

COLE
Women's
BIBLE STUDY

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1, 2, 3 JOHN
REVELATION 1-3

Fall 2023 - Spring 2024

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EXTRAS

This study was written Mary Ann Porter.

Cross references provided at the end of the study guides are from:

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

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NASB Formatting Notes:

- ***Italics*** are used to indicate words which are not found in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek but implied by it.
- **SMALL CAPS** are used to indicate Old Testament quotations or obvious references to Old Testament texts.
- **Asterisks (*)** denote places where a Greek historic present tense verb has been translated in English as a past tense verb for better readability.

e. Luke 9:44-56

f. Matthew 20:20-28

In the decades that followed the birth of the Christian church, John witnessed the church grow as the good news about Jesus Christ spread. He noted the increasing persecution of Christians; his brother James was the first apostle martyred. After Roman Emperor Vespasian's son, General Titus besieged and destroyed Jerusalem (and the Temple) in 70AD, the leadership hub of the Christian church moved to Ephesus. Refer to the timeline in Figure 1-1 to get a sense of the timing of John's writing.

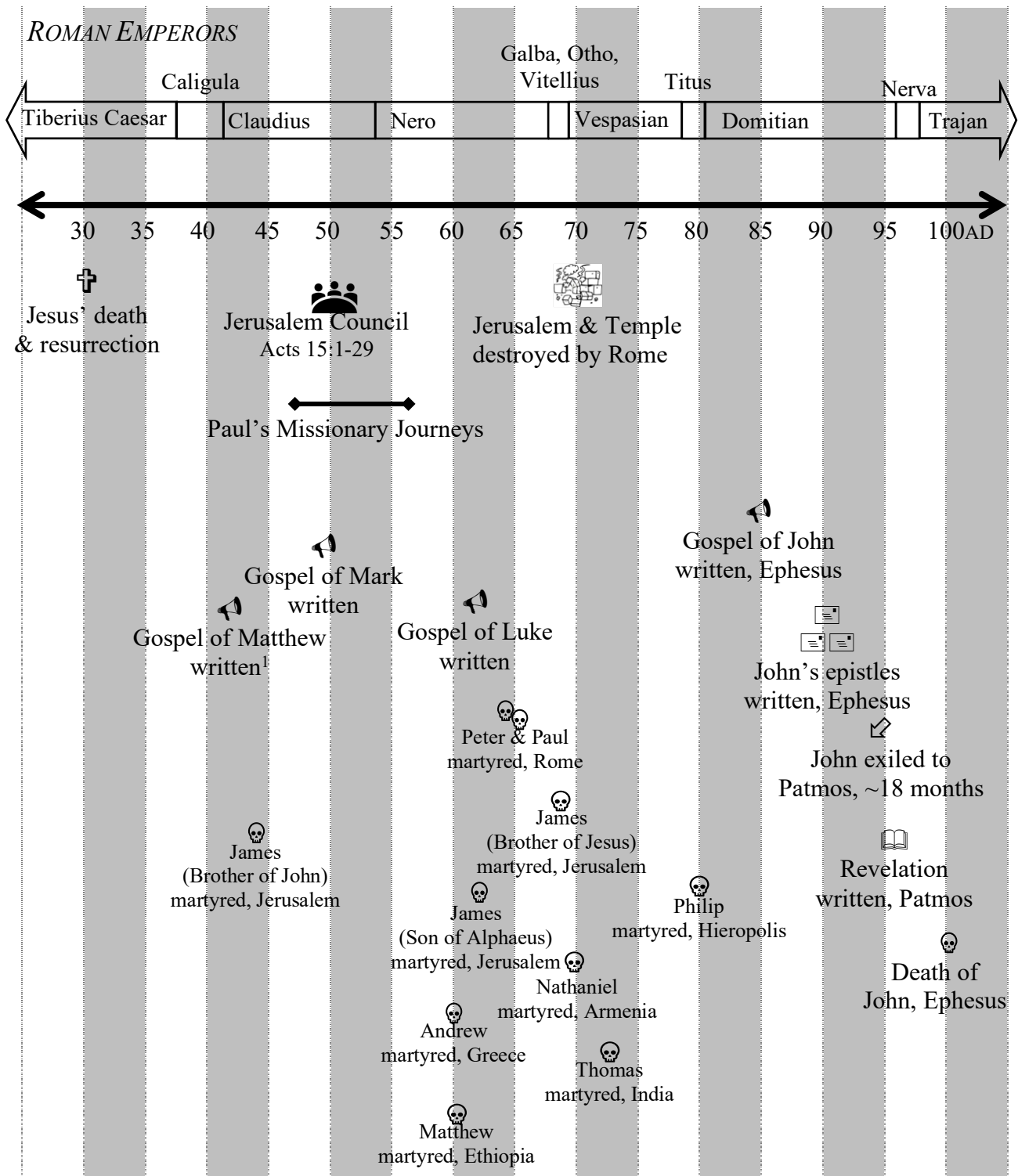
John wrote his gospel, his epistles, and Revelation in the latter years of his life. At the time the Spirit inspired him to write, John was the last living apostle; all the others had been martyred. Akin to his apostolic brethren's letters, John's epistles upheld the purity of the true gospel against false teachers attempting to entice believers away from the faith.

In his gospel, John never used his own name. Instead, he referred to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."

2. Record what you discern about John from the following verses from his gospel.

a. John 19:25-27

b. John 20:1-9



¹ Eusebius, *The Church History*

Figure 1-1

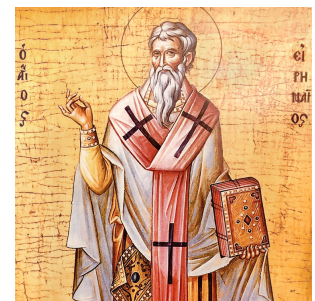
3. A third time Jesus revealed Himself to some of the disciples after His resurrection is recorded in John 21. Read John 21:15-24. What do you discover about the Apostle John (not the John mentioned as Simon Peter's father!) from these final verses of the Gospel of John?
4. Finally, read Galatians 2:1-10 and note the small detail that the Apostle Paul included in his letter to the Galatians when he mentioned John. (*Cephas* is the Aramaic, or Syriac, name that Jesus gave Simon [Peter] meaning *stone*.)

INTERPRETATION – Lord, help me to understand it.

5. What stands out to you about the Apostle John thus far? (Stay tuned – as we study his epistles, we will see how the years of walking by faith in Christ impacted John.)

Many of the epistles in the New Testament warn against false teachers. In his letters, Paul calls such people *false apostles*, *deceitful workers*, *false brethren*, *dogs*, and *evil workers*. Peter refers to them as *false prophets* and *false teachers*; he likens them to *unreasoning animals*.

At the time of John's writings, false teaching was gaining momentum. Sects were splintering off from Christianity and Judaism. These seeds of Gnosticism were sown in the first century and by the second century, the movement had taken root. It has existed, in some form or another, ever since. Much of what has been known about ancient Gnosticism is gleaned from *Against Heresies* by Irenaeus (c. 130-200AD.) Irenaeus was a student of Polycarp of Smyrna, who had been a disciple of the Apostle John. Irenaeus wrote to refute the teachings of the Gnostics and another



Irenaeus

derivative of Christianity, the Marcionites. In 1945 a farmer in Upper Egypt (south of the Nile River Delta) discovered what became known as the Nag Hammadi library. This collection of Gnostic writings confirmed that Irenaeus had represented the Gnostic teachings accurately in *Against Heresies*.

Gnosis is the Greek word for *knowledge*. The Gnostics purported that they possessed a secret, higher knowledge of spiritual things. This secret knowledge was key to one's salvation.

Table 1-1 highlights some of the differences between Christianity and Gnosticism, in general. There were many sects of Gnosticism and some held very specific views not covered in the table.

View of...	Christianity	Gnosticism
God	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Holy, good, righteous, just • Creator • Eternal • Almighty Father • Loves us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Supreme Being is separate and superior to the Hebrew God of the Old Testament (the <i>demiurge</i>) • The Supreme Being is good; the <i>demiurge</i> (the craftsman) is evil • The Supreme Being is unknowable and unknown to the <i>demiurge</i> • The <i>demiurge</i> created the physical world; thus, the material world, including one's body, is evil
Jesus Christ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fully man, fully divine • Born of a virgin • Messiah who died an atoning death and was raised from the dead • The propitiation for the sins of believers • Living, interceding for us 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus was a man, only a man, born of Mary and Joseph • Jesus had a pure heart • The Christ came on Jesus at his baptism, left before Jesus was placed on the cross • Jesus is dead, but will be raised on the Last Day • Some held that Jesus did not have a physical body; he only <i>seemed</i> to have one
Salvation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through faith in Jesus Christ and His atoning work on the cross, a gift by grace (not by works) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special, secret knowledge available to an elite few • Some held good works (for the non-elite) could earn one's salvation
Sin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebellion against God and His Law • Forgivable by God 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sins involving one's body were not particularly serious – the body was material hence already bad

Table 1-1

Distinguishing facts and beliefs of certain Gnostic sects:

Cerinthians (very similar to the **Ebionites**)

- The Gnostic sect led by Cerinthus may have originated the heresy which John targeted in his first two letters.
- Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* (Book 3, Chapter 3, paragraph 4): “There are those who heard from him [Polycarp] that John, the disciple of the Lord, going to bathe at Ephesus, and perceiving Cerinthus within, rushed out of the bath-house without bathing, exclaiming, ‘Let us fly, lest even the bath-house fall down, because Cerinthus, the enemy of the truth, is within.’”
- Jesus, the natural son of Joseph and Mary, was more righteous, prudent, and wise than other men. (*Against Heresies*, Book 1, Chapter 26, paragraph 1)
- When the Christ spirit settled on Jesus at his baptism, the God that Jesus proclaimed was the Supreme Being, not the God of the Hebrews.
- Jesus did rise from the dead, without future association with the Christ spirit.

Carpocratians

- According to Clement of Alexandria [Egypt,] in *Stromata* (3.431) Jude wrote his epistle to address the heresy of the Carpocratians.
- Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* (Book 1, Chapter 25) on the Carpocratians:
 - The physical world was created by angels.
 - A spirituality equal to Jesus’ was attainable by despising the material world.
 - Believed in a concept similar to reincarnation in which one’s soul must cycle through all experiences of sin and righteousness to ascend to the Gnostic version of heaven.
- Worshipped idols of Jesus, Aristotle, and Pythagoras.

Nicolaitans

- A couple possible origins:
 - Nicolas, one of the first deacons appointed by the apostles (Acts 6:5,) left Christianity and formed the sect.
 - The Greek meaning of the name *Nicolas* is *victor of the people*. This view holds that the Nicolaitians imposed a hierarchy over their followers – the Nicolaitian leaders were spiritually superior to the members, as well as the rest of mankind.
 - The Aramaic word *nicolah* means *let us eat*. Eating the food offered to their idols was an act of worship.
- In the Bible the Nicolaitans are mentioned as following the way of Balaam (Revelation 2:14, 15.) Balaam was a wicked prophet commissioned by King Balak of the Moabites to curse Israel. King Balak tried on three occasions to have Balaam curse Israel, but each time God pronounced a blessing instead. (Numbers 22:1-25:5) Later we learn from

Numbers 31:16 that Balaam advised King Balak to tempt Israel with Moabite women and idolatry. This ploy worked and the result was Israel brought God's judgement on itself.

- Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* (Book 1, Chapter 26) states that the Nicolaitans practiced adultery and ate food sacrificed to idols.

Valentinians

- This group held that some people were predestined for heaven, some for hell, and everyone else remaining could earn access to a lower heaven through good works. (Those predestined for heaven did not need to practice good works.). Hell was not a place of eternal punishment.

APPLICATION – Lord, help me to live it!

6. Why is it foundational to have a solid understanding of the natures of God and Jesus? (What is the danger otherwise?)

7. What are some modern-day false teachings about Jesus? What truth counters the false teachings you identified?

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OR CONTEMPLATION:

- I) It can be easy to take John's reference to himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved" as a very prideful thing to say. How is it actually a very *humble* admission?
- II) In this brief look at John (primarily from question 1,) do you identify any way(s) in which Jesus was preparing John for the second half of his life?

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

For more about Gnosticism:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GXC-vvCivp4>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ockwMVE7PgM>

 Cole Women's Bible Study Writing Team, 2023

Additional Scripture for Study Guide 1

□ Matthew 4:18-22

¹⁸ Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. ¹⁹ And He *said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." ²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.

²¹ Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the *son* of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them.

²² Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.

□ Mark 3:13-19

¹³ And He *went up on the mountain and *summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. ¹⁴ And He appointed twelve, so that they would be with Him and that He *could* send them out to preach, ¹⁵ and to have authority to cast out the demons. ¹⁶ And He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom He gave the name Peter), ¹⁷ James the *son* of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to them He gave the name Boanerges, which means, "Sons of Thunder"); ¹⁸ and Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot; ¹⁹ and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him.

□ Mark 5:35-43

³⁵ While He was still speaking, *people* *came from *the house of* the synagogue official, saying, "Your daughter has died; why bother the Teacher further?" ³⁶ But Jesus, overhearing what was being spoken, *said to the synagogue official, "Do not be afraid, only believe." ³⁷ And He allowed no one to accompany Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. ³⁸ They *came to the house of the synagogue official, and He *saw a commotion, and *people* loudly weeping and wailing. ³⁹ And after entering, He *said to them, "Why are you

making a commotion and weeping? The child has not died, but is asleep.”⁴⁰ And they *began* laughing at Him. But putting them all outside, He *took along the child’s father and mother and His own companions, and *entered *the room* where the child was *in bed*.⁴¹ And taking the child by the hand, He *said to her, “Talitha, kum!” (which translated means, “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”).⁴² And immediately the girl got up and *began* to walk, for she was twelve years old. And immediately they were completely astonished.⁴³ And He gave them strict orders that no one was to know about this, and He told *them* to have *something* given her to eat.

□ **Luke 9:18-36**

¹⁸ And it happened that while He was praying alone, the disciples were with Him, and He questioned them, saying, “Who do the people say that I am?”¹⁹ They answered and said, “John the Baptist, and others *say* Elijah; but others, that one of the prophets of old has risen again.”²⁰ And He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” And Peter answered and said, “The Christ of God.”²¹ But He warned them and instructed *them* not to tell this to anyone,²² saying, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised up on the third day.”

²³ And He was saying to *them* all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.²⁴ For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.²⁵ For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and *the glory* of the Father and of the holy angels.²⁷ But I say to you truthfully, there are some of those standing here who will not taste death until they see the kingdom of God.”

²⁸ Some eight days after these sayings, He took along Peter and John and James, and went up on the mountain to pray.²⁹ And while He was praying, the appearance of His face became different, and His clothing *became* white *and* gleaming.³⁰ And behold, two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah,³¹ who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.³² Now Peter and his companions had been overcome with sleep; but when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men standing with Him.³³ And as these were leaving Him, Peter said to Jesus, “Master, it is good for us to be here;

let us make three tabernacles: one for You, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah”—not realizing what he was saying.³⁴ While he was saying this, a cloud formed and *began* to overshadow them; and they were afraid as they entered the cloud.³⁵ Then a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My Son, *My* Chosen One; listen to Him!”³⁶ And when the voice had spoken, Jesus was found alone. And they kept silent, and reported to no one in those days any of the things which they had seen.

▣ **Luke 9:44-56**

[Jesus, Peter, James, and John returned from the mountain the next day and were met by the other disciples and a crowd. Jesus cast out a demon from a boy.]

But while everyone was marveling at all that He was doing, He said to His disciples,⁴⁴ “Let these words sink into your ears; for the Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men.”⁴⁵ But they did not understand this statement, and it was concealed from them so that they would not perceive it; and they were afraid to ask Him about this statement.

⁴⁶ An argument started among them as to which of them might be the greatest.⁴⁷ But Jesus, knowing what they were thinking in their heart, took a child and stood him by His side,⁴⁸ and said to them, “Whoever receives this child in My name receives Me, and whoever receives Me receives Him who sent Me; for the one who is least among all of you, this is the one who is great.”

⁴⁹ John answered and said, “Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to prevent him because he does not follow along with us.”⁵⁰ But Jesus said to him, “Do not hinder *him*; for he who is not against you is for you.”

⁵¹ When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem;⁵² and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him.⁵³ But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem.

⁵⁴ When His disciples James and John saw *this*, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?”⁵⁵ But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, “You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; ⁵⁶ for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.”] And they went on to another village.

□ **Matthew 20:20-28**

²⁰ Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him. ²¹ And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She *said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left." ²² But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They *said to Him, "We are able." ²³ He *said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

²⁴ And hearing *this*, the ten became indignant with the two brothers. ²⁵ But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and *their* great men exercise authority over them. ²⁶ It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

□ **John 19:25-27**

²⁵ Now beside the cross of Jesus stood His mother, His mother's sister, Mary the *wife* of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. ²⁶ So when Jesus saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing nearby, He *said to His mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" ²⁷ Then He *said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her into his own *household*.

□ **John 20:1-9**

Now on the first *day* of the week Mary Magdalene *came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and *saw the stone *already* removed from the tomb. ² So she *ran and *came to Simon Peter and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and *said to them, "They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and we do not know where they have put Him." ³ So Peter and the other disciple left, and they were going to the tomb. ⁴ The two were running together; and the other disciple ran ahead, faster than Peter, and came to the tomb first; ⁵ and he stooped to look *in*, and *saw the linen wrappings lying *there*; however he did not go in. ⁶ So Simon Peter also *came, following him, and he entered the tomb; and he *looked at the linen wrappings lying *there*, ⁷ and the face-cloth which had been on His head, not

lying with the linen wrappings but folded up in a place by itself. ⁸ So the other disciple who had first come to the tomb also entered then, and he saw and believed. ⁹ For they did not yet understand the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead.

□ **John 21:15-24**

¹⁵ Now when they had finished breakfast, Jesus *said to Simon Peter, “Simon, *son of John*, do you love Me more than these?” He *said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He *said to him, “Tend My lambs.” ¹⁶ He *said to him again, a second time, “Simon, *son of John*, do you love Me?” He *said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He *said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” ¹⁷ He *said to him the third time, “Simon, *son of John*, do you love Me?” Peter was hurt because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.” Jesus *said to him, “Tend My sheep.

¹⁸ Truly, truly I tell you, when you were younger, you used to put on your belt and walk wherever you wanted; but when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands and someone else will put your belt on you, and bring *you* where you do not want *to go*.” ¹⁹ Now He said this, indicating by what kind of death he would glorify God. And when He had said this, He *said to him, “Follow Me!”

²⁰ Peter turned around and *saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following *them*—the one who also had leaned back on His chest at the supper and said, “Lord, who is the one who is betraying You?” ²¹ So Peter, upon seeing him, *said to Jesus, “Lord, and what *about* this man?” ²² Jesus *said to him, “If I want him to remain until I come, what *is that* to you? You follow Me!” ²³ Therefore this account went out among the brothers, that that disciple would not die; yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but *only*, “If I want him to remain until I come, what *is that* to you?”

²⁴ This is the disciple who is testifying about these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.

□ **Galatians 2:1-10**

Then after an interval of fourteen years I went up again to Jerusalem with Barnabas, taking Titus along also. ² It was because of a revelation that I went up; and I submitted to them the gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but *I did so* in private to those who were of reputation, for fear that I might be running, or had run, in vain. ³ But not even Titus, who was

with me, though he was a Greek, was compelled to be circumcised. ⁴ But *it was* because of the false brethren secretly brought in, who had sneaked in to spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, in order to bring us into bondage. ⁵ But we did not yield in subjection to them for even an hour, so that the truth of the gospel would remain with you. ⁶ But from those who were of high reputation (what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality)—well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me. ⁷ But on the contrary, seeing that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter *had been* to the circumcised ⁸ (for He who effectually worked for Peter in *his* apostleship to the circumcised effectually worked for me also to the Gentiles), ⁹ and recognizing the grace that had been given to me, James and Cephas and John, who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, so that we *might go* to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰ *They* only *asked* us to remember the poor—the very thing I also was eager to do.

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STUDY GUIDE 2

Overview of 1 John

Pastor Ray Stedman introduced his sermon series on 1 John by summarizing an excellent insight from Watchman Nee in his book, *What Shall This Man Do?* (A link to the introduction is provided at the end of this study guide.)

Watchman Nee observed that just as God calls people to different tasks, He has also prepared them for said tasks in different ways. Watchman Nee cites the examples of the apostles Peter, Paul, and John as evidence. When the Lord called Peter in Matthew 4:18-19, Peter was casting a fishing net. Jesus told Peter and his brother Andrew to “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” Recall that Peter, at the Pentecost in Acts 2, boldly preached to the crowd the truth about Jesus and three thousand people came into the faith – he cast the gospel net and the haul was plentiful! Paul was a tent-maker by trade; a builder. We have Paul to thank for much of the doctrine in the New Testament – under the Spirit’s leading, Paul built and maintained it on the foundation of Jesus Christ.

When John and his brother were called (Matthew 4:20-21), the text says they were mending the fishing nets. John was preserving and maintaining the integrity of the nets. Similarly, his writings near the end of the first century call believers to hold to the original message of the gospel and the true character of God and of His Son Jesus Christ. John was preserving and maintaining the integrity of Jesus’s teachings.

Study warm-up: Think of a situation in which you got off on the wrong track. How did you remedy it?

OBSERVATION – Lord, help me to discover it!

Read 1 John in one sitting. (This study guide is rather brief, use the extra time to read 1 John multiple times this week!)

1. Re-read 1 John and list the reasons he gives for writing the letter, and the associated verse. (Expect to find 8 different verses!)

2. What do you observe about the recipients of the letter? (Big picture thinking is all you need to do right now!)

3. What do you see about John? (Again, think big picture!)

INTERPRETATION – Lord, help me to understand it.

In his book, *The Knowledge of the Holy*, A. W. Tozer writes,

“What comes into our minds when we think about God
is the most important thing about us.”

Tozer goes on to explain that no one rises above their religion and no religion rises above its idea of God. He says that we (individually and collectively as the church) “move toward our mental image of God.” For this reason, it is imperative to think accurately about God to the degree to which He has chosen to reveal Himself to us in the Scriptures.

APPLICATION – Lord, help me to live it!

7. What verse or concept especially caught your eye in 1 John? How will it impact your day to day living?

8. How do you handle false teachers? Are they to be feared?

FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION OR CONTEMPLATION:

- I) What is idolatry? What are today's idols? (We'll revisit this in the coming weeks; please be thinking about it.) Why does John end his letter, "Little children, guard yourselves from idols"?
- II) Does John still seem like a *Son of Thunder*? Why or why not?

REFERENCES

<https://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/1-john/life-with-father>

Nee, Watchman, and Angus I. Kinnear. *What Shall This Man Do?: Discovering Your Place in Ministry*. Christian Literature Crusade, 2008.

 Cole Women's Bible Study Writing Team, 2023

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