

Freddy Davis
321 Anton Dr., Tallahassee, FL 32312
freddy.davis@capitolcom.org
850-339-2679
www.capitolcom.org/florida

**Capitol Commission Bible Study
The Existence of Truth
Introduction to 1 John**

During this year's session, I am going to do a study on John's first epistle (1 John). I trust you will find this biblical teaching one that will help you more effectively express your faith in daily life. We will begin with an introduction to the book to help you grasp the big picture context of John's letter. By understanding this context, you will be able to more fully grasp the significance of what he was trying to share with his readers.

John's Purpose in Writing the Epistle

1 My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense — Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world. 1 John 2:1-2

In a nutshell, John had two main reasons for writing this letter. The first was to spiritually strengthen his readers during a time when they were under a lot of pressure because of their faith. In doing this, he appealed to them to show love to each other; to strengthen their relationship with God; to live rightly; to learn and live out the truth of God; and to stand strong in their hope of eternal life. The second reason for the letter was that John was particularly concerned with false teachers who were trying to lead the people to embrace false teachings. In fact, there was a strong push by a group of Gnostics in the area to do just that. John deals pointedly and extensively with the fallacies of Gnostic beliefs in order to debunk their falsehoods.

Why John Was Concerned with Gnosticism

During the time John was pastor of the church in Ephesus, there was a local Gnostic teacher named Cerinthus. He was a former Jew from Egypt, and his doctrine was a combination of Jewish and Gnostic beliefs. Cerinthus rejected Christian teachings – specifically those found in the gospels and the letters of Paul. Most importantly, he denied Christ's deity.

Cerinthus taught that Christ and Jesus were two different beings. Christ was from heaven, and when he came to earth, he took possession of the body of the human named Jesus. Then, during Jesus' earthly ministry, Christ shared special knowledge with certain followers about how people could know God. Finally, he taught that just before the crucifixion, Christ left Jesus' body and returned to heaven. For Cerinthus, the most important part of Christ's ministry was not his sacrificial death on the cross to atone for man's sin, but the special knowledge he left explaining how humans could have a fulfilling life. Thus, Cerinthus' teaching completely contradicted the gospel message. Unfortunately, many Christian believers became confused because of this teaching, and some even walked away from their faith. John wrote this letter to help Christ followers clearly understand the truth.

Why This Letter is Important Today

The reason this epistle is so important today is because what was happening in John's day was very similar to what we see happening in ours. Now, as then, false teachers promote teachings aimed specifically at pulling Christians away from the gospel and into false beliefs. To deal with this, John admonished his readers to hold fast to two things – correct theological truths about Jesus Christ, and a right lifestyle based on truth and a pure life. To stand strong in our faith today, as we deal with those who would lead us to false beliefs and an immoral lifestyle, we must also apply John's principles of mastering right beliefs and living a godly lifestyle.

