

I JOHN: A STUDY IN SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT
I. Discerning The True Source For Spiritual Discernment
(1 John 1:1-4)

I. Introduction

- A. John wrote 1 John to counter heretical views (Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 881), so the epistle provides discernment, and is thus “filled with contrasts – light and darkness (1:6-7; 2:8-11); love of world and love of God (2:15-17); children of God and children of the devil (3:4-10); the Spirit of God and the spirit of Antichrist (4:7-12, 16-21).” (Ryrie Study Bible KJV, 1978, “Introduction to the First Letter of John: Contents,” p. 1770)
- B. We view the epistle for much needed spiritual discernment in our own era, and we begin by discerning the true source for spiritual discernment as is taught by the Apostle John in 1 John 1:1-4 (as follows):

II. Discerning The True Source For Spiritual Discernment, 1 John 1:1-4.

- A. The true Revealer of God’s truth is Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:1-2:
1. Many Bible teachers have thought that John’s phrase, “from the beginning” refers back to the creation of the universe “as described in Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1,” Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 883.
 2. However, the epistle of 1 John is concerned “with the original message about Jesus Christ,” so “it seems more likely that John referred to the beginning of the gospel proclamation. If so, the usage is similar to that found in 1 John 2:7, 24; and 3:11,” Ibid.
 3. Accordingly, John was “asserting that what he proclaimed was the truth about God’s Son that was originally witnessed by the apostles who had direct contact with Him,” Ibid.
 4. So, John and all the “apostolic eyewitnesses . . . described this proclamation as one ‘which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched.’” (Ibid.; NIV)
- B. This true Revealer of God’s truth, Jesus Christ, has been truthfully testified to us by the apostles, 1 Jn. 1:1-3a:
1. John obviously meant to clarify that he along with the other “apostolic eyewitnesses” truly witnessed Jesus Christ in their having empirically heard with their ears, seen with their eyes, looked upon and touched with their hands Jesus Christ in His human body, 1 John 1:1-2.
 2. In view of Proverbs 20:12 that claims that God made the seeing eye and the hearing ear as the best means for a human being to test reality empirically, John’s statement about seeing, hearing and also touching Jesus Christ in His humanity provides undisputable evidence that the apostles, **multiple** human witnesses in accord with the Law (Deuteronomy 19:15), witnessed the true Revealer of God’s truth in Christ!
 3. Furthermore, John with the other “apostolic eyewitnesses” were declaring to John’s readers what they had seen and heard from the Revealer of God’s truth, Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:3a. This statement coincides with Christ’s statement in His High Priestly prayer in John 17:20 that people would believe and be saved through the word of His apostolic eyewitnesses like John.
 4. Thus, Jesus Christ, the Revealer of God’s truth, was truthfully and authoritatively communicated to us by the ministries of the apostles of Jesus Christ, what includes their writings in the New Testament.
- C. The apostolic eyewitnesses of the true Revealer of God’s truth, Jesus Christ, is declared in 1 John (1 Jn. 1:3b):
1. The verb rendered “declare” in 1 John 1:3b is *apaggellomen*, the present active indicative of *apaggello*, “proclaim” (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 813; The Analyt. Grk. Lex. (Zon.), 1972, p. 35; Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 78).
 2. In other words, what John wrote in 1 John, what we have recorded there, is precisely and with full divine authority, the recorded truth about the true Revealer of God’s truth, Jesus Christ!
- D. John’s purpose in writing this epistle was that his readers might believe it to be God’s truth, and apply it to fellowship with Christ’s apostolic eyewitnesses, with God the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ, v. 3c.
- E. The result of this proclamation of God’s truth was that the joy of the apostles might be complete, 1 John 1:4. The better manuscripts read “our,” not “your” as the KJV reads, for the apostles’ joy would be complete only if John’s readers shared it with them. (Bruce M. Metzger, A Text. Com. on the Grk. N. T., 1971, p.709)

Lesson: *The true Source of spiritual discernment is Christ, and since His apostolic eyewitnesses authoritatively shared that truth as recorded in 1 John, we can be sure of discerning spiritual truth by heeding 1 John that we might enjoy spiritual fellowship with the apostles, with God the Father and with Jesus Christ to their full joy!*

Application: *(1) May we trust the truthfulness of 1 John to apply it for discernment truly to fellowship with the Lord. (2) May we also rely on Scripture and no other entity as our ultimate source of spiritual discernment.*