

**HERESY**

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**“ THEY WERE FIRM, AND STEADFAST, AND IMMOVABLE ”**

- 1. Where is this quotation found? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. Now let's read **Acts 2:40-42** about the founding of the Church of Christ.
- 3. Why was this so very important to the fledgling church? \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. As Jesus prepared to leave His disciples He commanded them, "*Go ye therefore, and teach all \_\_\_\_\_*" - **Matthew 28:19** (you provide the missing word)
- 5. As the disciples do this, what are they likely to encounter? \_\_\_\_\_
- 6. The Church's first encounter with paganism. Read **Acts 8:9-24**. Now, here he was, rebuked by the apostles, rejected by God, yet a baptized member of the church. Can we see a potential danger to the work of the Lord? \_\_\_\_\_
- 7. When Jesus told His disciples of the dangers that would befall them after His departure and before His return, what was the first danger of which He warned them? \_\_\_\_\_  
(**Matthew 24:4**)

**WARNINGS OF THE APOSTLES**

- 1. **Peter** writes to the church: **2 Peter 2:1-2**. Of what three things did he warn the church? \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. What is a heresy? \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. The danger inherent in the definition.
- 4. **Paul's** warning to the church: **1 Timothy 4:1-3**. What did Paul identify as the origin of false teachings? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. **John** warns the church: **1 John 2:18-19**.
- 6. **Jude** writes to the church: **Jude 4**.

**HOW DO WE AVOID HERESIES?**

- 1. **1 John 4:1-2** - \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. **1 Timothy 4:13-16** - \_\_\_\_\_
- 3. **2 Thes. 2:15** - \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. **1 Cor. 15:58** - \_\_\_\_\_

## THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

### **A. Peculiarities of John's gospel:**

1. Elicit responses from class.
2. None of the *parables* found in Matthew, Mark or Luke appear in John.
3. Just 2 of the 32 *miracles* recorded in Matthew, Mark and Luke are found in John, while John records six others.
4. The gospel of John seems to show a more intimate ministry of Jesus to his disciples than the other gospels.

### **B. The Author of the Gospel of John:**

1. Identified as "the *disciple, whom Jesus loved*" in 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20.
2. Testimony of ancient Christians and internal evidences point to John, the son of Zebedee. See **Matthew 10:2**. Let's consider a few commentaries:
3. *Easton's Bible Dictionary* - "The genuineness of this Gospel; i.e., the fact the apostle John was the author, is beyond all reasonable doubt. In recent times, from about 1820, many attempts have been made to impugn its genuineness, but without success."
4. *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* - "It appears more likely, however, that four of the five writings were actually penned not by John the apostle but by John the elder, a disciple and friend of John's who relied directly on the apostle's testimony as he wrote the documents. This would explain those passages in the gospel that speak about the beloved disciple ... as well as the references to 'the elder' in 2 and 3 John."

### **C. The purpose of John's gospel:**

1. John states his purpose in 20:31. "*That ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God, and that believing ye might have life through his name.*"
2. According to several ancient sources John, while staying in Ephesus, was requested by the elders to write a "spiritual Gospel" to counteract a dangerous heresy being taught by a Jew named Cerinthus. Cerinthus was a Gnostic who lived in Ephesus.

**Let's take time out to study gnosticism and Cerinthus' variations of it in particular.  
This is found on page 3.**

### What is Gnosticism?

(From Justo González's *A History of Christian Thought*)

1. Gnostics took any doctrine, regardless of its origin, to use for their purposes: Persian dualism, Babylonian astrology, oriental mysticism & Greek philosophy. (I am reminded of the modern Persian Bahai faith and New Age religious concepts.)
2. When they saw the appeal of Christianity, they began to pervert it to promote their own beliefs.
3. Gnosticism is a doctrine of salvation, but what is the nature of this salvation?
  - a. It is primarily the liberation of the spirit.
  - b. The body and soul of man belong to the material world. They give us our life, passions and desires.
  - c. The spirit, in some mysterious way, has fallen into the world and become a prisoner of matter.
  - d. It is necessary to free the spirit from this prison.
  - e. This is achieved by *gnosis*, Greek for knowledge. (This makes it easy to adapt Christian teachings; i.e., "*the word of knowledge by the same spirit.*")
  - f. The spirit is enslaved by our union with matter in such a way that it can know the truth only by means of some messenger sent from the transcendent spiritual world. They see a band of heavenly beings between heaven and the earth. Now they can adopt Christ as that messenger. Now let's read **Colossians 2:18**. Of what heresy was Paul warning the Christian community?
 

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g. This is all couched in a cosmology that is based on a mystic, numerological speculation too complicated for me to understand. But it leads to this heretical concept: Whatever the body or soul does, makes no difference, for it cannot mar the purity of the spirit. This leads to freedom from moral principles.
4. Gnosticism corrupted three basic teachings of Christianity:
  - a. The creation of the material world as a divine act of a righteous God.
  - b. The resurrection of the body as well as the spirit.
  - c. Christ, who came in the flesh, was fully righteous. To Gnostics the flesh was evil, so Christ had no real body. His suffering and death were not real, only imaginary.
5. Back to the Gnostic leader in Ephesus, named Cerinthus. He distinguished between Jesus and Christ:
  - a. Jesus, the man, was a son of Mary and Joseph.
  - b. Christ, the divine being, descended upon Jesus at his baptism.
  - c. When Christ established his mission as a messenger to humanity, he abandoned Jesus, the man.
  - d. The man, Jesus, was crucified, died and was resurrected.

**Now we return to the Gospel of John in paragraph C3 on page 4.**

3. The basic message of **1 John** seems directed toward the heresy of Cerinthus. (Read **2:22; 4:1-3; 5:1, 5, 20.**)
4. The word “believe” occurs 98 times in the Gospel of John. Ancient Greek mss. of John use a special tense for the word “believe” in 20:31 (see C #1, above). They would have the word “believe” read as “that you might go on believing”.
5. In his Gospel, John presents evidence that Jesus was Israel’s Messiah and God’s Incarnate Son. His evidence includes the following:
  - a. Seven miraculous signs such as in **2:1-11** and **6:16-21**.
  - b. Seven discourses in which Jesus reveals his identity, such as **10:1-18**.
  - c. Seven “I am” statements, such as **6:35; 8:12** and **14:6**.

**D. Special emphases of John’s Gospel:**

1. The deity of Jesus as the “Son of God”, from his prologue in **John 1:14** to his conclusion in **20:28**.
2. Eternal life is emphasized, such as in **3:15; 6:54** and **10:28**.
3. He emphasizes “the truth”, such as in **1:17; 8:32; 14:6** and **17:19**.