

THAT YOU MAY  
**KNOW**

A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

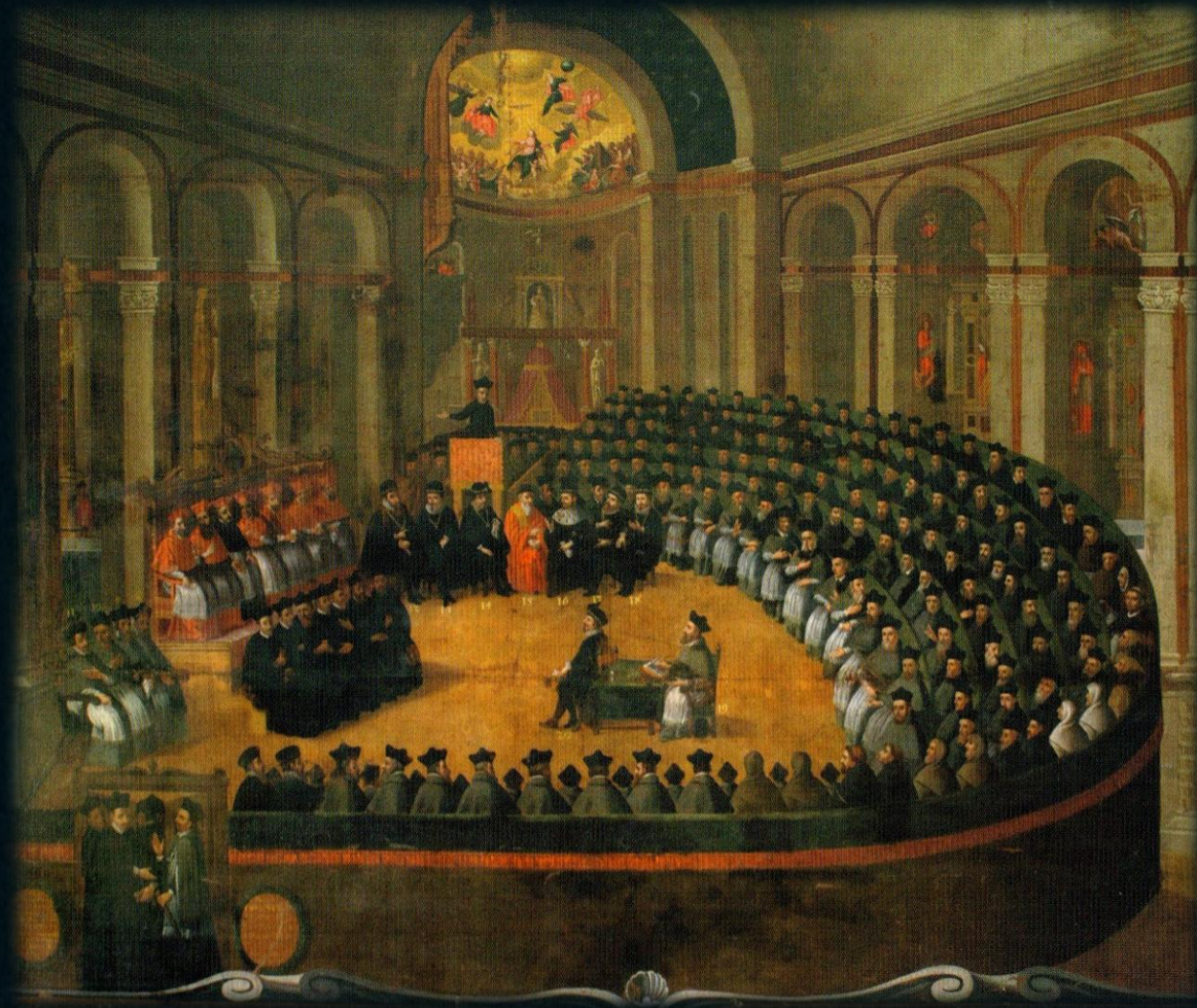
“Assurance and  
the Historicity  
of Christ”

**1 John 1:1–4**

September 3, 2025 | Men of the Word | Grace Community Church



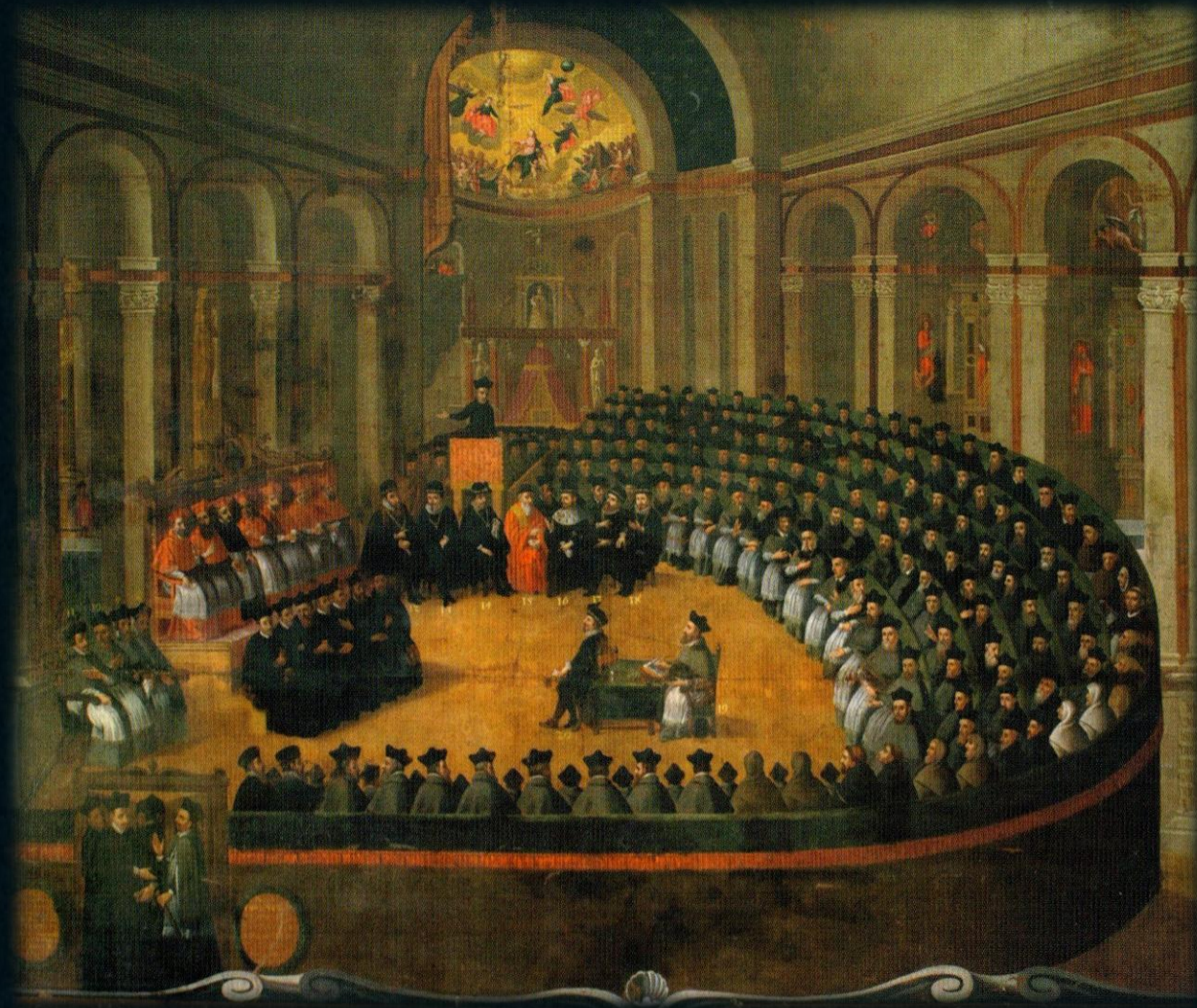
- In 1545, the Roman Catholic Church convened the Council of Trent to produce a formal response to the Protestant movement.
- As a result of its three sessions spanning eight years, the RCC pronounced 151 “anathemas” against various doctrines, particularly those held by the Protestants.





“If anyone saith, that a man, who is  
born again is justified, is bound of  
faith to believe that he is assuredly  
in the number of the predestinate:  
**let him be anathema.”**

—*Canons and Decrees of the Council of  
Trent, Canon XV, “On Justification”*







- The Italian Jesuit Robert Bellarmine (1542–1621) became one of the most vocal RCC theologians in the ensuing counter-Reformation.
- He asserted, “The principal heresy of Protestants is that saints may obtain to a certain assurance of their gracious and pardoned state before God” (*De justificatione* 3.2.3).

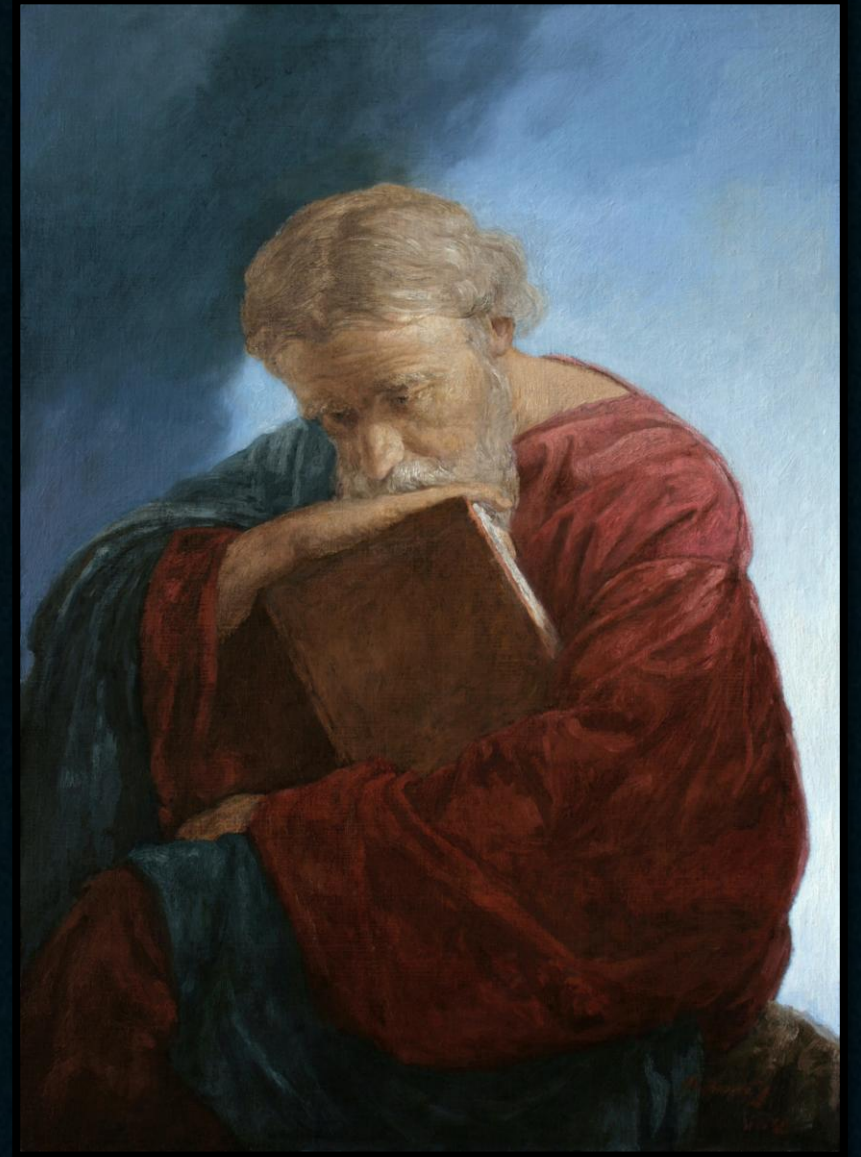
## What is the “assurance of salvation”?

- John MacArthur & Richard Mayhue: “The divinely given confidence of the believer that he or she is truly saved” (*Biblical Doctrine*, 924).
- Joel Beeke: it is “the conviction that one belongs to Christ through faith and will enjoy everlasting salvation” (*Knowing and Growing in Assurance of Faith*, 11).
- Sinclair Ferguson: “Assurance is the conscious confidence that we are in a right relationship with God through Christ” (“The Reformation and Assurance,” 20).



“These things I have written to you  
who believe in the name of the Son  
of God, so that you may know that  
you have eternal life.”

—1 John 5:13



“Apostle John the Theologian”  
—A. N. Mironov

## The Context of 1 John

- The apostle John wrote 1 John in an increasingly confusing religious climate.
- Early forms of *Gnosticism* were on the rise, perverting the doctrine of Christ, advocating licentious living, sowing doubt among believers, and luring members away from the church (e.g., 1 John 2:18–19, 26; 4:1–3).
- In response, John wrote to defend the gospel and the Christian's assurance in it by providing spiritual tests to define true Christianity.
- These tests countered the growing confusion over the gospel and provided the basis for fellowship among professing Christians and for assurance of eternal life.



## **“Assurance and the Historicity of Christ”**

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us—what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.”

**—1 John 1:1–4**



# I. The Certainty of the Incarnation

1 John 1:1



*"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life."*



**“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life” (1:1).**

- John begins with a series of five non-negotiable historical declarations.
- 1) **“What was from the beginning”** – similar to the beginning of John’s Gospel (John 1:1; Micah 5:2), but here the concern is not the *pre-existence* of the Word but the reality of His *incarnation*.
  - The Gnostics taught that flesh was evil; Jesus only *appeared* to be in the flesh, or He was *empowered* to become Christ when the Spirit came upon Him and ceased to be when the Spirit left Him.
  - In response, John underlines the *historicity* of the incarnation.



**“What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life” (1:1).**

- 2) “What we have heard”** – John changes to the second person plural (“we”) to highlight *ear-witness* testimony; he and others *heard Jesus speak*.
- 3) “What we have seen with our eyes”** – John repeats this assertion again in v. 2 and v. 3, emphasizing that Jesus was not an apparition or phantom.
- 4) “What we looked at”** – not merely eyesight, but careful observation.
- 5) “Touched with our hands”** – John culminates with the ultimate historical proof—physical touch (Luke 24:36–39).



## II. The Credibility of the Witnesses

1 John 1:2



*“And the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and  
proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father  
and was manifested to us.”*

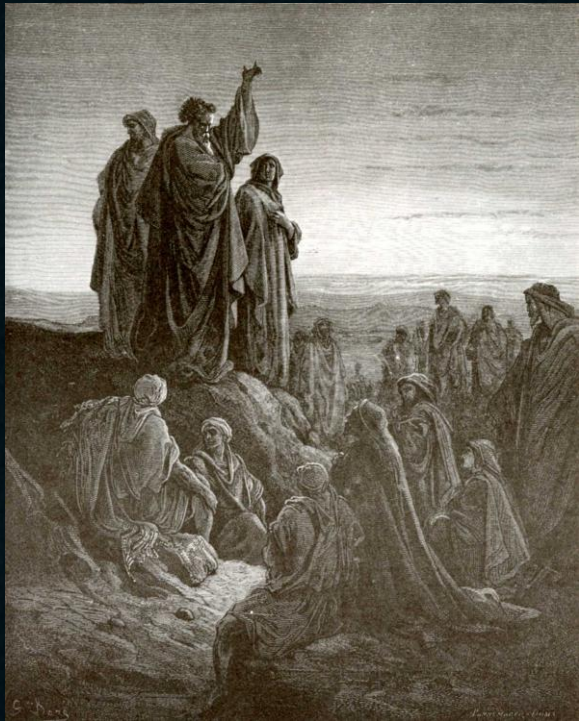


“and the life **was manifested**, and we have **seen** and **testify** and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and **was manifested** to us” (1:2).

- John again emphasizes the certainty of the incarnation by asserting *twice* that Jesus Christ “**was manifested**” and that He was “**seen**” by eyewitnesses.
- But what about those who have not “heard” or “seen” or “touched”? John answers in v. 2 with two important verbs:
  - 1) “**We . . . testify**” – “to confirm or attest something on the basis of personal knowledge or belief, *bear witness*”; the emphasis is on *accurate, factual reporting* (John 19:35; 21:24).



“and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and **proclaim** to you **the eternal life**, which was **with the Father** and was **manifested to us**” (1:2).



“Apostles Preaching  
the Gospel”  
—Gustave Doré

- 2) “**We . . . proclaim**” – “to make something known publicly” (also in v. 3); the emphasis is on *bold, public declaration*.
- That which was witnessed and declared was recognized as “**the eternal life**” (1 John 5:13):
  - “**With the Father**” – “face-to-face” with Him; describes divine equality and distinction.
  - “**Manifested to us**” – became flesh (John 1:14).

### III. The Consequence of the Message

1 John 1:3–4



*“What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.”*



“what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, **so that** you too may have **fellowship with us**; and indeed our fellowship is **with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ**. These things we write, **so that** our joy may be made complete” (1:3–4).

- “**So that**” – John’s motivation was not simply to communicate historical reality; he identifies a two-fold pastoral purpose:
  - 1) “**You too may have fellowship**” – “life shared together” (also in vv. 6, 7); contrary to the claims of the false teachers, *true belonging* was only found in John’s message:



- *Horizontally*: “**with us**”—the apostolic eyewitnesses.



- *Vertically*: “**with the Father . . . with His Son Jesus Christ.**”

**“what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete” (1:3–4).**

**2) “Our joy may be made complete”** – not wishful thinking or momentary gratification, but the peace, contentment, and true happiness of the soul.

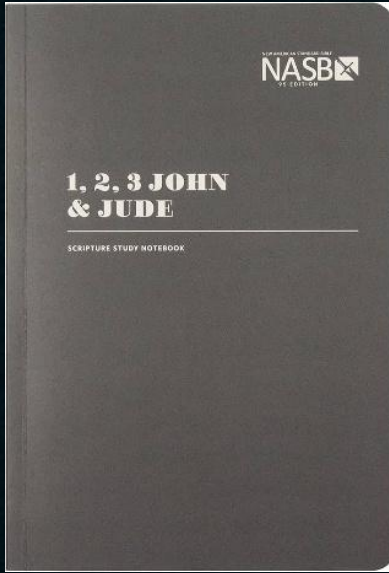
- The joy of John and his associates would be completed as his audience believes the truth and experiences its consequences (3 John 4; Philippians 2:2).
- John’s sincere interest was the confident, assured, well-being of Christians (contra Bellarmine).



# THAT YOU MAY KNOW

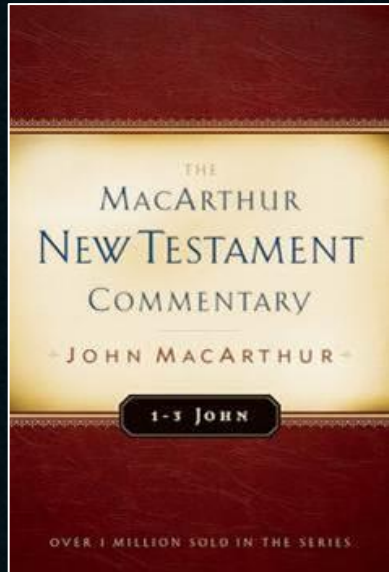
A STUDY OF FIRST JOHN

- ✓ Assurance is the conviction that one belongs to Christ; it must be developed by both *light* and *heat*.
- ✓ The light—objective truth—comes first.
- ✓ Read the Gospel of John. Do you believe that all that is recorded in it is *historically accurate* and *theologically true*?
- ✓ There can be no assurance of salvation if the truths about Christ are doubted or denied.



## NASB Scripture Study Notebook: 1–3 John & Jude

This notebook is ideal for personal study. It displays the NASB 1995 edition text on the left page, with lots of room in the margins and between the lines of text to add personal observations. The opposite, right page is a blank, lined page, to allow for taking notes.



## John MacArthur, *1–3 John* (MacArthur NT Commentary Series)

Based on pastor John's verse-by-verse exposition of the Johannine letters, this commentary is the most helpful, accessible commentary on 1 John. Read each section of the commentary in conjunction with the passage we will be studying each week in Men of the Word.