



William Holman Hunt, *The Light of the World*, between 1851 and 1852, oil on canvas, 121.9 x 61 cm, Keble College, Oxford. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

# 1–3 JOHN; JUDE

DISCIPLESHIP BY HOPE; WARNINGS AND EXHORTATIONS

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## **Introduction to the Epistles of John**

The Epistles are arranged by length, and only Jude is shorter than the three letters attributed to John.<sup>1</sup> Like the Gospel of John, these three epistles do not mention John's name. In 2 and 3 John, the author introduces himself as the Elder (*presbuteros*). All three letters share vocabulary, themes, and style with the Gospel of John. By AD 215, the eastern and western Christian churches accepted the author as the Apostle John.<sup>2</sup> Yet debate over the authorship and dating continues today.<sup>3</sup> This commentary will refer to the author as John and focus on understanding and applying the messages as scripture.

### *Themes*

The three epistles of John, like his Gospel, highlight themes of light, darkness, truth, love, and the Lord's name. He builds on ideas presented during Jesus's Last Supper. Only 1 John has the length to develop these themes. First John is developed into a poetic sermon.

Table 1. Overview of 1 John

1:1–4	Prologue: The Word of Life
1:5–3:10	The message of light Warning against worldliness Warning against antichrists Children of God will become like God
3:11–5:12	The message of love Loving one another to abide in God’s love
5:13–21	Concluding testimony

## Introduction to 1 John

### Organization

John writes to all Saints and calls them children. Seven times in the prologue John repeats that he has seen or handled or heard the glorified, resurrected, physical Lord. He develops two messages: first, “God is light” and second, “we should love one another.” The epistle ends with his testimony.

### 1 John 1

#### *Prologue: The Word of Life—1 Jn 1:1–4*

**1 Jn 1:1: (JST).** “**Brethren, this is the testimony which we give of ~~T~~that which was from the beginning.**” The Prophet Joseph’s additions sound similar to D&C 76:22: “After the many testimonies which have been given of him, this is the testimony, last of all, which we give of him,” which interestingly, Joseph received while translating Jn 5:29. This is the only JST change in this chapter. The words in the JST reflect the Gospel of John.<sup>4</sup> As discussed earlier, three of the four Gospels and this epistle open with words similar to Gen 1:1: “In the beginning.”<sup>5</sup> Like the Gospel of John’s prologue, this prologue also emphasizes the beginning, the Word, and life. New Testament authors crafted their own writings after that pattern as another witness of God’s laws in Genesis. They also wrote to testify that Jesus fulfilled the old law as the promised Messiah and gave the new law.

The epistle or sermon is written in poetic parallels. By comparing the wording with the Gospel of John, we can see where the author introduces new ideas. For example, here in the epistle he emphasizes the physical nature of Jesus’s resurrected body (see 1 Jn 4:3). It was probably in response to the growing problem of Gnosticism, which taught the Greek philosophy that all things physical were evil and that the spirit alone was ultimately good. John repeats over and over that he (and others) saw and touched the *body* of

the resurrected Lord.<sup>6</sup> John refers to Jesus as the Word of Life with a body (as in Php 2:16). John uses the Greek word *logos*, the same word in his Gospel prologue. Here though, he wants to emphasize Jesus as life, meaning eternal life. Earlier Jesus taught, “Whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life” (Jn 5:24 NIV).

**1 Jn 1:2. “the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life.”** Seven times in the prologue alone, John mentions that Jesus was seen and handled (seven was the number John used the most often in his writings). It also emphasizes that Jesus’s words bring us hope and life, even an abundant life here and afterwards.

**1 Jn 1:3 (NIV). “we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son.”** The “life . . . revealed” (ISV) to John includes a relationship with both God the Father and His Son. To this, Joseph Fielding Smith added the companionship of the Spirit: “If we are in fellowship with this Spirit, then we walk in the light and have fellowship with God.”<sup>7</sup> Disciples can feel the fellowship with the Spirit powerfully when they repent and feel God’s mercy through forgiveness. The word *koinóni*, “fellowship,” literally means “partnership” and can also refer to “contributory help, participation, sharing in, communion, spiritual fellowship.”<sup>8</sup> Inherent in Christian fellowship is the responsibility of sharing our livelihood with those in need (see Act 2:44–45).

**1 Jn 1:4. “these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”** Most English versions other than the KJV express that John teaches this “to make our joy complete” (NIV).

### *Light and darkness: Sin and forgiveness—1 Jn 1:5–2:2*

**1 Jn 1:5. “This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”** John introduces the first section of his sermon: God as light. Light was also one of the major themes of John’s Gospel.<sup>9</sup> Many levels of meaning can be found in the phrase “God is light.” Light is energy, reason, color, heat, and inspiration. Light fuels life and feeds our spirits. Light inspires art and science. Light holds the secrets of the universe. Light is threaded into modern technologies and electricity. A Stanford bioengineering professor, Markus Covert, shed a deeper level of significance to this concept:

When I think “God is light” I think: light is everything! Light is gorgeous! It is beautiful! It is mysterious! We don’t even know if it is a wave or a particle—probably neither! It’s eternal! Who would dare to say where it came from or where it’s going? It is the fastest thing in the universe, 300,000,000 meters per second without breaking a sweat. It warms us! It feeds us (from the sun to the photosynthetic plants to the rest of the animal kingdom)! It comforts us (triggering serotonin release and sensing by our brain cells). It protects us (vitamin D). Our bodies have all kinds of ways to harvest light, but the most spectacular is the ocular—our eyes are absolutely amazing in what we can perceive, and yet so much of the light around us is completely undetectable or only with advanced technology. It’s completely amazing!<sup>10</sup>

Beyond being merely a descriptor of God, light has a literal connection to God (D&C 88:7). This description of God is completely different than those of the Greco-Roman gods. John worships a perfect being.

**1 Jn 1:6. “If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth.”** To enter fellowship with God, disciples must live in Christ’s Light or in the light of Christ. When we walk in the light, we walk with our Savior, as He is the “light of the world” (Jn 8:12; 9:5). Moroni 7:18–19 describes the Light of Christ like a conscience, being “the light by which ye may judge . . . that ye may know good from evil.” This rudimentary work of the Spirit is given to everyone to learn how to “hold upon every good thing” (Moro 7:19).

**1 Jn 1: 7 (NIV). “if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”** Fellowship includes serving and loving all neighbors who cross our path. Interestingly, John calls for fellowship with God’s light first and before our neighbors. The order is significant, as it is with two greatest commandments of the Old Testament.<sup>11</sup> It is easier to love others when we feel God’s love and love Him—which often comes after repenting and receiving forgiveness.

We also walk in the light when we walk in harmony with God and others. To walk in God’s light allows us to see others as God does. When we have a hard time getting along with someone, we can use God’s light to see that person as He does. If we humbly acknowledge our own weaknesses, it is easier to endure them in others. We are all in need of the cleansing light of our Savior.

**1 Jn 1:8–9. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us.”** If we confess and repent of our sins, Christ’s atoning sacrifice allows the Spirit to cleanse or forgive our sins. Even though we do not believe humans are depraved because of Adam’s transgression, we all sin and need daily repentance.<sup>12</sup> The best “weapon against sin is its recognition and a dependence on the redemption wrought by Jesus.”<sup>13</sup>

Biblical authors taught the need for repentance often. Yet the Book of Mormon includes versions of the word *repent* ten times more often than the Bible. The Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price repeat it twice as often as the Bible.<sup>14</sup> This increased frequency speaks of the importance of repentance in the Restoration. In our day, President Russell M. Nelson taught,

Too many people consider repentance as punishment—something to be avoided except in the most serious circumstances. But this feeling of being penalized is engendered by Satan. He tries to block us from looking to Jesus Christ, who stands with open arms, hoping and willing to heal, forgive, cleanse, strengthen, purify, and sanctify us.<sup>15</sup>

Satan’s false propaganda distorts the blessings of repentance. Humble confession brings great blessings.

## 1 John 2

**1 Jn 2:1 (NIV).** “*My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin.*” John is the only author to use *teknion*, “little child,” in the New Testament; he uses it once in his Gospel and seven times in this epistle. It was also used for “someone *deeply loved*.”<sup>16</sup> Outside of the New Testament, this term of endearment is used for disciples by their masters. John explains that the purpose of his epistle is to persuade his readers to sin not. His epistle is filled with information on sin.

**1 Jn 2:1 (JST).** “**And But if any man sin and repent, we have an advocate with the Father.**” The JST addition of “repent” is doctrinally significant. In modern revelation, the Savior further explains that He will intervene if we repent; otherwise, “if they would not repent they must suffer even as I” (D&C 19:17). The word for “advocate,” *paraklétos*, also means “intercessor, a consoler, helper, and Paraclete.” In the entire Bible, Jesus’s role as an advocate is mentioned only here, but we find it five times in the Doctrine and Covenants (for example, see D&C 45:3–5). Advocate is a favorite title for the Lord in John’s writings—four times it appears in John’s Gospel as *paraklétos*, “comforter.”<sup>17</sup> This dual definition is consistent with D&C 88:3 and Joseph Smith’s teachings that define the Second Comforter as a visitation of the Savior:

Now what is this other Comforter? It is no more nor less that the Lord Jesus Christ Himself; and this is the sum and substance of the whole matter; that when any man obtains this last Comforter, he will have the personage of Jesus Christ to attend him, or appear unto him from time to time, and even He will manifest the Father unto him, and they will take up their abode with him, and the visions of the heavens will be opened unto him, and the Lord will teach him face to face, and he may have a perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the Kingdom of God.<sup>18</sup>

**1 Jn 2:2 (NIV).** “*He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world.*” Christ appeased the demands of justice through His “atoning sacrifice” (NIV), as a “remedy” (NEB), “expiation” (RSV) or “propitiation” (KJV). The Book of Mormon taught that Jesus’s Atonement would become the “great and last sacrifice” (Alm 34:10). The Lamb of God sacrificed Himself for the world’s sins through His death.<sup>19</sup>

### *Keeping the commandments—1 Jn 2:3–11*

**1 Jn 2:3 (NIV).** “*We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.*” At His Last Supper, the Savior taught that to *know God* is to have eternal life (Jn 17:3). This knowledge comes as disciples closely follow His commandments with a pure heart and righteous desires. Knowing God happens as one becomes like Him. In Semitic thought “knowledge implies intimacy.”<sup>20</sup>

**1 Jn 2:4–5.** “*He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar . . . whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected.*” John emphasizes the importance of *obeying* the word of God (as we saw in Jms 2:7). Does one really believe if one’s actions

are not consistent with one's faith? Sinners can overcome by doing all they can and then strengthening their faith in Christ and returning our will to Him. We must live the teachings of the Lord to claim complete conversion.

**1 Jn 2:7 (JST).** *"I write **no** a new commandment unto you, but **an-old** it is the same commandment which ye had from the beginning."* Jesus taught a new commandment at the Last Supper. The JST clarifies the continuity of loving as Jesus loves (Jn 15:12). The phrase "from the beginning" may refer to when Adam received these commandments or the beginning of Christianity.

**1 Jn 2:9–10 (NIV).** *"Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister is still in the darkness. Anyone who loves their brother and sister lives in the light."* As we demonstrate Christlike love, we receive and reflect the light that Christ possesses. We must live the gospel to receive its light. New windows of light open ways for disciples to forgive and love with God's love. John also teaches that hatred causes darkness so that we cannot see where we are going.

**1 Jn 2:12–14.** *"I write unto you."* The poetic double message highlights three groups (citing the NIV):

*Children*, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name.

*Fathers*, because you know him who is from the beginning.

*Young men*, because you have overcome the evil one.

*Children*, because you know the Father.

*Fathers*, because you know him who is from the beginning.

*Young men*, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

John's acknowledgement of little children's purity is a dramatic departure from his culture's perspective (and sadly later Christianity adopted the falsehood that children are sinful). Yet, restored scripture adds a second witness that children are whole, saved through Christ's Atonement, and do not need baptism (Moro 8:9–14; Mosi 3:16). John addresses different groups to get everyone's attention. The absence of women in this list is not a sure sign that women were not included in his audience because several times elsewhere John uses the word *adelphos*, "member of the same religious community, especially a fellow-Christian," which the NIV translates as "brothers and sisters" three times (1 Jn 3:13, 15, 16).

*Warning against worldliness—1 Jn 2:15–17*

**1 Jn 2:15–16 (JST).** *"Love not the world, neither the things that are **in** the world . . . For all **that is** in the world, **that is of** the lusts of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the **pride of life**, is not of the Father."* The inspired JST distinguished "in the world" from "of the world," which means "is of the lusts." While the world values lust and pride, disciples must repel worldliness. Disciples replace self-centered behavior with service and generosity (D&C 84:50–53). Loving consecration more than materialism, the Sabbath more than sports, or God's will more than one's wishes are all

sacrifices that disciples make to know God. As Jesus earlier taught, one “cannot serve God and Mammon” (Mt 6:24; 3 Ne 13:24).

**1 Jn 2:17 (NIV).** *“The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”* John describes the opposite of those in the world as those who “do the will of God” (GNT). When one thinks of the great reward of eternal life, it helps keep the requirements in perspective. Disciples give so little to receive so much. Our planet is estimated to be billions of years old, yet it will pass away (as we know it), but humans, who now usually live less than a century, will live forever.

### *Warning against antichrists—1 Jn 2:18–27*

**1 Jn 2:18–19 (NIV).** *“Dear children, this is the last hour; . . . even now many antichrists have come . . . but their going showed that none of them belonged to us.”* The last hour, or “last time” (KJV), is not the last days. John prophesies of the Great Apostasy, not the end of the world. Corruption had already entered the Lord’s Church in John’s time. The antichrists include Church members who “went out from us” (KJV). John doubts the sincerity of their conversion. He defines an antichrist in verse 22 as one who denies Jesus as the promised Messiah. Antichrists work for the devil and drive apostasy.

The Book of Mormon also refers to antichrists in the form of Sherem (Jac 7), Nehor (Alm 1), and Korihor (Alm 30), to name a few. Their arguments are like those used today. We, too, can see antichrists who try to stop the work of the Restoration or cause contention within the Church.

**1 Jn 2:20 (NKJV).** *“you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things.”* The KJV “unction” means “anointed” (RSV) or “are among the initiated” (NEB). The same word is used in verse 27 and for inaugural ceremonies for priests.<sup>21</sup> John writes to Saints who were endowed with the power of God and knew the sacred temple ordinances.<sup>22</sup>

**1 Jn 2:21–22 (BSB).** *“I have not written to you because you lack knowledge of the truth, but because you have it. . . . [But] the antichrist . . . denies the Father and the Son.”* John writes to believers who trust in the truth. They have the gift of the Spirit to discern truth from error. An important use of discernment is to recognize an antichrist in any who deny the roles of God the Father and His Son Jesus.

**1 Jn 2:23.** *“Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father: [but] he that acknowledgeth the Son hath the Father also.”* In the KJV, the second phrase is italicized to identify it as not being in the Greek manuscript. Without these words, John may have referred to the difference between enjoying the presence of the Son in the terrestrial kingdom and that of the Father in the celestial kingdom (D&C 76:70–79).

**1 Jn 2:24–25 (NIV).** *“remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—eternal life.”* In the Restoration, we define eternal life as exaltation in the celestial kingdom with God the Father.<sup>23</sup> Joseph Smith’s separation of this from immortality was unique among Christians (Mose 1:39).

**1 Jn 2:27 (NIV).** *“the anointing you received from him remains in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you . . . remain in him.”* John speaks to many disciples, not just anointed

prophets (D&C 124:125). This is the second time he reminds them that their *chrisma*, “anointing, unction,” has the power to teach them “all things” (1 Jn 2:20). This refers to all things required for exaltation. Consecrated disciples can be taught by the Spirit when they do not offend the Spirit. Donald Parry taught:

Anointed individuals potentially acquired several heavenly boons. For instance, persons who received the anointing were protected by God (1 Chr 16:22; Ps 105:15; 89:20–23; D&C 121:16), were taught from on high (1 Jn 2:27), and gained salvation (Ps 20:6; 28:8; D&C 109:80). In addition, the Lord showed mercy to his anointed (2 Sam 22:51; Ps 18:50). Similarly, it was forbidden for souls to speak out against the anointed of the Lord (1 Sam 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 23; 2 Sam 19:21).<sup>24</sup>

Kelly Ogden explains this anointing as the gift of the Holy Ghost.<sup>25</sup> Joseph Smith also emphasized the premier role that the Holy Spirit plays. To Joseph, the Holy Spirit is the great revelator and reveals God’s will to His children and shows them what they should do. However, John’s text seems to describe an anointing with oil, which is not the confirmation of the Holy Ghost but an additional gift. Early Christians had temple washings and anointings, which signify being cleansed and sanctified through Christ.<sup>26</sup> John may have referred to these promises as the means to learn and hear truth (D&C 88:74).

*Children of God will become like God—1 Jn 2:28–3:3*

**1 Jn 2:28–29 (NIV).** “*dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming . . . everyone who does what is right has been born of him.*” John again uses *teknion*, “little children,” endearingly as a loving teacher would. He also defines one who is “born of Him” as one who does righteousness. His encouragement to gain confidence in the Lord, to be worthy of being called a child of God, was the topic of a general conference talk by Elder Jörg Klebingat:

Do you have a personal witness that your current offering as a Latter-day Saint is sufficient to inherit eternal life? Can you say within yourself that Heavenly Father is pleased with you? What thoughts come to mind if you had a personal interview with your Savior one minute from now? . . . Yours is the privilege, if you want it, to come to know for yourself, today or soon, that you are pleasing God in spite of your shortcomings. . . . I testify of a loving Savior who rejoices when we apply His Atonement daily with the calm and happy assurance that we are facing in the right direction. I testify of a loving Savior who is anxious for your “confidence [to] wax strong in the presence of God” (D&C 121:45).<sup>27</sup>

### 1 John 3

**1 Jn 3:1–2 (BLB).** “*what love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God—and we are! . . . We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, for we will see Him as he is.*” From the New Testament perspective, one becomes a child of God when one lives



worthy of that title. (John the Baptist also taught this about claiming to be children of Abraham in Mt 3:7–10.) Yet, John’s audience does not comprehend what being a child of God entails. This amazing potential to “see him as he is” comes only when disciples apply the Savior’s Atonement for cleansing.

**1 Jn 3:3 (CEV).** *“This hope makes us keep ourselves holy.”* The hope of purification should motivate disciples to repent and receives Jesus’s cleansing and forgiveness. Sanctification or becoming holy prepares one to become like Him.

#### *Avoiding sin—1 Jn 3:4–10*

**1 Jn 3:4–6 (JST).** *“sin is the transgression of the law . . . he was manifested to take away our sins; . . . Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever **sinneth continueth in sin hath not seen him, neither known him.**”* John’s argument is built on two facts: sin exists, and all need a Redeemer to cleanse sins. We abide in our sins if we do not repent. When we abide with our Savior, we have repented and He has purified us. John explains that we know God only when we return allegiance to His laws. The JST points to the problem of “continuing to sin” (and then repeats the correction in verses 8 and 9). This word choice was also used by the NIV, which translates this as “continue to sin.”

**1 Jn 3:7–8 (JST).** *“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous . . . He that **committeth continueth in sin is of the devil.**”* The JST changes the Calvinistic thought of God predestining humans to do evil. John, like James, calls the Saints to demonstrate their beliefs with action. God has no incongruity. If we come unto Him through regular repentance, He honors us as His children. In this way, “the child of God is marked by freedom from sin, [and] the child of the devil is marked by sin.”<sup>28</sup>

**1 Jn 3:9 (JST).** *“Whosoever is born of God doth not **commit continue in sin; for his seed the Spirit of God remaineth in him: and he cannot continue in sin, because he is born of God, having received that holy Spirit of promise.**”* For the third time in this chapter, the JST makes an important doctrinal clarification by adding “continueth.” Most other modern English translations also change the meaning to “practices sin” (NASB) or “continue to sin” (NIV). This acknowledges the human propensity to sin but leaves room for repentance and a change of heart and behaviors. Spiritual rebirth motivates us to forsake sin. Satan rebelled against God premortally and was removed from the presence of God, but Satan came to earth to tempt humankind (Mose 4:1–4; Abr 3:24–28). In his Gospel and epistles, John repeatedly defines a spiritual birth.<sup>29</sup> The Holy Spirit of Promise has special meaning in restored scripture and refers to the Spirit’s ability to ratify ordinances and seal them conditionally or permanently.<sup>30</sup>

**1 Jn 3:10 (NIV).** *“This is how we know who the children of God are . . . Anyone who does not do what is right is not God’s child, nor is anyone who does not love their brother and sister.”* John loves opposites and often illustrates his points with images of right and wrong or light and darkness. The epistle has no middle ground or gray area.

*The message of love—1 Jn 3:11–24*

**1 Jn 3:11–12.** *“this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain . . .”* John returns to his key message and the Lord’s message from the beginning: love.<sup>31</sup> This was also the message given to the children of Israel through Moses (Deu 19:18). Yet, learning to love as Christ loves is the basis of God’s higher law. Looking back in biblical history, the first story of hatred, the antithesis of love, was Cain’s selfish behavior and murder of his brother (Gen 4:8). This was a New Testament favorite, as Heb 11:4 and Jud 1:11 also remembered it. Selfless, divine love is a sign of overcoming the kingdom of the devil.

**1 Jn 3:13 (NIV).** *“Do not be surprised, my brothers and sisters, if the world hates you.”* John warns his fellow Saints that the world lives under the influence of Satan, hence it hates followers of God.

**1 Jn 3:14–15 (NIV).** *“Anyone who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer.”* John teaches that we are spiritually dead, or not born again, unless our hearts have been permeated by a love for God that spills out to our fellow beings. In the higher law that He taught at the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus warned about the power of thoughts: “Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of his judgment” (Mt 5:22, JST).

**1 Jn 3:16–18 (NIV).** *“Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters . . . let us not love with words or speech but with actions.”* The ultimate testimony of love comes when we live for God and love others. John gives examples on how we can do this—giving to the poor in need and offering compassion. Real love must be enacted, not only offered in words. God demonstrates it, and so must we.

**1 Jn 3:19–21 (BSB).** *“by this we will know that we belong to the truth, and will assure our hearts in His presence: . . . if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God.”* If we feel and demonstrate Christlike love by giving to our neighbors, then our hearts will not condemn us. Our own hearts, or consciences, know what is right and wrong and whether we are filled with love or selfishness. The Spirit knows our thoughts (which, in scripture, is called the Spirit of Christ or the Spirit of God, the Holy Ghost, and the Light of Christ).<sup>32</sup> The Book of Mormon affirms, “The Spirit of Christ is given to every man, that he may know good from evil.”<sup>33</sup> Since all humans received this gift, accountable humans know their standing with God unless they have denied the Spirit to the point that they are past feeling (1 Ne 17:45; Moro 9:20).

**1 Jn 3:22 (NKJV).** *“whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”* Just as in Jms 1:5, John also encourages disciples to ask God for help. The Lord added a qualifier in His counsel to the Prophet Joseph Smith: we must only ask if it is right, or “that is expedient for you” (D&C 88:64). Otherwise, we get what we ask for, even if it is wrong, as Joseph Smith did with the lost pages of the Book of Lehi.<sup>34</sup>

John teaches another interesting point here. The more righteous a person is, the easier it is for them to receive communication from heavenly sources. Yet even Joseph Smith felt unheard in Liberty Jail, and

Job did not receive the answer he desired when he asked. That said, I do think that when we are being obedient to the Lord's commandments, whether the answers come in the way and when we expect, they still come. Furthermore, by keeping the Lord's commandments we will usually not ask amiss. Yet, there are times when all need to say, "Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" (Lk 22:42).

**1 Jn 3:23 (NKJV).** *"this is His commandment: that we should believe on the name of His Son Jesus Christ and love one another."* There is power in the name of God—evil spirits can be cast out, miracles can be performed, and the Spirit may come when we call on His name. The name of Christ is an important theme in John's Gospel and the Book of Mormon. For example:

- "Whosoever doeth this shall be found at the right hand of God, for he shall know the name by which he is called; for he shall be called by the name of Christ" (Mosi 5:9; also verse 8).
- "For behold, in my name are they called; and if they know me they shall come forth, and shall have a place eternally at my right hand" (Mosi 26:24).
- "The good shepherd doth call you; yea, and in his own name he doth call you" (Alm 5:38).
- "[Jesus will] take away the sins of the world, yea, the sins of every man who steadfastly believeth on his name" (Alm 5:48; also Alm 9:27; 11:40; Hel 14:2).
- "For by this name shall ye be called at the last day; and whoso taketh upon him my name, and endureth to the end, the same shall be saved at the last day" (3 Ne 27:5–6).

President Dallin H. Oaks taught about this: "Our willingness to take upon us the name of Jesus Christ affirms our commitment to do all that we can to be counted among those whom he will choose to stand at his right hand and be called by his name at the last day."<sup>35</sup>

**1 Jn 3:24 (NASB95).** *"The one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. We know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us."* When we keep the commandments of God, we receive that wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit. In the KJV, "dwelleth" is from the Greek word for that means "remains, abides." This verse helps us understand John's imagery of the Godhead, too. If we abide in God and God in us, then we can understand how Jesus abides in God.

## 1 John 4

*Try the Spirit: Truth or deceit—1 Jn 4:1–6*

**1 Jn 4:1.** *"Beloved."* John uses *agapétos*, "beloved," as an endearment ten times in his epistles.<sup>36</sup> (We find it sixty-one times in the New Testament spread across every author.)

**1 Jn 4:1 (NKJV).** *"do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God."* In Restoration scripture we learn that in the pre-mortal realms, Lucifer fought against God's plan and a portion of the heavenly spirits chose to follow him.<sup>37</sup> These devils promote evil and will

never receive a body (D&C 10:20–23, 27; 93:39). Their eternal progression stopped, and they became devils. Jesus, Luke, Peter, Paul, and John all describe false spirits working through false prophets or teachers during their time.<sup>38</sup>

This same call to “try the spirits” (KJV) was a favorite topic of the Prophet Joseph. According to Elder George A. Smith, the Prophet’s cousin and a member of the Quorum of the Twelve, “there was no point upon which the Prophet Joseph dwelt more than the discerning of Spirits.”<sup>39</sup> We, too, must “try the spirits” by checking the sources of our research, praying for warnings, following God’s messengers, and being aware of Satan’s deceptions.

**1 Jn 4:1.** “*many false prophets are gone out into the world.*” The next four verses form a chiasmic structure:<sup>40</sup>

- A False prophets have gone into the world (4:1)
- B The Spirit of God (4:2)
  - C Everyone who confesses Jesus . . . reflects the Spirit that belongs to God (4:2)
  - C’ Everyone who negates Jesus reflects a spirit that does not belong to God (4:3)
- B’ The spirit of antichrist (4:3)
- A’ The spirit of antichrist (4:3)

**1 Jn 4:2–3 (NIV).** “*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, but every spirit that does not . . . is the spirit of the antichrist.*” This is the first of three ways that John offers to recognize whether a spirit is of God or of Satan (see also 1 Jn 4:6–7). Disciples must ask whether the idea, spirit, or person testifies that Jesus is the Christ and came in the flesh as our God. Moro 7:24 teaches how to test spirits: “All things which are good cometh of Christ” (see also Omni 1:25).

**1 Jn 4:3 (NKJV).** “*This is the spirit of the Antichrist, which . . . is now already in the world.*” False teachers of Docetism taught that Jesus was not really a human who lived to suffer and die.<sup>41</sup> Some taught that the divine Messiah joined the man Jesus at baptism and then departed from Him just before His death. Others taught that the eternal Messiah really didn’t come in contact with temporal matter because that would have desecrated His divinity. These philosophical arguments are laced with Gnosticism, which taught that only the spirit is perfect and that everything physical is bad and part of our punishment here on earth. Gnostics taught that salvation did not undertake to deliver mortals from sin and guilt but rather to free their spirit from contaminating matter.<sup>42</sup> We face other antichrists now—humanism, materialism, skepticism, secularism, rationalism, and agnosticism, to name a few.

**1 Jn 4:4.** “*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.*” Those of God who enjoy the Spirit of the Lord have greater power than the devils. Thus, we can overcome the world with Christ’s help. Be careful with the

“he”s in this verse. The Anchor Bible translation begins, “As for you, Little Children, you belong in God,” giving it a sense of children’s innocence.<sup>43</sup>

**1 Jn 4:5–6 (BSB).** “*They are of the world. . . . We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; whoever is not from God does not listen to us. That is how we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of deception.*” In this context, “of the world,” or worldliness, includes everything that is under Satan’s domain. John describes the Saints as coming from God. That entails our need to serve Him. He also offers a second key to identify false prophets—they will not listen to God’s Apostles and prophets. Likewise, if we receive God’s message and messengers, we are on the right track. However, if someone does not receive truth, they have the spirit of error, “or falsehood” (NIV).

*Loving one another to abide in God’s love—1 Jn 4:7–21*

**1 Jn 4:7–8 (NIV).** “*Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. . . . Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.*” John gives a third key to detecting false prophets—whether they love one another.<sup>44</sup> Disciples can identify the wicked by their level of love for God and *agapaó*, “charity.” The pure love of Christ seems to be the essence of God’s character. Thus, to become like Him, disciples must seek this gift of charity. Paul and Mormon call charity the greatest spiritual gift that God gives His children (1 Cor 13:13; Moro 7:46). John uses the perfect tense of the verb when describing being born of God, “has been [and remains] begotten,” which happens through the sealing of the Holy Spirit of Promise.<sup>45</sup>

**1 Jn 4:9–10 (BSB).** “*This is how God’s love was revealed . . . not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son as the atoning sacrifice for our sins.*” The clearest example of God’s love is the gift of His Son as our Savior and Redeemer. In Greek, the word order stresses the object as the “only Begotten.”<sup>46</sup> Two more words play an important role the text. The KJV uses “propitiation,” but the Greek *hilasmos* is translated “atoning sacrifice” by many modern English translations. Throughout this entire epistle, John uses *agape*, which is charity, or “the pure love of Christ” (Moro 4:47).

**1 Jn 4:11.** “*Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*” God requires us to share His gift with others. If you don’t feel love for someone, pray to see them as God sees them. Ask the Lord to bless you with an understanding of His love for that person. Sometimes we mix up counterfeit forms of love—pleasure, praise, power, or even sex. But, if these are used for self-serving, enjoyment-based emotions, they are not what John refers to as God’s unconditional love. He wants us to go beyond lust and self-aggrandizement to an eternal perspective of selfless service and compassion for each other.

**1 Jn 4:12 (JST).** “*No man hath seen God at any time, **except them who believe.** If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.*” The first phrase of this verse seems out of place as it reads in the KJV. When portions of the text do not flow, scholars question if it was original to the text. The important JST correction leaves room for the biblical examples of the hundreds who saw the resurrected Lord (Jn 20–21; 1 Cor 15:6). Two verses later, John says he has seen God, too. Many believers have seen God before and after His Resurrection.<sup>47</sup>

In the Gospel of John and other places in this epistle, we find the same message from the JST. For example, “Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God” (Jn 6:46; also 1 Jn 3:6; 4:14). The Lord taught Joseph Smith that He wanted believers to strive to see Him: “Every soul who forsaketh his sins and cometh unto me, . . . and obeyeth my voice, and keepeth my commandments, shall see my face and know that I am.”<sup>48</sup>

**1 Jn 4:13 (NIV).** “*This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit.*” One way God abides in us is through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If you want to know whether you are living in accordance with Jesus’s will, determine if you feel the Spirit of God. If you do, He lives in you.

**1 Jn 4:14 (NIV).** “*And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son.*” John bears his testimony that he has seen enough to know that the Father sent His Son.

**1 Jn 4:15–16.** “*Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and . . . he . . . dwelleth in love.*” John lists two conditions as evidence of when God abides in us: (1) we believe in Jesus’s supreme act of atoning love, and (2) We are filled with God’s divine love (*agapa*, “charity”).

**1 Jn 4:16b–18 (NIV).** “*God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.*” This type of love gives us “confidence on the day of judgment.”<sup>49</sup> It has no strains of arrogance because it comes from God. When we can trust God’s perfect love, we need not fear what the world or humans can do to us. Trusting God may give disciples the courage to really love one another unconditionally. Fear is a tool of the devil. We need to be careful and wise in our judgments. We can move forward without fear if we walk on the path that God prepared for us, or figuratively, “walk where Jesus walked.”

**1 Jn 4:19.** “*We love him, because he first loved us.*” This verse rings of our premortal existence, where we lived in a heavenly parental relationship. To some tiny degree, God gives parents the gift of unconditional love toward their children, but it must be fostered if it is to survive and grow into charity.

**1 Jn 4:20–21 (NIV).** “*Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. . . . Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.*” These verses repeat John’s theme that when we are filled with God’s love, it will spill over to our feelings for others. The corollary suggests that when we have unkind feelings toward another, we need to pray to understand God’s love better so that we can share it with those with whom we have hard feelings. This wonderful theme runs through much of John’s writings. We also find it clearly taught across other scripture.<sup>50</sup>

## 1 John 5

*Overcoming the world—1 Jn 5:1–12*

**1 Jn 5:1 (NASB 1995).** “*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.*” This is a continuation of the theme of being

born of God (see 1 Jn 3:9; 4:7). Yet, John gives us more details on what it means. The new twist in this section brings in the Father. If we love God the Father, we must love His Son; they are inseparable.

**1 Jn 5:2–3 (NKJV).** *“we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. . . . His commandments are not burdensome.”* The trio of loving God, His Son, and our neighbors are combined in these verses to make sure we make all the connections between them.<sup>51</sup> It is interesting to realize that by keeping the commandments we show love for our neighbors. Thus, God’s commandments are a blessing to all. Those who have God’s Spirit share its light with others. Life is easier when we live as God directs. “My yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mt 11:30).

**1 Jn 5:4–5.** *“this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith . . . that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.”* This verse describes how a Saint can overcome the world by integrating love and faith. Our faith in Jesus’s plan allows disciples to prioritize divine thoughts and thus overcome worldly temptations. Only through Jesus’s redeeming powers can disciples be removed from the sins of this world eternally. This transforms humans to overcome sin rather than just survive. Jn 5 discusses how faith, love, and obedience work together to benefit each other.

**1 Jn 5:6–8 (NIV).** *“This is the one who came by water and blood—Jesus Christ. . . . For there are three that testify: the Spirit, the water and the blood.”* John uses symbols from human birth to describe our spiritual rebirth (see Jn 3). Giving birth involves great pain, water, blood, sometimes being near death, and then new life. Being born again through Jesus Christ requires the waters of baptism and His atoning blood painfully shed for our sins. John and Moses brought these symbols together as the Lord taught them. Most modern English translations omit much of verse seven.

**1 Jn 5:9–11 (NIV).** *“We accept human testimony, but God’s testimony is greater . . . And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.”* God’s witness is far greater than man’s witness, yet humans often trust physical witnesses more than spiritual witnesses. These verses give one pause to ask, what do I accept as a valid witness of truth, from whom, and

Table 2. Birth and rebirth in 1 Jn 5:6–8 and Mose 6:58–60

<b>1 Jn 5:6–8</b>	<b>Mortal birth</b>	<b>Rebirth into God’s kingdom</b>	<b>Mose 6:58–60</b>
Water	The fetus grows in water	Baptism by immersion	By the water ye keep the commandment,
Blood	Through blood the fetus is nourished and grows. In birth, blood is spilt	Blood of Christ redeems mortals from death	By the blood ye are sanctified,
Spirit	At birth the spirit body, literal offspring of God, joins mortal body	Cleansing power of Spirit purifies mortals to dwell with God again	By the Spirit ye are justified

how? Those who lack faith call for evidence and reasoning without the witness of the Spirit. God's greatest witness and gift of love is the life and death of His Son. We accept God's gift by enabling the power of the Savior's Atonement through our sincere repentance. Then He opens the way for eternal life, or exaltation.

*Concluding seven-point testimony—5:13–21*

**1 Jn 5:13 (JST).** *“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may **continue to believe on the name.**”* The JST clarifies that the audience still needs to continue progressing. Yet the last phrase in the KJV not in modern English translations. Interestingly, the JST addition of “continue” is also added in the NKJV. Without this phrase, the verse either speaks of the Calvinistic thought that humans are predestined to exaltation and do not control their belief or is written to those sealed up to eternal life (1 Jn 5:11).

**1 Jn 5:14 (NIV).** *“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.”* This may be misleading and needs clarification. We learn in D&C 6:14 that God always hears our prayers and gives us direction: “as often as thou hast inquired thou hast received instruction of my Spirit.” But He will only give us what we ask for if it is right. And “if it be not right you shall have no such feelings, but you shall have a stupor of thought that shall cause you to forget the thing which is wrong” (D&C 9:9). God's silence is a blessing, as His eternal perspective is more than we can comprehend. Learning to ask according to God's will and to listen for inspiration is a skill that requires spiritual tutoring. John's qualifiers guide disciples to ask in their prayers, “Is this the best thing to pray for?”

**1 Jn 5:16 (NIV).** *“If you see any brother or sister commit a sin that does not lead to death, you should pray and God will give them life. . . . There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that you should pray about that.”* This verse is confusing. Is the sin unto death the unpardonable sin—that is, denying the sure witness of the Second Comforter? Does it say that by praying for others we can remove their accountability? John may be encouraging disciples to pray for those who are sick, but it is confusing.

**1 Jn 5:17.** *“All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not unto death.”* John uses some form of the word *sin* twenty-seven times in this letter. The Greek noun and verb (*hamarta* and *hamartia*) mean “missing the mark; hence: (a) guilt, sin, (b) a fault, failure (in an ethical sense), sinful deed.”<sup>52</sup> John does not leave room for rationalizing our mistakes: “All wrongdoing is sin” (RSV, NIV). The second half of this verse is confusing, in part because the ancient world often attributed illnesses to sins. John may also be referring to murder or something else.

**1 Jn 5:18 (JST).** *“We know that whosoever is born of God **sinmeth continueth not in sin; but he that is begotten of God and keepeth himself, and that wicked one toucheth overcometh him not.**”* John repeats the phrase “we know” three times at the end of his epistle as a summary and testimony. The KJV seems to imply that the righteous cannot sin, but the JST once again changes the



Calvinistic wording, identifying how Satan attacks us. He tries to influence us, but we need not yield. If we are not sinning, Satan cannot overcome or conquer us. Many modern English translations also add the phrase “continue in sin,” as Joseph Smith did.

**1 Jn 5:19 (NIV).** “*we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.*” Because we are surrounded by wickedness, often we do not even recognize all of it.

**1 Jn 5:20 (NIV).** “*the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true. And we are in him.*” John triumphantly confesses our Savior and our potential to become one with Him (Jn 17:21). Again, he defines being one with God as being with Him. Truly knowing God in the deepest sense is the same as receiving eternal life to live with Him. This is repeated from John’s record of the Last Supper, which focuses on the intercessory prayer (Jn 17).

**1 Jn 5:21.** “*Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*” John closes his testimony by warning against idols—which encompass more than pagan gods. An idol is anything that takes one away from God.

## **Introduction to 2 John**

The Second Epistle of John identifies the author as the Elder (or Presbyter). Traditionally this John is the son of Zebedee and Salome, yet Peter also introduced himself as an elder (1 Pet 5:1). In the restored Church, we call our Apostles elders, too. At the organization of the Church, the Prophet Joseph taught, “An apostle is an elder” (D&C 20:38). However, biblical scholars debate this authorship.

The early Christian historian Eusebius recorded that John lived in Ephesus after Paul had opened the mission.<sup>53</sup> Eusebius described John as being a very old man who was known by Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria. Even though the author does not identify himself as the John the Beloved Apostle, the style of this letter is very similar to that of the Gospel of John and to 1 John. We believe that Jesus honored John’s desire to remain on the earth and serve God until the Second Coming (Jn 21:22–23; D&C 7).

### *Audience*

Tradition holds that John wrote to an unnamed Church congregation in or near Ephesus. This epistle is directed to “the elect lady and her children,” which is a figure of speech for Christ’s Church and committed members. John also refers to the Church as an allegorical bride in Rev 19:7 (as does the Old Testament with the marriage relationship between God and Zion or Jerusalem). Others surmise the audience is John’s own family (which may have included Mary, the Lord’s mother from Jn 19:26–27) because the Elder announced his upcoming visit.

### *Themes*

The major themes running through the epistle are truth and love (similar to the Gospel of John).<sup>54</sup>

Table 3. Overview of 2 John

1:1–3	Greetings
1:4–6	Walking in truth and love
1:7–11	Beware of deceivers
1:12–13	Final greeting

## 2 John 1

### Greeting—2 Jn 1:1–3

**2 Jn 1:1.** “*The elder unto the elect lady and her children, whom I love in the truth.*” The analogy of the Church as a lady was used by Jesus in Mk 2:19, introducing Himself symbolically as the bridegroom and the Church as His bride. John’s Gospel and First Epistle use three different words for “children,” but in this letter, he uses just one: *teknon*, “offspring . . . affectionate address, helpers.” The lady and her children were loved by “all who know the truth.” The words “truth” and “love” are used together four times in this short epistle and once each in John’s other two epistles.<sup>55</sup> The Prophet Joseph also used the title of “elect lady” for Emma in D&C 25:3.<sup>56</sup>

**2 Jn 1:2 (ESV).** “*the truth that abides in us and will be with us forever.*” Various translations of the Gospels record Jesus saying, “I tell you the truth,” more than eighteen times. If Jesus is the source of truth, then the Elder (or author) may refer to the Lord or the Spirit of the Lord who dwells in him. The inner dwelling was promised by Jesus with the Second Comforter (Jn 14:16). Truth may also refer to God’s knowledge or Jesus as the Christ and His teachings or revelation.

**2 Jn 1:3.** “*Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.*” The opening is a customary greeting used twelve times in New Testament epistles (with John adding, “truth and love”).

### Walking in truth and love—2 Jn 1:4–6

**2 Jn 1:4 (BSB).** “*I was overjoyed to find some of your children walking in the truth, just as the Father has commanded us.*” John compliments the “children” for living the gospel, or “walking in truth” (BLB). The idea of walking in the light is found in Jn 1:7; Rev 21:24, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>57</sup>

**2 Jn 1:5–6.** “*we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments.*” We do not know which beginning this refers to, but love has certainly been a commandment since the beginning of the gospel and since the Creation (Gen 1:1; 2:24). John sees love as an action. This emphasis on love is consistent throughout his writings (this verse repeats portions of 1 Jn 2:7; 3:11; and Jn 13:34, 35; 15:12). John’s use of love ties to God as it relates to walking after His commandments, or it may be teaching the broader truth that all divine love includes obeying the gospel. The Johannine writings consistently teach that if we really love God, we will love our fellow humans.

### *Beware of deceivers—2 Jn 1:7–12*

**2 Jn 1:7.** “*many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.*” The same troubles of apostasy that 1 John repeated in seven verses are also a problem for the Christians addressed in 2 John. Antichrists promoted the idea that Jesus was not the Messiah and that He was not resurrected with a body of flesh. “The full implication of this teaching attacks revelation, prophets, resurrection, and authority. It also promotes skepticism, empiricism, survival of the fittest, naturalism, and moral relativism.”<sup>58</sup>

**2 Jn 1:8–9 (NIV).** “*Watch out that you do not lose what we have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.*” A belief of Jesus is essential for any real worship of the Father, as Jesus is our Mediator with Elohim. John teaches that Christians must obey and honor the teachings of Jesus. Literally, the Greek translated as “continue,” “abideth” (KJV), or “without remaining” (BSB) means, “going ahead and remaining in the teaching of Christ.” The Saints need to hold onto what was taught from the beginning of Christianity by Jesus.

**2 Jn 1:10 (NKJV).** “*If anyone comes to you and does not bring this doctrine, do not receive him into your house nor greet him.*” This probably refers to the house-churches where Saints gathered for worship.<sup>59</sup> Christians must not support those who teach falsehoods. Those who attack the Lord’s Church build up Satan’s kingdom. Paul, Peter, and John all warn against false teachers who may splinter the Saints and obscure the truth.

**2 Jn 1:10.** “*neither bid him God speed.*” The phrase “God speed” was used at the time of the KJV to wish one prosperity. The greeting in Greek wished one well. But at that time, false itinerant preachers exist because they were accepted and fed. To stop supporting them would stop their heretical preaching.

### *Final greeting—2 Jn 1:12–13*

**2 Jn 1:12–13 (NIV).** “*I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete. The children of your sister, who is chosen by God, send their greetings.*” John apologizes for his brevity and hopes for a future visit. He ends with a greeting from the Saints of his current congregation, “thy elect sister” (KJV).

## **Introduction to 3 John**

### *Themes*

- Truth and love
- Good and bad leadership

Table 4. Overview of 3 John

1:1–4	Greetings
1:5–8	Gaius commended for hospitality
1:9–12	Do not follow a bad example
1:13–14	Final greeting

### Audience

John wrote a personal note to a friend named Gaius. This is the shortest letter in the New Testament and was probably the length of a piece of parchment.

## 3 John 1

### Greetings—3 Jn 1:1–4

**3 Jn 1:1 (NIV).** “*The elder, To my dear friend Gaius, whom I love in the truth.*” The author again opens by introducing himself as an elder (see 2 Jn 1:1). He writes to a fellow Saint named Gaius about missionary fellowship. Gaius was a popular first name in the Roman Empire.<sup>60</sup> We find two or three different people named Gaius in the New Testament within Paul’s circles.<sup>61</sup> All three people mentioned in the epistle have Greco-Roman names without any derivative Hebrew or Semitic connections. This suggests that these men were Gentile converts.

**3 Jn 1:2 (NKJV).** “*Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.*” The wish of prosperous health—physically, emotionally, and spiritually—was a common greeting in Greek correspondence. We presume it means that if the Elder is John, he used a scribe trained in Greek writing. This is the only Epistle that includes this standard greeting in the New Testament.

**3 Jn 1:4.** “*I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.*” John heard from “some believers” (NIV), or traveling missionaries, that Gaius was still a faithful Saint, and includes him in the group of “my children.” As mentioned earlier, *teknon*, “children,” was an endearing term used by masters for their servants or by teachers for their disciples. Just as in the previous letters, John emphasizes “walking in truth” (ESV) here and in the following verse as an approach to living Christ’s gospel. This Greek verb for “walk” (*peripateó*) was used in a Hebrew sense as “I conduct my life, lives.”<sup>62</sup>

This verse has beautiful implications to families—our nuclear, extended, adopted, and church families. Missionaries feel this joy for their converts. John’s reference to families includes a far broader circle that stretched beyond his posterity to his children in the gospel.

### Gaius commended for hospitality—3 Jn 1:5–8

**3 Jn 1:5–6 (NIV).** “*Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love.*”

***Please send them on their way in a manner that honors God.***” John thanks Gaius for his kindness and for extending love to the visiting leaders whom he did not know previously. We get a picture of the early Church leaders traveling to different groups of Christians. Gaius’s example to support missionaries and Church leaders is still applicable. He helped to build the kingdom from his home. We, too, assist in missionary work when we help a missionary. This message of brotherly love is consistent throughout John’s writings.

**3 Jn 1:7–8 (BSB).** ***“For they went out on behalf of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers for the truth.”*** Missionaries and servants of God go forth as representatives of His name. This is especially true of the Apostles. The work is not ours but God’s. We help as His servants to build His kingdom. The text reads as if their leaders or missionaries went without purse or scrip (Lk 10:4; 22:35–36).

*Do not follow a bad example—3 Jn 1:2–12*

**3 Jn 1:9–10 (NIV).** ***“I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will not welcome us. So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, spreading malicious nonsense about us.”*** Gaius was loyal and hospitable, and in contrast, John warns him of Diotrephes, a bad example of a Church leader. (This is the only time the word *church* appears in the Gospel or Epistles of John.) It appears that Diotrephes served in a local congregation with Gaius. John alerts him to three specific problems.

- Diotrephes likes to be foremost and will not bend to other leaders.
- He “does not acknowledge my authority” (RSV). John claims that Diotrephes rejected an earlier letter to the Church. If Peter has died, then John was the head of the Church.
- He casts out good members of the Church. No heresy seems to be involved, just insubordination by an ambitious official.

If we can trust an early Christian source, *Apostolical Constitutions*, the story had a happy ending as John later ordained Diotrephes as a bishop of Philadelphia.<sup>63</sup> Or perhaps as an ordained bishop (as he claimed to be) he led away those that accepted his claim.

**3 Jn 1:11.** ***“He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”*** John uses a favorite word when he refers those who have seen God—of the ten times *horaó*, “seen,” is used in the New Testament, nine are in John’s writings. Most of John’s references refer to physically seeing God. But it has a broader definition: “Experience, perceive, discern, beware.”<sup>64</sup> Inspiration of God’s Spirit and would fall into that category (similar messages are found in Moro 7:12; and Omni 1:25).

**3 Jn 1:12 (NIV).** ***“Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone—and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him.”*** Demetrius is the third person mentioned by name in this letter. We find the same name—but probably a different person—in Act 19:24 and a shortened version, “Demas,” in Phm 1:24 and Col 4:14. Demetrius may have delivered John’s letter, or perhaps he needed extra validation from Gaius.

*Final greeting—3 Jn 1:13–14*

**3 Jn 1:13–14. “I had many things to write, but . . . I trust I shall shortly see thee, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to thee. Our friends salute thee. Greet the friends by name.”**

The similarity between the second and third of John’s endings is one of the reasons why we assume the two epistles share an author. John knows his fellow flock members by name.

## **Introduction to Jude**

### *Author*

Jude is the nickname for Yehuda, Judah, Juda, or Judas. He introduces himself as a servant of Christ and “brother of James.” The New Testament mentions three important men with this name—the author is one of the first two:

- One of the original Twelve Apostles, Judas, is identified in Lk 6:16 as “Judas the brother of James” in the KJV and “Judas the son of James” in most modern translations. To differentiate himself from Judas Iscariot, he may have chosen to shorten his name to Jude.
- Judas in Mt 14:55 is identified as the brother to James, son of Mary and Joseph, and half-brother of Jesus: “Is not this the carpenter’s son . . . and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?” (Mk 6:3).
- Judas Iscariot, the Lord’s betrayer.

We also see phrases in this epistle similar to phrases in 2 Peter, which opens the possibility of shared authorship, original source material, or scribes.

### *Audience*

Jude writes to devout Christians who are sanctified, preserved, and called (Jud 1:1 KJV). The audience probably included Jewish converts to Christianity, as the text says, “You already know all this,” and then quotes several Old Testament and apocryphal stories (1:5 NIV). The audience was aware of attacks against their faith by “scoffers” trying to destroy the Church.

### *Structure*

The Epistle of Jude was carefully crafted. It opens with a friendly wish of God’s blessings, then the body exhorts the Saints to “earnestly contend for the faith.” The first of the two main sections warns against apostates that had crept in by deceit (1:4–16). This material is organized to alternate between crime and punishment in triplets. In the second half, Jude admonishes the Saints to be steadfast, which he divides into two parts—prophecy and exhortation (1:17–25). He also uses key words that give the letter unity and bind it together.

Table 5. Overview of Jude<sup>65</sup>

1:1–2	Opening blessing
1:3	Exhortation for faithfulness
1:4–16	Crimes and punishment 1:4 Three charges against deceivers 1:5–7 Three paradigms of punishment 1:8 Three charges 1:9 Prophecy of punishment 1:10 Charge and punishment 1:11 Three paradigms of punished sinners 1:12–13 Multiple metaphors of charges 1:14–16 Prophecies of punishment
1:17–23	Warnings and exhortations to faith and love 1:17–19 Prophecies of wicked 1:20–23 Exhortations: Build faith, prayer, the Spirit
1:24–25	Benediction

### Chiasm

Jerome H. Neyrey found a hint of a chiastic structure in the exposition from verses 4–17.<sup>66</sup>

- A Opponents proscribed (1:4)
- B Opponents labeled as godless (1:4)
- C Those judged kept in darkness (1:6)
- C' Those judged kept in darkness (1:13)
- B' Opponents labeled as godless (1:15–16)
- A' Opponents pretold (1:17)

### Greetings—Jud 1:1–3

**Jud 1:1 (JST).** “*Jude, the servant of God, called of Jesus Christ, and brother of James; to them that who are sanctified by God of the Father; and preserved in Jesus Christ and called.*” Jude’s audience had a close relationship to God as described with three Greek words:

- “Sanctified” is usually a form of *agapaó*, “loved, or loved by the Father.”<sup>67</sup>
- “Preserved” is *téreó*, “kept intact, to watch over, to guard” by the Savior.<sup>68</sup>
- “Invited” is *kléto*s, or “summoned by God to an office or to salvation.”<sup>69</sup>

This summarizes the attachment and stewardship that disciples have with the Godhead. That sweet relationship between Saints and God provides mercy, peace, and love. The title “God the Father” is found twenty-nine times in various English New Testaments, all but one of which are in the Epistles.

**Jud 1:3 (NIV).** “*Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt compelled to write and urge you to contend for the faith.*” This Epistle is an “exhort[ation] . . . to contend earnestly” (BLB) “to defend the faith” (CEV). Jude feels obligated to admonish the Saints to protect the truths God entrusted to them.

### *Deceivers pervert truth—Their crimes and punishments—Jud 1:4–16*

**Jud 1:4 (NIV).** “*Certain individuals whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you.*” While they say they will give help, apostates “secretly or under pretense . . . slip in a side door” but deceitfully lure believers away.<sup>70</sup> These deceivers “pervert the grace of our God into a license for immorality” (NIV). The same problem exists in today’s Christianity (also see 2 Pet 2:1).

**Jud 1:4 (BLB).** “*this condemnation, ungodly ones changing the grace of our God into sensuality and denying our only master.*” The punishments for these three crimes are described in the next three verses:

- Ungodly men came to the Church stealthily to deceive.
- They licensed immorality.
- They denied the Sovereign Lord, Jesus Christ.

**Jud 1:5 (BSB).** “*Although you are fully aware of this, I want to remind you that after Jesus had delivered His people out of the land of Egypt, He destroyed those who did not believe.*” Jude illustrates the punishment of the wicked with Old Testament apostates who also enticed and disrupted the faith of the Israelites. An entire generation died off for their disbelief. Jude warns that those Christians who yearn for worldliness, metaphorical Egypt, will fall into the same pattern.

**Jud 1:6.** “*angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*” The fallen angels refer to those who followed Lucifer in their first estate. Only the KJV translates this “just estate,” yet the Prophet Joseph Smith used it again while translating Abr 3:26, 28 when describing our premortal existence. Others interpret this verse as angels who abandoned their “positions of authority” (NIV) or “did not stay within their own domain” (BSB). Without the context of the Restoration and a premortal life, one cannot see the full meaning of this verse. Fortunately, the prophet Joseph Smith taught:

The spirits in the eternal world are like the spirits in this world. When those have come into this world and received tabernacles, then died and again have risen and received glorified bodies, they will have an ascendancy over the spirits who have received no bodies or kept not their first estate, like the devil.



The punishment of the devil was that he should not have a habitation like men. The devil's retaliation is, he comes into this world, binds up men's bodies, and occupies them himself. When the authorities come along, they eject him from a stolen habitation.<sup>71</sup>

***Jud 1:7 (NIV). “Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.”*** Jude's third example of punishment falls on sexual immorality. The Bible often refers to Sodom and Gomorrah when warning of similar punishment for breaking the law of chastity.<sup>72</sup> In 2004, Elder Boyd K. Packer compared our society to Sodom and Gomorrah: “Nothing happened in Sodom and Gomorrah which exceeds in wickedness and depravity that which surrounds us now. . . . [Then] these things were localized. Now they are spread across the world, and they are among us.”<sup>73</sup> Jude warns his audience that God will enforce severe consequences for this disobedience.

***Jud 1:8 (NIV). “In the very same way, on the strength of their dreams these ungodly people pollute their own bodies, reject authority and heap abuse on celestial beings.”*** Jude makes three more charges. The Anchor Bible translates the KJV's “these filthy dreamer” as “hypnotized as they are.”<sup>74</sup> We recognize this type of apostate because they

- contaminate or defile their God-given bodies,
- do not respect God's servants as having authority, and
- speak evil of the Lord's anointed.

***Jud 1:9 (NIV). “even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’”*** Jude alone tells stories from the apocryphal book the *Assumption of Moses*. It describes Moses's translation in front of Joshua and Caleb and Satan and Michael debating over Moses killing the Egyptian.<sup>75</sup> Michael the archangel steps in to remind the devil that God is the judge. Jude depicts apostates as the devil who reviled Moses. He wants the Saints to rebuke those who slander Church leaders.

***Jud 1:10–11 (NIV). “these people slander whatever they do not understand. . . . Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; . . . Balaam's error; . . . Korah's rebellion.”*** Jude again rebukes deceivers who attack God's laws.<sup>76</sup> Then he offers three more Old Testament examples of wicked men who received God's punishment.

- *Cain* is Jude's next example of heresy. Cain represents “the archetype of those who through zeal, envy, social dissatisfaction, and hostility to society, drive their brethren in the faith to death.”<sup>77</sup> The fratricide of apostates may be spiritual death, but it could lead to murder as well with the growth of Christian persecution (especially under Domitian in approximately AD 95).

- *Balaam's* sin of idolatry sought to seduce God's people to follow alien masters and then paid the false teachers for gaining followers.
- *Korah (Core)* was an Israelite who rebelled against Moses's authority by instigating a rebellion (Num 16:1–35). Jude warns that all who follow these deceivers will end up like sons of Korah.

***Jud 1:12–13 (NIV). “These people are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, . . . wild waves.”*** Early Christians referred to the Lord's sacrament as a feast of charity or a love feast. Paul also described Sabbath shared meals (1 Cor 10:16; 11:20–26). Jude's three physical examples of clouds, waves, and trees describe effects left by these apostates. They also overlap with 2 Pet 2:13–14, 17.

#### *Prophecies of punishment—Jud 1:14–16*

***Jud 1:14–15. “Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon . . . all their ungodly deeds.”*** The prophet Enoch is mentioned in eleven biblical verses.<sup>78</sup> His name is also used for others who are not the prophet. He preceded Noah. Outside of the Bible, three other ancient texts shed more light on him.

- First or Ethiopic Enoch—quoted by Jude (1 Enoch 1:9). Today, Jews and traditional Christians do not hold Enoch as scripture
- Second or Slavonic Enoch
- Third or Hebrew Enoch describes Rabbi Ishmael's vision of Enoch in the seventh heaven (discovered in 1873).

In addition, the Prophet Joseph Smith received much information on Enoch by revelation, including Moses 6–7 and eleven verses in the Doctrine and Covenants. The restored texts have unique information as well as some that collaborate with the three apocryphal books of Enoch.<sup>79</sup> Joseph Smith also spoke of both Enoch and Jude in a Nauvoo sermon:

Now this Enoch God reserved unto Himself, that he should not die at that time, and appointed unto him a ministry unto terrestrial bodies, of whom there has been but little revealed. He is reserved also unto the Presidency of a dispensation, and more shall be said of him and terrestrial bodies in another treatise. He is a ministering angel, to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation and appeared unto Jude as Abel did unto Paul; therefore, Jude spoke of him (14, 15 verses).<sup>80</sup>

Jude claims that thousands of Saints will accompany Jesus's Second Coming, and Rev 14:1 uses the symbolic number 144,000.

**Jud 1:15–16.** *“To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly . . . murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts.”* The Lord will execute judgment on all (both good and bad). He will convict the unrepentant of their sins. This is mentioned frequently in restored scripture, with over fifty references (see, for example, 2 Ne 9:15–16, 46).

### *Prophecies of wicked—Jud 1:17–19*

**Jud 1:17–18 (NIV).** *“But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. . . . In the last times there will be scoffers.”* Jude and 2 Pet 3:3 cite the Lord warning His Apostles that persecution will arise. Again, Jude cites texts not in our Bible.

**Jud 1:19 (ESV).** *“It is these who cause divisions, worldly people, devoid of the Spirit.”* Jude offers another key to discern false leaders and teachers by. They “separate themselves” (KJV), or cause divisions among the people. The wicked value materialism and do not have the Spirit of God directing them.

### *Exhortations to build faith, prayer with the Spirit, seek God's love—Jud 1:20–23*

**Jud 1:20–21 (NIV).** *“But you, dear friends, by building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in God's love as you wait for . . . eternal life.”* Jude offers three ways to avoid apostasy:

1. Build your faith (compare Hel 5:41, where faith is joined by repentance)
2. Pray with the Spirit (compare D&C 50:29–30; 101:27)
3. Seek God's Love as you patiently wait for our Savior's gifts (compare 1 Ne 11:25; Jac 3:2, 6–7)

**Jud 1:22–23 (NIV).** *“Be merciful to those who doubt; save others by snatching them from the fire; . . . even the clothing stained by corrupted flesh.”* Jude exhorts the Saints to avoid contact with even a spot of sin. His image is of burning in an effort to stop the spread of disease by fire. The law of Moses instructed that clothing should be burned if it were spotted with diseases (Lev 13:57). Similarly, D&C 36:6 builds on this image: “Come forth out of the fire, hating even the garments spotted with the flesh.”

### *Benediction: Doxology—Jud 1:24–25*

**Jud 1:25.** *“To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”* Jude closes his epistle with a benediction asking God for divine help to “to keep you from falling.” We find similar praise throughout the Epistles.<sup>81</sup> These last two verses form a doxology, or a formula of praise to God used in Christian liturgy. Compare these prayers or hymns in the Anchor Bible translation:<sup>82</sup>

<b>Rom 16:25–27</b>	<b>Eph 3:20–22</b>	<b>Jud 1:24–25</b>	<b>2 Pet 3:18</b>
to him who is able	To him. . . who is	to the One who can guard	to him
to strengthen you. . .	able to do. . .	you . . . to the only God	
to the only wise God.	to Him		
be glory	be glory	be glory, majesty, might, and authority	be the glory both now
forevermore	to all generations	before all ages, now and forever	and to the day of eternity
Amen	Amen	Amen	Amen

The Lord’s prayer also acknowledged God the Father’s glory and filled about one-third of the prayer with praise and honoring God. So too Jude’s lasts words reflect his witness and testimony of God.

## Notes

1 As explained earlier in the introduction to Rom 1, biblical compilers organized the Epistles by length, not chronology. Paul wrote the most, so his books all come first, ordered from longest to shortest. John’s longest epistle is first.

2 Raymond Brown, *The Epistles of John* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 10, 20. Brown does not think all four books share the same author, even though he quotes another scholar who argued, “The three Epistles and the Gospel of John are so closely allied in diction, style, and general outlook that the burden of proof lies with the person who would deny their common authorship.” Brown also notes, “Tertullian (d. AD 215) cites 1 John some forty or fifty times, referring to it as the work of John. Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. AD 220) not only cites 1 John but speaks of it as ‘the greater epistle.’”

3 Terry L. Wilder, J. Daryl Charles, and Kendell H. Easley, *Faithful to the End: An Introduction to Hebrews through Revelation* (Nashville, TN: Zondervan, 2007), 173. Papias of Hierapolis (died approximately AD 120) “was the first one to refer expressly to a letter of John as being the work of the apostle. Irenaeus credited John with writing 1 and 2 John. Origen designated the apostle as the author of all three letters.” Despite this, scholars have debated the issue for centuries. By the fourth century these epistles were generally accepted as scripture and placed before Revelation.

4 At times the JST is not restoring what was originally said but adding clarity like modernizing spellings.

5 See Mk 1:1, Lk 1:3; Jn 1:1.

6 The “we” may be other members of the Twelve as “a special witness of the name of Christ” (D&C 107:23, 26).

7 Joseph Fielding Smith, *Doctrines of Salvation*, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Bookcraft, 1954–1956), 3:290.

8 “*Koinónia*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/2842.htm>.

9 Jn 1:4–9; 3:19–21; 5:35; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9–10; 12:35–36, 46; see also D&C 50:23–24; 88:67–68.

10 Markus Covert, talk in Palo Alto California First Ward.

11 Lev 19:18; Deut 6:5; Mk 12:28–31.

12 Jörg Klebingat, “Approaching the Throne of God with Confidence,” October 2014 general conference, online at [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org).

13 Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel and Epistles of John* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1988), 111.

14 The table below outlines the frequency of references to repentance in the standard works.

	<b>Old Testament</b> (610,303 words)	<b>New Testament</b> (180,565 words)	<b>Book of Mormon</b> (266,944 words)	<b>D&amp;C / PoGP</b> (165,166 words)
<i>Repent</i>	22	24	205	97
<i>Repentance</i>	1	25	99	36
<i>Repent-ed, -s, -eth, -ing</i>	21	27	55	22
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>359</b>	<b>155</b>
Word Ratio	7.21/10K words	36.5/10K words	134.5/10K words	79.42/10K words

15 Russell M. Nelson, “We Can Do Better and Be Better,” April 2019 general conference, online at [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org).

16 “*Teknion*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/5040.htm>.

17 Jn 14:16, 26; 15:26, 16:7; “*Paraklétos*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/3875.htm>. “Notice Jesus is the paraclete (‘advocate’), a title which the Gospel applies to the Spirit.” Brown, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 111.

18 “History, 1838–1856, volume C-1 [2 November 1838–31 July 1842] [addenda], p. 9 [addenda], The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-c-1-2-november-1838-31-july-1842/544>.

19 2 Ne 1:15; 4:33; Alm 5:24.

20 Brown, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 111.

21 Ex 28:37; 40:13; Lev 6:22.

22 “History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843], p. 1572, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/217>.

23 Margaret Pope, “Exaltation,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York, NY: Macmillan, 1992), 3:479.

24 Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch, *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book; Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1994), 271.

25 D. Kelly Ogden and Andrew C. Skinner, *New Testament Apostles Testify of Christ: A Guide for Acts through Revelation* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1998), 295.

26 “Elders’ Journal, August 1838,” p. 49, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/elders-journal-august-1838/1>: “The apostles after their endowment, were qualified to ordain others.” Later in Nauvoo, Joseph Smith also taught that “Paul . . . knew . . . all the ordinances, and blessings were in the Church.” Andrew F. Ehat and Lindon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith: The Contemporary Accounts of the Nauvoo Discourses of the Prophet Joseph* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 9–10, 42, 210, 327–331.

27 Klebingat, “Approaching the Throne of God with Confidence.”

28 Brown, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 115.

29 Jn 1:13; 3:3–7; 1 Jn 2:29; 4:4; 5:1, 4, 18.

30 See my commentary on Eph 1:13; see also D&C 76:53; 88:3–5; 124:124; 131:5, 7, 18, 19, 26; Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 4:266. The Holy Spirit of Promise also became a topic that Joseph addressed outside of revelation.

31 1 Jn 2:10; 5:2; Jn 13:35; 15:12.

32 There is debate on the role of the Light of Christ since restored scripture includes a range of influences. For example, this is the light “which is in all things, which giveth life to all things” (D&C 88:13, 11; also see 84:46).

33 Moro 7:16, 19; see also 2 Ne 2:5; Hel 14:31.

34 “Preface to Book of Mormon, circa August 1829, Page iii,” p. iii, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/preface-to-book-of-mormon-circa-august-1829/1>.

35 Dallin H. Oaks, “Taking upon Us the Name of Jesus Christ,” April 1985 general conference, online at [churchofjesuschrist.org](http://churchofjesuschrist.org). He also published a book on this entitled *His Holy Name* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2009).

36 1 Jn 2:7; 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11; 3 Jn 1:1, 3, 5, 11. The KJV translates *agapétos* nine times as “beloved” but once, in 1 Jn 2:7, as “brethren.”

37 Mose 4:1–3; D&C 29:36–37; 76:25–38.

38 Mt 24:24; Act 13:6; 2 Cor 11:13; 2 Pet 2:1.

39 George A. Smith, sermon, November 28, 1869, in “Minutes of Meetings Held in Provo City,” microfilm of holograph, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University. “It should be noted that at the time of this statement of George A. Smith, the Mormons were in a debate with a growing number of Spiritualists in Utah, and hence had a reason to emphasize the importance of discernment.” Benjamin E. Park, “‘A Uniformity So Complete’: Early Mormon Angelology,” *Intermountain West Journal of Religious Studies* 2, no. 1 (2010): 27n79.

40 Brown, *Epistles of John*, 502.

41 Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 375–376.

42 These ideas of early Gnosticism are also reflected in 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 2 Peter, and Colossians.

43 D&C 93:38; Brown, *Epistles of John*, 485.

44 Compare Mosi 3:19; Morm 3:12; Moro 7:48.

45 Brown, *Epistles of John*, 514. For a review of what John taught on being born of God, see Jn 3:3–7; 1 Jn 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18; JST, 1 Jn 3:9.

46 Brown, *Epistles of John*, 516.

47 Susan Juster, *Doomsayers: Anglo-American Prophecy in the Age of Revolution* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003), 209–210. A rich visionary culture filled early America with many prophets. Susan Juster documents over three hundred published sources of unorthodox prophets who circulated their visions in early America. The Prophet Joseph Smith’s vision exceeded what was held to be the limits of acceptable responses to prayers, but it was not entirely unique. Terryl Givens has pointed out that many nineteenth-century visions had a mythic orientation, but “Joseph’s language was anything but reveling with metaphor and obscurity.” Givens reported that Bushman found thirty-two published pamphlets that described visionary experiences between 1783 and 1815. Terryl Givens, *Hand of Mormon* (New York, NY: Oxford, University Press, 2002), 72, 79. Perhaps a little more vagueness would have been easier for Joseph’s Methodist minister to accept. As it stood, though, his vision violated the minister’s bounds of propriety in part because of 1 Jn 4:12.

48 D&C 93:1; see Gen 32:30; Ex 33:11; Isa 6; D&C 76:7; 3 Ne 16:1.

49 1 Jn 4:17 NIV; Brown, *Epistles of John*, 561.

50 Mosi 23:15; Lev 19:18; D&C 88:133.

51 See 1 Jn 2:3, 5; 3:14, 22–24; 4:21.

52 “*Hamartanó*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/264.htm>.

53 Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.23.7: “The church at Ephesus was founded by Paul, and John remained there till Trajan’s time; so she is a true witness of what the apostles taught.” There is still scholarly debate on the matter of John in Ephesus.

54 Jn 1:14, 17; 8:44; 18:37.

55 1 Jn 3:18; 2 Jn 1:1, 3, 10; 3 Jn 1:1.

56 The word *elect* is from the same root as *election* (as in the seal of calling and election from 2 Pet 1:10). Joseph Smith gave biblical phrases augmented definitions for new meanings in the Restoration (for example, “Holy Spirit of promise,” “gift of the Holy Ghost,” and “calling and election made sure.”).

57 Brown, *Gospel and Epistles of John*, 123.

58 Ogden and Skinner, *New Testament Apostles Testify of Christ*, 300.

59 Everett Ferguson, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity*, 2nd ed. (New York, NY: Garland, 1998), 546. House-churches are early Christian congregations that met in the Saints' homes. The book of Acts and 1 Corinthians refer to these in Act 1:13–14; 2:46; 20:7–12, 20; 1 Cor 16:19.

60 Brown, *Epistles of John*, 702.

61 Act 19:29; 20:4; 1 Cor 1:14; Rom 16:23.

62 “*Peripateó*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/4043.htm>.

63 John Stott, *Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: The Letters of John* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 237.

64 “*Horaó*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/3708.htm>.

65 Adapted from Jerome H. Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude* (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1993), 23.

66 Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 24.

67 “*Agapaó*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/25.htm>.

68 “*Téreó*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/5083.htm>.

69 “*Kléto*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online at <https://biblehub.com/greek/2822.htm>.

70 “*Pareisdunó*,” *Strong’s Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, available online <https://biblehub.com/greek/3921.htm>.

71 “History, 1838–1856, volume D-1 [1 August 1842–1 July 1843],” p. 1557, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/history-1838-1856-volume-d-1-1-august-1842-1-july-1843/200>; spelling, punctuation, and capitalization silently modernized.

72 Gen 18:20; 19:28; Isa 13:19; Jer 49:18; 50:40; Amos 4:11; Mt 10:13; 2 Pet 2:6.

73 Boyd K. Packer, “The One Pure Defense” (address to CES religious educators, February 6, 2004), church ofjesuschrist.org.

74 Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 65–66.

75 Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 4.8.48–49. “The children of Israel and Moses himself wept. . . . Now as he went thence to the place where he was to vanish out of their sight, they all followed after him weeping; but Moses beckoned with his hand and bade them to stay behind in quiet. . . . At Mount Abarim he dismissed the senate; and he was going to embrace Eleazar and Joshua and was still discoursing with them . . . A cloud stood over him on the sudden, and he disappeared in a certain valley, although he wrote in his holy books that he died.” See Deu 34:5–6; see also D&C 84:25.



76 Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 203. In approximately AD 95, 1 Clement also wrote about troublemakers who opposed authority.

77 Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 206; 1 Clement 4:1–7.

78 Gen 4:17, 18; 5:18, 19, 21–24; Lk 3:37; Heb 11:5; Jud 1:14.

79 Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies; Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986).

80 “Instruction on Priesthood, circa 5 October 1840,” p. 6, The Joseph Smith Papers, <https://josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/instruction-on-priesthood-circa-5-october-1840/11>.

81 See Rom 11:36; 16:25–27; Gal 1:5; Php 4:20; Eph 3:20–21; 1 Tim 4:17; 6:16; 2 Tim 4:18; 2 Pet 3:18.

82 Neyrey, *2 Peter, Jude*, 95.