

Introduction to First John

I. Introduction

- A. A general epistle addressed to no particular church
- B. One of the latest writings in the NT

II. Writer

- A. According tradition, it was written by the Apostle John
- B. Follows much in the pattern of writing as the Gospel of John

III. Themes

A. **Discernment of False Teachers**

- 1. Those that lack the marks of authentic Christianity
- 2. They have doctrinally compromised the person and work of Jesus Christ
- 3. Two primary errors:
 - a) Gnosticism: special knowledge
 - b) Docetism: Jesus only appeared to be human

B. **Assurance**

- 1. Spells out the fundamentals of Christianity
- 2. Deals with certainties, not opinions or conjectures

C. **A Criteria of True Christian Profession**

- 1. John discusses three criteria for determining genuine Christian confession:
 - a) Righteous living
 - b) Love for other believers
 - c) Belief in Jesus as the Incarnate Christ (Word of God)
- 2. Summed up in three test questions:
 - a) **The doctrinal test:** Do you believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, come in the flesh?
 - b) **The ethical test:** Does your life reflect growing obedience to Christ?
 - c) **The relational test:** Does your life reflect growing, practical love for others?

True Christianity vs. False Religion

Contrast Between	Reference
Light vs. darkness	1:5
The Father vs. the world	2:15-16
Christ vs. the antichrist	2:18-22
Truth vs. lies	2:20-21
Good works vs. evil works	2:29; 3:4-10
The Holy Spirit vs. the spirit of error	4:1-6
Genuine love vs. pretense	4:17-21
Life vs. death	5:11-12

Tests of True Christianity

1. Do we walk in the light or in the darkness? (1 John 1:6-7)
2. Do we claim to be without sin, or do we regularly confess our sins? (1 John 1:8-10)
3. Do we walk in obedience to God? (1 John 2:3-5)
4. Do we hate our brother or do we love him? (1 John 2:9-11; 4:14-15)
5. Do we love the world or do we love the Father? (1 John 2:15-17)
6. Do we persevere in our faith and our understanding? (1 John 2:24-25; 4:1-3)
7. Do we practice sin or do we strive toward righteousness? (1 John 3:4-5, 10)
8. Do we make a practice of demonstrating love? (1 John 4:7-8)
9. Does the Spirit of God dwell within us? (1 John 4:13)