



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The First Catholic Epistle of St. John

Chapter 1

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

- The Gospel of John was designed to produce faith so that we might have life (Jn 20:30-31)
- However, it is The First Epistle of John which describes the nature of that life in greater detail

AUTHOR

- The author is John, the beloved disciple of Jesus
- Similarities in style, vocabulary, and themes in both this epistle and the Gospel of John certainly offer internal evidence for this conclusion



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- There is also **external evidence** that John is the author
- Polycarp, a disciple of John, appears to make reference to this epistle in a letter to the Philippians at the beginning of the second century
- Irenaeus, a student of Polycarp, quoted from the epistle and attributed it to John

RECIPIENTS

- No one is specifically mentioned by name



Introduction

- St. John may have been in Ephesus, and some think this was a general epistle to Christians throughout Asia Minor (modern day Turkey)
- Comments in 1 Jn 2:20,27 could imply that St. John was addressing a specific group that possessed certain spiritual (miraculous) gifts

DATE

- From 60 A.D. to 100 A.D., maybe 95 A.D., others say 70 A.D. prior to the destruction of Jerusalem



Introduction

PURPOSE AND THEME

- St. John's purpose therefore appears to be two-fold:
 - ❖ Assure Christians that they have eternal life (1 Jn 5:13)
 - ❖ Counter those who denied that Jesus had come in the flesh (1 Jn 4:1-6)
- The theme of this epistle is Eternal life is in Jesus Christ, who has come in the flesh



Introduction

OUTLINE

- Prologue: The Word of Life (1:1-4)
- God Is Light (1:5-3:10)
- God Is Love (3:11-5:12)
- Conclusion: Confidence and Characteristics of the Child of God (5:13-21)
 - ❖ Be confident in prayer (5:13-17)
 - ❖ Do not continue in sin (5:18-21)

Introduction to Chapter 1



- St. John begins his first epistle like he does his gospel
- With a prologue regarding the Word of Life (Jesus Christ) who dwelt in the flesh among men and made fellowship with the Father possible (1:1-4)
- Fellowship with God is maintained as we walk in the light and confess our sins that we might enjoy continual cleansing through the blood of Jesus (1:5-10)

What Was Heard, Seen, and Touched (1:1-4)



- The Word, manifested as Christ, was from the beginning (John 1:1), (Genesis 1:1)
- Looked upon...handled: In its incarnate form in the person of Jesus Christ
- Christ, the revealed Word, when He became flesh; in Him was life (John 1:14,4)
- The office of the apostle, having seen and known the Eternal Life as He lived on earth, was to bear witness of Him to the world

What Was Heard, Seen, and Touched (1:1-4)



- To declare what they had seen and heard was simply to preach the gospel
- This knowledge brought those who accepted it into a fellowship of knowledge and hope
- Those are in fellowship who are partakers of the same faith, hopes, and privileges
- All the saints entered into fellowship with the apostles, but the apostles were in fellowship with God

What Was Heard, Seen, and Touched (1: 1-4)



- This grand fellowship, that of the saints with the Father and the Son, is simply a guarantee that no good thing will be withheld from us; that all things are ours
- There is a fellowship of peace, of unity, of eternal life and glory
- This assurance of the divine fellowship is given in order that they may rejoice with the fullness of joy in the glorious hope



Fellowship with Him and One Another (1:5-10)

- The message heard from Christ, now declared, is that God is the source whence all light, whether it be physical, or moral, or spiritual, comes; the Enlightener of the universe
- The term denotes luminous clearness, the free and benevolent source from whence flow light, intelligence, purity and blessing, absolutely free from alien intermixture, since in him there is no darkness at all



Fellowship with Him and One Another (1:5-10)

- Light represents truth, knowledge and holiness
- Darkness represents ignorance, error, falsehood and sin
- To claim a fellowship with Him who is Light and to walk in the darkness of error, of ignorance, and of sinfulness are utterly inconsistent
- He who obeys not the truth walks in darkness
- We walk in the light by following Christ, the Light of the world



Fellowship with Him and One Another (1:5-10)

- All who are walking in the light have the common life and fellowship
- Cleansed by the blood of Christ, and thus made holy, we are fitted for the heavenly communion
- To say that we have reached a sinless state in which we no longer need the blood of Christ to cleanse us is a deception
- This language is in opposition to the claims of the Perfectionists of all ages



Fellowship with Him and One Another (1:5-10)

- Instead of affirming that we are sinless we should confess our sins
- If we confess our sins the Lord will be faithful to His promise of mercy, and just, to forgive us our sins (sacrament of confession since this is directed to Christians)
- God says we have sinned. He declares There is none righteous; no, not one. See Rom 3:10; Ps 14:4
- If we affirm we are sinless, we make Him a liar



Conclusion

- Who is called the 'Word of Life'?
- What does St. John declare? What does he want to share? Why does he write?
- How do we have fellowship with God?
- What message has St. John heard that he now declares to us?
- If we walk in the light, list two things we gain.
- When does the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ cleanse us from all unrighteousness?