

Introduction to NT Books

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XXI. First Epistle of John

A. The Authorship of First John¹

1. External Evidence—numerous patristics testified to the Johannine authorship of this epistle including Polycarp to Eusebius.

2. Internal Evidence

a. The epistle is anonymous but echoes the Gospel of John in 1:1.

b. Many similarities exist between the Gospel and I John including common terms such as Father, Son, Spirit, beginning Word, believe, light, love, etc.

c. The author was an eyewitness to both pre-Cross and post-Resurrection ministry of the Lord.

B. The Audience and Date of First John

1. Irenaeus stated that John ministered in Ephesus in his later years.

2. He probably wrote all of his works in the 90's.

C. The Purpose of First John

1. He focused on the true Christology to rebut Gnostics, indicating that the Lord Jesus was a physical reality, God incarnate.

2. He wanted his audience to have assurance of salvation by passing the social, moral, and doctrinal tests.

3. He warned them against false teachers who would affect them spiritually and morally.

4. He used the expression “these things I write” to indicate his purpose for them to have joy (1:4), to not sin (2:1), to avoid seducers (2:26), and to have assurance of eternal life (5:13).

D. The Characteristics of First John

1. He used “*we know*” thirteen times, from 2:3 to 5:20.

2. John described worldliness through lust of the flesh, lust of the eye, and pride of life (2:15-17).

3. He refuted Gnostic views of Christ:

a. The Adoptionists said that the Christ Spirit adopted the human Jesus as his baptism and departed from him at his crucifixion. They denied that Jesus was the Christ (2:22).

b. The Docetists said Jesus “*seemed*” (δοκέω) to be in the flesh but was really a phantom. They denied His incarnation (4:3).

4. He taught his people that they knew all things because of four truths:

a. They had the Spirit of God (the author of Scripture living within),

b. They had the Word of God (the Scriptures),

c. They had the Church of God (the local church),

d. They had the Man of God (they were submissive to John).

5. He inscripturated the great verse on the Triune Godhead in I Jn. 5:7, giving several sure reasons for its inclusion.

¹The NT lists four Johns, such as John the Baptist, John the Apostle, John Mark, and John of the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:6).

- a. Grammatical
 - b. Contextual
 - c. Theological
6. He taught that Jesus was the true God refuting, all Gnostic heretics who denied His deity (5:20).