of us - humanity.

While on the cross, all the sin of the whole world - past, present and future - was dumped on Jesus. He paid our penalty by being separated from God the Father in our place. His payment was not just for the Jews or only for a special group of people - His payment was for everyone.

That payment was then put on deposit with God the Father. It is available to everyone. If we want to make the payment ourselves - then we will be separated from God forever. That is the penalty. Or we can accept the payment Jesus made for us. All we have to do is tell God *I know I am not perfect and can never meet Your standards. But I want to spend eternity with You. I accept the payment of Jesus.* At that moment, God the Father puts my sin on the account of Jesus and puts the perfection of Jesus on my account. God now sees me in Jesus. This means I can enjoy Him in this life and thruout eternity.

When John says, *Jesus is the propitiation for our sins*, He is saying, ***Jesus made the payment that meets the requirements of God the Father.***

Jesus is Savior because He made our payment.

John has told Jewish believers,

**The first basic** of a common faith with others - there must be agreement about Jesus.

Jesus is true humanity, true deity and our Savior. His death had eternal value.

But that is not enough.

**There is a second basic** of a common faith - agreement about sin.

## FALSE TEACHING ABOUT SIN

### People are basically good; there is no such thing as a sin nature.

John tells his readers,

*If we say we have no sin (no sin nature), we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 1:8*

People do have a sin nature.

### People can get secret knowledge, become perfect and not commit sin.

John writes, *If we say we have not sinned, (can be perfect), we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. 1:10*

### People can be in God's family but still have a life of continual sin without any guilt.

John says,

*If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 1:6*

The words *light* and *darkness* are Jewish picture language for holiness and unholiness. John is saying,

*If you are living in unholiness, you can never enjoy companionship with a holy God. That is impossible.*

So in he tells them what they need to do.

*If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1:9*

The Greek word for *confess* means *to say the same thing*. If God says its wrong, they are not to argue or try to bargain. They are to agree with God. *What I did was wrong. Forgive me.* When they agree with God, they are forgiven.

John continues,

*My dear children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not commit acts of sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an Advocate with the Father — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2:1*

Notice the names John uses. **Jesus** points to His humanity as our representative.

**Christ, the Righteous One** points to His deity. That gives Him the authority to sit at the right hand of God the Father.

After we are forgiven, Satan still goes to God to accuse us. *See what they did? God, You should kick them out of Your family.* Immediately Jesus turns to the Father and says, *I already paid for that disobedience. They admitted it and it is forgiven.*

Jesus as deity, the Righteous One, is our Advocate - our defense lawyer. He forgives us and then defends us from the accusations of Satan.

John has given his readers 2 basics of a common faith.

They need to be in **agreement about Jesus** - He is true humanity, deity and Savior.

They need to be in **agreement about sin**.

They have a sin nature; they commit acts of sin; Jesus is ready to forgive them; God expects obedience.

Because of their history over the last 20 years, this teaching is exactly what the Jewish believers have needed.

- They thought they were free to believe what they wanted.
- They thought they should listen and learn from all teachers.
- They had allowed teachers into their churches who said. *Jesus is not deity.*

When John had heard about it, he had gone to their churches and told those teachers to stop teaching. But some of them had not wanted to stop, so they left the local church to form their own group.

John now tells the Jewish believers of the local church, that those who left did not have a common faith with them. They were not true believers. (2:19) From now on, they (John's readers) should only get instruction from those who are in agreement about Jesus and about sin.

- In addition, the Jewish believers thought the more teachers they had, the more knowledge they would have. John tells them God does provide gifted teachers, but their dependence should not be on people. Their most important teacher is the Holy Spirit within them.

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, - meaning teacher, - but test the teachers to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God, - if He is speaking thru them. Every teacher that confesses that Jesus **Christ** - deity - has come in the **flesh** - humanity - is from God... Verse 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world. 4:1-4*

The Holy Spirit, in them, is greater than the unholy spirit – Satan - who is in the world. It is the Holy Spirit who will help them recognize false teachers based on what they teach about Jesus and about sin.

It is also the Holy Spirit who gives John insight about the future of believers.

*Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been made visible. But we know, (for a fact), that when He is made visible, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. 3:2*

In the future, *believers will see Jesus* in the glory of His deity just as John saw Him on the mountain of Transfiguration.

*Believers will be like Him* means they will have a resurrection body as Jesus had. It will be flesh and bones that can be seen and felt. We will eat. We will have self-awareness and identity. We will recognize our loved ones - they will recognize us.

## **FALSE TEACHING ON HOW BELIEVERS TREAT EACH OTHER**

- Jewish believers did not have to be concerned about others in the church.
- They could ignore the needs of others.
- If they did not get their way, they could tell people off or get even with them.
- It was fine to just think about themselves and their needs.

John tells them none of these things are right.

This brings us to the **3<sup>rd</sup> basic of a common faith** - how believers treat each other.

Believers are to *love one another*.

John uses the **love** 46 times. It is always the Greek word *agape*. This word has nothing to do with feelings or emotions. We know that because feelings cannot be commanded. Try telling a family member, *I command you to love me*.

But in the Bible, love **is** commanded because it is the Greek word *agape* which always involves choices.

It means to *do what is right based on God's standards*.

So to love our neighbor is *to do what is right* towards them.

To love our enemy means *doing what is right* towards them.

These are choices that **can** be made. Sometimes our English phrase “tough love” could be used.

For our culture, it is almost impossible to hear the word love and not connect it with feelings.

To help us understand the Jewish meaning, let me define some of these *agape* phrases that we are so familiar with.

*God is love* means He always does what is right because He is deity, He is holy, He is perfect.

*To love God* means to obey what God says.

*To love the world* means to obey what the world system says is right.

*To love believers* means to do what is right towards them.

*To hate believers* means to do what is wrong towards them.

John says the **3<sup>rd</sup> basic of a common faith is to do what is right towards other believers**.

## **An example of Jewish style circular writing**

John ends his book as he began. He goes back to his 1<sup>st</sup> topic, the deity of Jesus.

*And this is the testimony; that God gave us eternal life and this life is in His Son - deity. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know for a fact and be sure that you have eternal life. 5:11-13*

Only deity has eternal life. Therefore, only deity can give eternal life.

Anyone who accepts Jesus' deity and accepts His payment can be sure they have eternal life.

This certainty of being in God's family will help them pray with confidence.

When there are faith and obedience, they will not ask for anything outside His boundaries. So John can tell them,

*This is the confidence that we have toward Him; that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 5:14*

John is writing Jewish believers in the 1<sup>st</sup>-century, but his letter also applies to us.

First of all, he commands us to love other believers. Because we think of love as feelings, it is easy to think John means,  
We should be nice to everyone, regardless of their behavior.  
We should be fond of everyone regardless of their personality.  
We should never make people feel bad by correcting them.

But John uses the word *agape*, which is about choices. *Do what is right based on God's standards*. So for example,  
We encourage and comfort those who are going thru difficult times.  
We give help where it is needed; we pray for the sick and do what we can.  
We give instruction to those who lack knowledge.  
Obviously, this is love - agape - doing what is right.

Now let's think of other examples that are not so obvious.

Church members who publically disobey God's commands and refuse correction,  
need to be disciplined within the church.

Those who teach heresy must be stopped.

Those who refuse to work or to help themselves should be left on their own.

Those who desire to hurt or destroy us, we need to break our relationship with them.

We are to set boundaries with others. We are to hold people accountable.

This also is agape - doing what is right based on God's standards.

The reason God commands **this** kind of love is for our protection and the well-being of others.

John's final command is also relevant to us.

He knew the importance of Jesus in his life - how he had been changed.

Now he wants Jesus to be the most important in the lives of all believers.

So John tells his generation and ours,

*Keep or guard yourselves from idols. 5:21*

An idol is anything that is in opposition to His deity, His worship and His authority.

We are living in a culture that is evil and actively working against God. So from morning to night we will be surrounded by idols. We are surrounded...

By things that want to pull us away from Jesus, to make us lose our interest and enjoyment of Him

By things that take away our desire to learn and obey

By things that become more important and take away His influence in our life.

John says to us, *Guard yourselves from the idols that surround you. Do not let them pull you away from Jesus.*

## ENDNOTES

1 John 1:1

Because John refers to Jesus as the "Word of Life", (a something rather than a someone), the verse has to begin with "That which". However, we know John is talking about Jesus, (a person), so in English, it has the meaning, "He who was from the beginning, whom we have heard, whom we have seen with our eyes, whom we have looked upon and have touched with our hands..."

## EXTRA INFORMATION FOR THE STUDIOUS AND INQUISITIVE

### 5:16-17 sin that leads to death

There are times believers deliberately and willfully refuse to obey God. After many warnings, if they still refuse, God may take their life prematurely. When they are dying, church members should not ask God to spare their life. This is judgment from God. Because they are believers, they will have eternal life. But they may die prematurely because they refuse to obey God in this life.