

# My Favorite Thing About

## 1<sup>st</sup> JOHN

1 John 4:1

February 19, 2022

None of the 3 letters assigned to John bear his name, but early church records and a thematic connection to the Gospel of John suggests that the author is John *"the beloved"*.

All 3 letters were likely written between **80-90 AD**.

By that time the church had been around for several decades and Greco-Roman philosophies had crept in.

- **Docetism** – Christ did not really come in the flesh, but only appeared to do so. This belief ties in with the Greek philosophical idea that the human spirit is "good" while the human body is "bad" – therefore Christ, as a Divine Being, would never actually become human.
- **Gnosticism** – The way to God was through special knowledge only available to an elite group of people.

Apparently, a group who had left the church to start a movement of their own, still had some degree of influence within the church and had shaken the confidence of many of the believers.

Because of these false teachings, John began his 1<sup>st</sup> letter by asserting that the foundation of his ministry was personal experience. He knows because he has heard, seen and touched:

- **1 John 1:1-2** - That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched -- this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. <sup>2</sup> The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us.

Which echoes:

- **John 1:1, 14** - In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God..... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Which brings us to **My Favorite Thing About 1<sup>st</sup> JOHN – the word TEST**

John could have simply said, *"I have told you the truth about God and Jesus --- trust me."*, but he didn't. At the end of the letter John said:

- **1 John 4:1** - Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but **TEST** the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

**Okay, but how do we do that?**

- **1 John 4:2-3** - This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup> but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

Throughout the letter, John compared and contrasted Jesus, God and Believers with those who have the spirit of the antichrist.

**Jesus:**

- Is the Son of God {1:3}
- Came in the flesh {4:2}
- Died for the sins of the whole world {2:2 and 4:10}
- Is the Christ {5:1}

**God:**

- Is light and no darkness is found in Him at all {1:5}

- Is righteous {2:1, 29; 3:7}
- Is love {4:8}
- Has given us eternal life through Jesus {5:11}

#### Believers:

- Walk as Jesus walked {2:6}.
- Continue in Him and do what is right {2:28-29}.
- Obey His commands {3:24}.
- Love other people {4:7}.

#### Spirit of the Antichrist:

- Claims to have fellowship with God yet walks in darkness {1:6}.
- Claims to be without sin {1:8}.
- Claims to “know Him”, but does not obey His commands {2:4}.
- Claims to be in the light, but hates his brother {2:9}.
- Loves the world and the things of the world {2:15}.
- Denies that Jesus is the Christ {2:22}.
- Does not love {4:8}.

The character of the antichrist is **opposite** that of God and Christ.

The origins of the Second World War are complex, but a significant contributing factor to the rise of the **far-right** Nazi party was the fact that the German people did not see its true character because they chose **NOT** look beyond the propaganda. They chose **NOT** to ask some very important questions. They chose **NOT** to read the *“fine print”*. Everyone was tired of the humiliation of the 1<sup>st</sup> World War and the painful economic hardships it brought. Everyone was tired.... and Hitler gave brilliant and passionate speeches. He told the people what they wanted to hear = if they followed him, they would be great again. Germany would be great again. No longer would they have to live in humiliation and embarrassment. No longer would they be mired in a deep financial depression. He would make those responsible pay **{specifically Jews and the far-left}**. Shame and loss would be replaced by pride and victory and domination and purity. Few looked beyond what Hitler said to the character of the man – one notable exception was Dieterich Bonhoeffer.

The result? In the European Theatre alone, WW2 accounted for an estimated 55-65 million dead **{military and civilian}**, including 6 million Jews and untold numbers of political opponents, gypsies, clergy, homosexuals, and the disabled.

People who claim to be Christians use flowery language and tell us things they think we want to hear all the time. The way not to get caught up in what they are selling is to look beyond the words they speak **{the Propaganda}** to what they do – to their characters – to the *“fine print”*. Do word and action = the same thing?

- **Psalm 119:30-37** - I have chosen the way of truth; I have set my heart on your laws. <sup>31</sup> I hold fast to your statutes, O LORD; do not let me be put to shame. <sup>32</sup> I run in the path of your commands, for you have set my heart free. <sup>33</sup> Teach me, O LORD, to follow your decrees; then I will keep them to the end. <sup>34</sup> Give me understanding, and I will keep your law and obey it with all my heart. <sup>35</sup> Direct me in the path of your commands, for there I find delight. <sup>36</sup> Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain. <sup>37</sup> Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.
- **1 John 4:1-3** - Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. <sup>2</sup> This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, <sup>3</sup> but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

That’s why the word **TEST** is **My Favorite Thing About 1<sup>st</sup> JOHN**.