

1 John



1 John

Canon, Authorship, and Context



Why Study this Letter?

1. Is knowing God and His truth important to you?

- John 17:3, “This is eternal life: That they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent — Jesus Christ.”

Why Study this Letter?

2. To Respond to God's "Self-Revelation" in Christ

- John 1:18, “No one has ever seen God. The one and only Son, who is himself God and is at the Father’s side — He has revealed him.”
- 1 John 1:1-3, “...[He] was revealed to us...” and “...our fellowship is with the Father and his son...”

Why Study this Letter?

3. *To Build Our Worldview—a Christian Worldview*

- John 1:1, “In the *beginning* was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.”
- 1 John 1:1, “That which was from the *beginning*...”

Canon

What is the “Canon” of Scripture?

- Summary Definition of the work of Dr. Michael J. Kruger: *“The canon is the collection of divinely given books that function as God’s authoritative Word and are recognized as Scripture by the church.”*
- This “Canon” is closed in that, Scripture’s divine origins are no longer present today and thus no open stream of revelation is active today

Canon

What makes a book of “divine origin”? Kruger’s Attributes of Canonicity:

1. Divine Qualities

- Self-attesting to its origin through its beauty and coherence in theology; consistency with prior revelation; transformative power; moral and spiritual authority
- In other words, Scripture sounds like God (Jn 10:27, “My sheep hear my voice...”)

Canon

What makes a book of “divine origin”? Kruger’s Attributes of Canonicity:

2. Apostolic Origins (or Connection)

- Written by an Apostle or closely connected to apostolic authority (e.g., Mark with Peter, Luke with Paul)
- In other words, Scripture comes from Christ’s appointed messengers and their *given* authority (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 9:15-16)

Canon

What makes a book of “divine origin”? Kruger’s Attributes of Canonicity:

3. Corporate Reception (Catholicity)

- Widespread and early use in churches, recognition across geographic regions, and consistent in teaching and worship
- The church doesn’t make a book Scripture, rather they recognize, even over time, what already is Scripture

Canon

Does 1 John bear the attributes of canonicity—divine qualities, apostolic origin, and corporate reception—that testify to its identity as Scripture?

Yes!

Canon

1 John:

- Has divine qualities both in the majesty of its writing, theology, gospel message, and alignment with other books of Scripture—specifically the “Fourth” Gospel
- Clear apostolic origin with strong historical reason to date it during the apostolic period of writing
- Widely accepted early within the Church (*Moratoria Fragment*)

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Authorship

John the Apostle: Proofs

- Style and writing similar to the Fourth Gospel
- Early, universal acceptance of the letter
- Polycarp of Smyrna & Papius (69 AD - 155 AD)
- Eusebius and Athanasius listed it as canon (367 AD)
- Accepted in the Council of Hippo (393 AD)
- Martin Luther says 1 John “Shows you Christ and teaches you all that is necessary for salvation...”

Context/Occasion

Why was the letter written?

- A misconception: The letter was written against “Gnosticism” —the idea that physical life is evil and that “spirit” life toward divine knowledge is ultimate life (the “Spark of divinity”)
- This is rejected now since any writings of the Gnostics and the Church Father’s against the view post-date 1 John

Context/Occasion

Why was the letter written?

- Pastoral concern for the flock of God's people
 - Trust in apostolic authority
 - Belief about Jesus and God generally
 - Right attitude toward sin and the world
 - Interpersonal relationships marked by love
 - Understanding the Gospel and its implications
(Cf Jn 2:19)

Context/Occasion

Why was the letter written?

- Pastoral concern for the flock of God's people
 - Understanding the Gospel and its implications (Cf Jn 2:19)
 - ◆ It could be that Greek philosophical assumptions combined with misunderstanding of the promises of the Gospel produced beliefs opposed to the Gospel of Christ

Context/Occasion

- Wrong assumptions about the Gospel or foreign philosophies are very much in line with the nature of our own day!
- The relevance of 1 John will never go away in light of that—even beliefs that will develop beyond our day
- 1 John can answer many wrong worldviews while also guiding Christians to know God more through the revelation of Jesus Christ

Why study 1 John?

- To know God's truth and to know God
- To respond, rightly, to God's Revelation in Christ
- To build our worldview



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