

buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰ Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, ³¹ he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. ³² This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.

EX: Why did they teach? Why did they preach? How could they not? Erin knows I can't come home from a walk where I see a bunny and not tell her all about it. She can't see a funny video without sharing it with me. Seth can't beat a boss in his game without sharing it. Kara can't have a strange story from school without telling it. When we see something wonderful, we want to share it with others. We want them to join us in its wonder—to join us in our **fellowship** and our joy!

How much more true was it for the disciples? Jesus wasn't just some nice story or some imagined vision brought about by some overripe wine or spoiled hummus. His **reality** forced His disciples to share it so that those around them—those they most cared about—could share in their **fellowship** and complete their **joy**!

ILL—Fellowship with Friends (something in common; same school; same fandom; same family) As you grow older, you tend to grow apart as those things that join you together lessen in significance. When you're 45 years old, the fact that you grew up 5 mins from one another doesn't seem as crucial as it once did!

AP: In Christ, we have something that never fades—a **fellowship** that never fails. When those we love come to know Christ as we do, we join in a closer and more permanent **fellowship**: not simply as friends, but as brethren with us and our shared Father and His Son. And when we share this message, *our joy* [is made] *complete*.

1PT 1.6-9 - NKJV ~ *In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, ⁷ that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, ⁸ whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, ⁹ receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls.*

CONCLUSION

The Gnostic gospel, like any number of other false gospels, had a certain appeal to the average Christian. But John's solution was to reintroduce the people to **the real thing**—to focus on the **reality of Christ**: for when we see how He was not simply a story or idea, but a real figure who lived, breathed, suffered, and died, that opens us to the **true fellowship** and **joy** found in Him. And that **fellowship** should be ever expanding outward: driving us to share His message not simply among to one another, but to every corner of the earth.

JN 15.1-8 - NKJV ~ *"I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. ² Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. ³ You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. ⁴ Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. ⁵ "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. ⁶ If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. ⁷ If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. ⁸ By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.*

INVITATION

#658 [Exp-NTGE][1.5]
08/07/2025

The Real Thing
PC ___ Pchd _____

1JN 1.1-4

QUESTION: How did John expect to fight the false gospel of Gnosticism?

TRN TO 1JN 1 INTRODUCTION

ILL—Misty's Twin (went for a walk around the block; heard a bark from a new house in the area; it was a Shi Tzu similarly colored to Misty) This surprised us—it's not often we see a Shi Tzu anymore—they've seemed to fall in favor among our circles. But to see one that looked so similar to our Misty was a bit shocking

As much as that dog might have looked like our dog at a glance, we'd have had no trouble telling the difference. But that's how it is when you really know something or someone: you can pick out the real thing without any trouble!

This year, the Bible Bowl team will be looking at the General Epistles (with **RV**). These books tend to be rarely focused upon in our churches. The focus of these letters was helping tell truth from counterfeit—**the real thing**. To the inspired writers of the New Testament, who were very familiar with Christ, they could tell the difference at a glance. They'd never fall for the counterfeit when they'd seen **the real thing**. **But to the new disciples?** Well, many of them struggled.

BACKGROUND – Its Author, its Audience, and its Aim (1.1-4)

When we open any book of the Bible, there are three key questions that come to us: **who's the author, who's the audience, and what's its aim?**

1JNs Author - **"That's easy, Eric; did you read the header? It was written by John!"** Okay, couple things: first, the name of the book at the top of the page of your Bible wasn't the name given by the author or the Holy Spirit. The names were chosen years later and seem to be broken into three categories: they were either named after their audience, their theme, or their author. Paul having written 13, his books were named after his audience. Peter having written two, his letters were named after the author. But when you come to the books called **1-3 JN** (we'll ignore **RV** for now), we see three books commonly attributed to the same writer (with a very similar style), so they're named after the writer.

But the author never claims to be **"John"**. **Why is it named 1JN and not 1 Joseph or 1 Apollos?** Traditionally, the author is believed to have been John from an early age. But while **"tradition"** isn't nothing, it isn't the same as a direct statement like, *"James, a bondservant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad: Greetings."* (**JM 1.1a - NKJV**) **Do we know why it's traditionally believed to have been written by John?**

1 JOHN/Authorship/Compared to the Gospel of John

JN is famous for many things, but none so much as its first chapter: *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.* (**JN 1.1-5 - NKJV**)

Now, compare that to **1JN 1.1 – NKJV** ~ *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—* The phrasing and tone—the very meter of

this language—clearly speaks out of the same voice as **JN 1**. So, there's good reason to believe that the author of **1JN** is the same as the author of **JN**. But let's continue down the rabbit hole: **how do we know that JN is written by John?**

GOSPEL OF JOHN/Authorship/Evidence for John, the Son of Zebedee

1JNs Audience - But who was it written to? Jewish Christians like Hebrews?

Persecuted roman citizens like Romans? Understanding the **audience** matters, for that informs the meaning and interpretation of the text, itself.

1 JOHN/Audience/The Asian Churches

1JNs Aim - We find ourselves frustrated by how false teaching slithers its way into even the most faithful of congregations. But in truth, we shouldn't. For within the lifetime of the apostles, it was already happening. Now, while the sun was setting on the false teaching of the Judaizing teachers, it was rising on a new error that would dominate for centuries and exist in varied forms even today: **Gnosticism**.

1 JOHN/Aim/Gnosticism

JN 5.13 – NKJV ~ *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.* This is similar to **JN 20.31 - NKJV** ~ *but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.* If we can know Christ fully, we can have eternal life.

AP: There are all sorts of teachings that have found their way into the church. Teachers proclaim **egalitarianism, universalism, Calvinism, and Marianism**—all of which I would argue are fully foreign and hostile to the pure message of scripture. **How are we to recover and return people to the pure teachings of Christ?**

I would argue that the answer is found in the writings of men like John, Jude, and Peter—who just so happen to be the authors of most of this year's Bible Bowl material! For John, his focus was on combating Gnosticism—this goal is widely believed to be an overarching theme not only of **1JN**, but also **JN, 2JN, and 3JN**, as well. John saw his beloved brethren being tempted and drawn by the tempting false philosophies of various Gentile influences. And it was his desire to bring them out of this and back to a right understanding of the Gospel message. **But how would he do that?** His answer was simple: by **reintroducing Christ**.

BD1: Jesus is Real (1.1-2)

But, does it really matter? Who cares? I know I've had this discussion with people before. But in truth, our beliefs cannot remain separate from our teachings forever. And the teachings of Gnosticism had some dramatic effects on Christianity.

1 JOHN/Aim/Gnosticism's Effect on Christianity

1JN 1.1-2 - NKJV ~ *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—² the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—*

EX: Did you notice John's themes in this passage? The Jesus that the apostles were preaching was not some disembodied spirit as the Docetists preached or the half-man, half-God hybrid the Cerinthianists preached. The Christ of the Gospel was *"heard", "seen", "looked upon", "touched with our hands", and "made manifest"*! Jesus is not some hypothetical or conceptual savior. Jesus is as real as John, as me, and as you. He is audible, visible, physical, and practical. Jesus is!

BKGRND: The day of Jesus's resurrection, the disciples were uncertain and fearful. They'd just heard the words of Mary Magdalene and the other women who'd witnessed His resurrection, but they didn't know what to think. **What would it mean for Jesus to be resurrected? Had the women just seen something? Had Jesus resurrected in some ethereal way?**

JN 20.19-20 - NKJV ~ *Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, "Peace be with you." ²⁰ When He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord.*

EX: Jesus spoke to them—that familiar voice from the mount and the sea of Galilee and showed His hands and His side—the marks of the nails and the spear. In this, He proved to them that His resurrection wasn't just fakery or a hallucination. In what they had *"heard", "seen", and "looked upon"*, they could trust **His reality**. But, of course, there was one who was missing that day: Thomas.

JN 20.24-25a - NKJV ~ *Now Thomas, called the Twin, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵ The other disciples therefore said to him, "We have seen the Lord." So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."*

BKGRND: Thomas had likely heard such stories before—spirits on the water and superstition. He wasn't going to simply believe based upon a third party statement of what someone else had *"heard", "seen", and "looked upon"*.

JN 20.25b - NKJV ~ *So he said to them, "Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."*

EX: The Gnostic teachers would have no trouble explaining the words the apostles had spoken or the vision the apostles had seen (after all: a spirit could be heard and seen, in their minds). It is for that reason that John pointed to Thomas: who called for proof of the **reality of Jesus**—that His resurrection body could just be *"heard", "seen", and "looked upon"*: he wanted proof that it could be *"touched with our hands"*.

JN 20.26-28 - NKJV ~ *And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, "Peace to you!" ²⁷ Then He said to Thomas, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing." ²⁸ And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!"*

EX: **"Touch my wounds; feel my scars; I am here—I am resurrected. I am real!"** That is the invitation that Christ offered—a call to recognize **His reality**.

AP: Jesus doesn't stand apart from history—a mythical figure like Odysseus, Buddha, Muhammed, or John Smith. He's not a fully fictionalized figure like Brahma, Vishnu, and Shiva. Christ's physical existence is acknowledged by all serious historians. His death and empty tomb by both friendly and hostile historical sources. His wounds and scars are present and documented: proving His physical **reality**. And out of that physical **reality** our **fellowship and joy** is found!

BD2: Jesus is our Fellowship and Joy (1.3-4)

1JN 1.1-4 - NKJV ~ *that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴ And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.*

EX: It is out of the **reality** of Christ's existence and His resurrection that the apostles' confidence was born. As Peter would, himself, state in **AC 2.29-32 - NKJV** ~ *"Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and*