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## **FIRST, SECOND, THIRD LETTERS OF JOHN INTRODUCTION**

**The Writer:** The Apostle John, son of Zebedee, the writer of the Gospel of John

**Date and Time:** Although there is little or no external evidence, internal evidence places it shortly before the fall of Jerusalem, possibly ad 68 or ad 69

**Addressed to:** There is no internal evidence to give us knowledge to whom I John was specifically written. Early Christian tradition believes this to be written to churches of Asia in which the Apostle John had personally been involved with and was an elder toward. These would include smaller house churches as seen in the third letter, as well as larger city groups of Christians. II John was addressed to The elect lady and her children. III John was addressed to a Christian man named Gaius.

**Background:** Christians had fled Jerusalem, in anticipation of its destruction. Some of them had fled into Samaria and the Palestine area. Many had also fled to parts of Asia Minor. As we know, the apostle Paul had already done a great deal of work in this area. There were many churches throughout Asia Minor. The apostle John, a leader in the church at Jerusalem, had already been banished from Jerusalem once already. It was during this time that he wrote the book of Revelation possibly as early as ad 62 to ad 62. (notice how John wrote in Revelation 11: 1,2 an angel commanded that the temple be measured before the day of the Lord. How can this be, unless it still be standing.

John has referred to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved. It is fitting that he would write so much about love. He explained well the love of God for man through the sending of His only begotten son. He also encourages the Christian to love God in the same manner.

John also warned, as did Paul and Peter, to watch out for those who would lead you away from Jesus as the Christ. Note I John 2:22: "Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denieth the Father and the Son." II John v. 7 "For 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." III John v. 11 "Beloved, follow not that which is evil (Diotrephes and his followers), but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God."

Overall, John encourages the Christians (everywhere) what it means to walk in the light and in the love of Jesus Christ. As the Apostle Paul taught Christianity in contrast with the law, John presented the manner in which a Christian ought to live and grow in Christ.

**THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN**  
**LESSON 1 1:1-10 LIVING IN THE LIGHT Part 1**

1. John begins his letter talking about something that was from the beginning. What is he speaking of?
2. At the end of the verse, he describes Jesus as \_\_\_\_\_ .
3. How does John reinforce his belief in Jesus in verse 1?
4. Through Jesus, what now is available to men? V. 2
5. From where does eternal life come? V.1
6. From where did the Word of Life – Jesus come? V. 2
7. v. 1 “This we proclaim concerning the \_\_\_\_\_ .”  
v. 2 “And we proclaim to you the \_\_\_\_\_ .”  
v. 3 “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard...” Why?
8. How is godly fellowship possible among men?
9. With whom, do the witnesses of Jesus have fellowship?
10. What is the stated purpose of this letter?
11. In what way will these writings make their joy complete
12. What is the message that is being declared?
13. Because God is light, what is not in him?
14. What is fellowship?  
(Note to teacher: This is the word koinonia (pronounced: coin -o-knee-a) This is the same word translated: “communion” KJV I Cor. 10:16. This word is also translated in its verb form as “ye did communicate” KJV Rev. 18:4. Romans 15:16, translated a contribution which came as a result of their fellowship.
15. How can we have fellowship with God?  
A.  
B.
16. Personal question to each one studying: Does your life have more in common with light or darkness?

17. Give examples of darkness:

18. Give examples of light:

19. If we live our life by having things in common with darkness, and attempt to claim we are living in the light, what are we?

20. How can we know if we are living in the light?

21. What are two results of living in the light? (ie. having things in common with God?)

A.

B.

22. Retranslating verses 8 through 10 to give the complete Greek understanding.

“ If we claim not to sin *at any point*, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we *continually* confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will *continually* forgive us our sins and *continue* to purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim that we *have never sinned at any point*, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.”

23. What does this say about the forgiveness of God?

24. What does this say about our attitude of confession?

25. How does this relate to fellowship?

### **Application:**

As we live in the light, what ought we to consider and participate in, in order to have fellowship with God?

1. We need to seek that which agrees with God (truth) so that we can add it to our life.
2. As we make mistakes along the way, we need to truthfully recognize it and turn again to God, confessing (speak the truth).

As we confess, we need to trust to God's promise of "continual" forgiveness.

## **THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN**

### **Lesson 2 2: 1-6 PROPITIATION**

Retranslating 2:1 to give the complete greek understanding. “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not *live in a state of sin*. But if anybody does sin *at any point*, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense – Jesus Christ, the righteous one.

1. What is one difference between the Christian and a non-christian.

The Christian does not live in a sinful condition. The Christian lives in a forgiven condition. The non-christian lives in a sinful condition. The forgiveness that comes through the blood of Jesus has never been applied to them. Is it possible for a Christian to refuse forgiveness and return to living in a state of sin? Of course.

How is it possible for a Christian to remain in a forgiven condition when they sin? As they keep fellowship with God, continually confessing the unrighteousness (not belaboring past sin, but dealing honestly with sin as it may happen) of their life, God is faithful to continue to forgive that sin.

2. Who speaks on our defense before God?

3. Why is it that God will listen to him?

4. What is an atoning sacrifice?

Atone: Greek: hilasmos (pronounce hil-las-mos) this is better translated propitiation. A form of this word is used regarding the mercy seat upon the Ark of the Covenant. (Vines Dictionary p.78 “These describe the means (in and through the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, in His death on the Cross by the shedding of His blood in His vicarious sacrifice for sin) by which God shows mercy to sinners.” )

This word is only used in reference to the act of God (Him providing what is necessary) whereby he could show mercy to man. There is no usage of this word toward man doing or offering something on his own behalf to appease the wrath of God or to satisfy the justice of God or in any way to reconcile himself to the Almighty. The only manner in which man can expect anything other than a fearful judgment from God is through the provision that God Himself has made. Thus, with judgment, God always allows for mercy.

5. Did Jesus’ sacrifice only apply to you??

6. Who also?

7. How can you get to know God better?

8. What does this say about the person who says they know God but are not obedient to Him?

9. What happens as we obey God's word?

10. What does the word 'complete' mean?

11. How can we know that we are in him?

12. If one desires to claim to be in Christ, what must they do?

### **APPLICATION:**

Identify the areas where your love is incomplete.

Identify the areas that you are not obedient to God.

Note: as you identify the areas of disobedience, you will also learn how to complete your love.

**THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN**  
**Lesson 3 2:7-17 LIVING IN THE LIGHT Part 2**

NOTE: Some old texts use the term

agapetoi (pronounced: aga-pay-toy) literally translated – ‘beloved’

John views his relationship with these churches in like manner as a parent loves his children.

and other old texts use the term adelphoi (pronounced: adel-foy)

literally translated - brethren

The relationship that John has with the readers is not of friendship, but one of family, specifically, a spiritual family.

Both cases see John’s relating to these churches as a family. In this case, he relates to them as a spiritual family.

1. To what old commandment is John referring? (Keep in mind the subject matter which is love.)

2. What is the new command that John gives?

NOTE AND COMMENTARY: John both reminds the Christians of the commands that Jesus had given to the disciples, and through the disciples to all Christians, but he also gives to them another application of that same ‘old’ commandment. They knew that Jesus taught us to Love the Lord our God with all of our heart and soul and mind and, to love our neighbor as our self.”

3. How long have they had the ‘old’ commandment?

COMMENTARY: From the beginning of both the OT and Jesus’ teaching, they had been taught these two most important commandments. As Jesus explained, “upon these two, hinge all the other commandments. Illustration: In order for the door to do its job in completing the wall or to give access, it must be connected by the hinges. So too, is all of law. The door can neither shut out nor provide access if it is not connected to the rest of the structure.

4. Explain the contrast of verse 8 in that the darkness is past and the true light shines.

They are no longer living in a time in which they do not have the truth. Now that Messiah (Jesus) had come and lived among men, the truth is seen in the flesh.

Without understanding, there is no sight. Jesus brings all the ‘correct’ understanding wherein one can see what is spiritually true. Before Jesus, all was closed behind a veil. Jesus removed the veil in many ways for many reasons. One (illustration) application is that by removing the veil, we can see God as He is. Remember in the OT. “No one has seen God”. But now, by seeing Jesus, we see

God. The truth that Jesus revealed to His disciples, John is now revealing to the church.

5. How is one's relationship to his brother-in-Christ contrasted with light and darkness.

- A.
- B.

6. Hate is a strong word. What does it mean? In this case, it is set up in opposition to loving. If one loves, he will do that which is in the best interest of the other.

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

In opposition to this, if one hates, he will not do what is in the best interest of the other. Too often one may act in ways that by intention or accident bring harm to the other.

- A.
- B.
- C.
- D.

(This is why we understand that the opposite of love is selfishness – which, as a whole is hatred.)

7. Note how these truths apply to verse 10: When one loves, does he provide an opportunity for his brother to stumble?

8. In contrast, does a brother who hates, provide opportunity for his brother to stumble?

9. If one walks in the light, can he see more clearly what lies before him?

10. How does this help in our relationships with each other?

Find all the "I write to you..." statements and note the following:

- 1. I write to you \_\_\_\_\_
- 2. why? \_\_\_\_\_

Example: 1:4: We write these things to (all who read this letter)

Why? (So that our joy many be full)

2:1 to all who read..... Why?

2:8 to all who read..... Why?

2:12 to all Christians who read: ..... Why?

2:13 to fathers ..... Why?

2:13: to young men..... Why?

2:13: to all who read..... Why?

2: 14: to the Fathers.....Why?

2:14: to the young men.....Why?

2:21: to all,

2:26: to all,

11. Why does John tell the Christians not to love the world or anything in it?

12. What comes from the world?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

13. What will happen to all these things?

14. What is different about the man who does the will of God?

### **APPLICATION:**

Identify a brother in Christ that you do not love. Ask yourself, has God allowed any gray areas in the way we treat each other?

Figure out how you can turn what God has called, hating your brother, into what should be - loveing of your brother.

**THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN**  
**Lesson 4 2:18-27 Warning: Antichrist Part 1**

1. According to verse 18, what time is it?
2. What have they heard to expect? v. 18
3. What is present at that time? v. 18
4. What does knowing this confirm to them? v. 18
5. Where did these antichrists come out from? v. 19
6. Were the antichrists of the faithful? v. 19
7. Had they belonged to the faithful, where would they be now? v. 19
8. Should we accept the viewpoint (that some have drawn from this passage) that everyone, once having known the truth and turned away, never knew the truth to begin with? (countering Calvinism) NO!

9. Who is this passage speaking specifically about?  
The fulfillment of prophecy:

That is why John said, :

10. Definition and usage: anoint – There are several Greek words translated ‘anoint’. In this case, it is the word, *chrisma* (pronounced: chris-ma) This is used in reference to a physical pouring of oil on a person for the purpose of setting them apart from the world to accomplish the purpose of God. For example: The high priest in Ex. 29:7 (Septuagint – the later Greek version of the Bible - often said to have been the version that Jesus would have been familiar with) In this case, the Christians had been set apart from the world and set apart to God by the Holy One. Is this a special anointing by God, apart from what every Christian receives at the time of baptism, or does every Christian receive this same ‘unction’-anointing? The text is not clear.

11. What can we say about these particular Christians to whom John is writing? v. 20

12. Who then is a liar?

13. Besides a liar, what does John call the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ?

14. When one denies Jesus being the Christ, who else are they denying?  
Why?

15. John encourages them to remain true to what they had heard from the beginning.  
What was it that they had heard? 1:1-4

16. How can we expect the benefits from one that we deny? In other words, if we do not believe that Jesus is who God's Word represents Him to be, then why should we expect any of the blessings that come through Christ.

17. v. 25 What is one of the promises (blessings) that come from Jesus. because He is the Christ?

### **APPLICATION**

The overall thought of verse 27? Remain in the truth!!!!

List ways in which, we can help ourselves to remain in the truth!!!!

**THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN**  
**Lesson 5 2:28-3: 24 BELIEF AND LOVE**

1. v. 28 What is the reason John gives in saying that the Christians need to remain in the truth that Jesus is the Christ?
2. Knowing that Jesus is righteous, what other knowledge does this give the Christian?
3. How do we know that God has lavished His great love upon us?
4. Why doesn't the world recognize God's children?
5. (v. 2) What did John say that those Christians were at that time?
6. What will they be at the appearance of Christ?
7. When will they know?
8. There is something they do know about what will happen to them at the appearance of Christ, what is it?
9. How will this help them know what they will be when they see Jesus?
10. Having this hope does something. What does it do?
11. What is sin?
12. Why did Jesus appear in the first place?
13. What enabled Jesus to do that?
14. What does v. 6 mean?
15. Simple truth: He who does what is right is seen by God as \_\_\_\_\_.
16. Who is of the devil?
17. How long has the devil been living in sin?
18. What is another reason that Jesus appeared in the first place? v. 8
19. What is a blessing of being born of God?

20. What is it that keeps one from returning to a state of sin?
21. How simple is it to know if you are a child of God?
22. How else? Answer this: do you love your brother?
23. What is the message heard from the beginning?
24. Who is an example of one who did not love his brother?
25. What was the cause of his hatred and thus murder?
26. What expectation does John give the Christian?
27. What is one result that comes from loving one another?
28. What happens when we continue in hate?
29. Discuss: how is it that one who hates his brother is a murderer. See Matt. 5:21-26  
Isn't this why we cannot expect God to excuse us when we do not love our brother?

NOTE: to kill is to take a life; to murder is to take a life without authority to do so.

30. How are we to understand love?
31. How then are we to love?
32. Give examples of how we can do this?  
Literally:  
  
(does this verse limit our giving to only material things and let us off the hook for other needs ie. Mental, emotional, spiritual needs?)
33. What is the difference between talking about doing what is right and actually doing what is right?
34. How do we know that we love in truth
35. Is John teaching these Christians a secret about how a person can be at rest in the presence of God even when our own hearts condemn us? Explain: v. 20
36. Even when we FEEL as though we are guilty, what should we continue to do?

37. What are we commanded to do?

- 1.
- 2.

38. What confidence does this give us?

**APPLICATION:**

How can we know that the Spirit of Christ lives in us?

- 1.
- 2.

**THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN**  
**Lesson 6 4:1- 6 Warning: Antichrist Part 2**

1. What two spirits were present in the early church at this time?
  - 1.
  - 2.
2. Why is it important, according to the context, for these early Christians to test the spirits?
3. How were they to recognize the spirit of God?
  - A. What are the people, who teach that Jesus has not come in the flesh, called?
4. How were they to recognize the spirit that was not from God?
5. The spirit that does not recognize Jesus as from God, is the spirit of \_\_\_\_\_.
6. What had they heard in times past about the spirit of antichrist?
7. Where was the spirit of antichrist at the time John is writing this letter?
8. Who are the 'they' in verse 5?
9. Who is greater than the spirit of antichrist?
10. Where is God's spirit?
11. From where does the spirit of antichrist come?
12. Who listens to the voice of the antichrist?
13. Who listens to the voice of God?
14. Who will not listen to the voice of God?
15. What other term is used to describe the spirit of God?
16. What other term is used to describe the spirit of antichrist?

## APPLICATION

How important is it for us to beware, those who do not believe that Jesus has come in the flesh, the son of God, the Christ?

Identify some of those who deny Jesus having come in the flesh is the Christ.

Judaism –

Latter Day Saints (Mormans) –

Jehovah Witnesses -

Muslims –

Masons –

Satanism – Demonism – Witchcraft and the like. –

Christian Science –

Can you name others?

**THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN**  
**Lesson 7 4:7-21 God is love – Are you?**

1. In a word, define God. (vs. 7)
  - A. NOW, attempt to define LOVE..... (see if your definition will answer a question that comes up later in the lesson.)
2. What characteristic defines a person to be of God? (vs. 7)
3. How did God display Himself as love? (vs. 9)
  - A.
    1. Why was this a display of love? (vs. 10)
      - a.
      - b.
4. If we are of God, how are we to then live? (vs. 11)
5. What is it that uniquely defines one as having love in them? (vs. 13)
6. What spirit is this according to the context?
7. For what reason, do we rely on the love of God?
8. Why is it necessary for love to be made complete in us? (vs. 17)
9. What fear does perfected (complete) love get rid of? (vs. 18)
10. What will man be punished for, without Christ?
11. What then is our motivation to love each other and to love God? (vs. 19)
12. As far as God is concerned, is it possible to love God and hate your brother (sister)? (vs. 20)
13. If someone believes that they can, what are they? (vs. 20)

14. If we are to expect to be saved at our time of judgment, is loving one another a suggestion by God? (vs. 21)

15. Put 5: 1,2 in your own words:

16. How does obeying God prove that you love Him?

(How does your answer go together with your definition of love? See Definition at the bottom of the page)

17. How is it that God can say, that His commands are not burdensome?

18. Describe how that belief in Jesus and the Love of God work together for benefit to overcome the world.

What is the result of living in this world?

[It is through Jesus Christ and Him alone that we can have life and therefore overcome the world (that being death). It is the love of God that has provided His son in the first place.]

19. How does your answer help you to understand, 5:5 “ Who is it that overcomes the world?

### **APPLICATION**

Determine the areas wherein you are not being loving, toward others.

Determine what you need to do to be more loving toward them.

NOTE: Many people think that overcoming the world –primarily- means to keep from sinning and becoming more perfect. However, we find herein, that to overcome the world – primarily- means to overcome the final result of living according to this world.

To overcome the world, means to overcome DEATH!

To overcome death, we need to live by love!

Love is:

1. giving
2. for the highest good
3. unconditionally

**THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN**  
**Lesson 8 5: 6-21**

1. Who is the one who was born by water and by blood?
2. Read the Gospel of John 3: 1-21: Note vs. 5: In order to enter the kingdom of heaven, a man is to be born of what two things?
3. Remember question 15 in lesson 6? The spirit that testifies is the spirit of \_\_\_\_\_.
4. Definitions:
  - A. Testify: To bear record of what is true, based upon what you have personally and directly seen and/or heard.
  - B. Truth: (see lesson 8) literally: unconcealed or made manifest:  
Generally: what is actual or conforming to reality  
As it pertains to all things: That which is manifested by God to be actual or real.  
In Short: That which is in agreement with God.
5. In what three ways does God testify (bear witness of what is true) that Jesus is the one who has sent to save man from sin?
  - 1.
  - 2.
  - 3.
6. Why is it important to accept this truth?
7. Restate the testimony of God based upon verse 11. "God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son."
8. What is the result of one not having the Son of God?
9. What is another reason that John is writing to those who believe in the name of the Son of God?
10. What causes you to doubt your promise of eternal life?  
  
(Should you doubt?)
11. What confidence do you have when you approach God?  
NOTE: There is a difference in quality and quantity. Sometimes we think of faith as an

amount. If God will just open our heads (hearts) and pour in MORE FAITH, then we will be more faithful. It is imperative that we change our thinking from quantity to quality. Faith is not a matter of how much you have, but rather how much it can do.

ILLUSTRATION: Jesus described powerful faith as like a grain of mustard seed. Jesus did not speak of having the largest seed in the bag. He spoke of something that was physically small, but had within it a huge potential when given the proper climate. We too, are to have the faith of great potential. We are to provide for our seed (faith) the proper climate or environment, so that it might flourish and reach the potential that God knows is there.

12. When asking God for anything according to His will, do we realize that we have a promise? What is the promise?

13. Can and does God hear the prayer of those who are not Christians?  
(ex Cornelius) But does the non-Christian have the promise of being heard?

14. What is the other promise that the Christian has?

15. What should we do if we see a brother commit sin that does not lead to death?

(Remember 1:8 – 2:2 when answering the question: What sin does not lead to death.)

“ If we claim not to sin *at any point*, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we *continually* confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will *continually* forgive us our sins and *continue* to purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim that we *have never sinned at any point*, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.” Both the Christian and the non-Christian will sin. The Christian does not live in a sinful condition. The Christian lives in a forgiven condition. The non-Christian lives in a sinful condition. The forgiveness that comes through the blood of Jesus has never applied to them. Is it possible for a Christian to refuse the forgiveness and return to living in a state of sin? Of course. How is it possible for a Christian to remain in a forgiven condition when they sin? As they keep fellowship with God, continually confessing the unrighteousness (not belaboring past sin, but dealing honestly with sin as it may happen) of their life, God is faithful to continue to forgive that sin.

16. There is a sin that leads to death. What is it? Blaspheming the Holy Spirit. That is: to deny the working of the Holy Spirit in your life. This is true if you deny His working at the beginning or if you deny Him once you have come to know Christ.

17. What is a HUGE advantage that comes from being born of God?

18. Who was controlling the whole “world”?

19. Why did the Son of God come?

20. Who is the true God and who is eternal life?

21. Why end this letter with “keep yourselves from idols.”

## II JOHN 1-13

1. Who is the “elect lady”? .
2. In what does John love this chosen lady?
3. Is this woman known and loved by others?  
By whom?  
Does this sound like a woman who is known to all Christians?
4. How long will the truth be with the Christian? .
5. From the first letter of John, what do we know to be the truth?
6. What three things does John say will be with them? Define each.  
Grace: gift given freely; that which engenders a thankful heart  
Mercy: pity or compassion to the point in which one fills the need of the other  
Peace: without conflict
7. In what two ways will these be with them?  
Truth: (see lesson 8) literally: unconcealed or made manifest:  
Generally: was is actual or conforming to reality  
As it pertains to all things: That which is manifested by God to be actual or real.  
In Short: That which is in agreement with God.  
  
Love: (see lesson 7) 1. Giving, 2. For the highest good, 3. Unconditionally,
8. Define each:
9. What has given John great joy?
10. What is the command that John repeats to the elect lady and with which he was concerned in the first letter?
11. What is it that demonstrates and proves that one loves?
12. What does the word ‘walk’ mean?
13. Who does John refer to as ‘deceivers’?

14. What else are they know as?

15. Based upon verse 8, what will happen if one gives in to the spirit of antichrist?

16. NIV: “anyone running ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ, does not have God;”

GREEK: “Everyone who transgresses, and abides not in the teaching of the Christ, has not God.”

What is transgression? .

17. What law is it by which we live? James 1: 25; 2:12

18. We live by \_\_\_\_\_ and love sets us at \_\_\_\_\_ (sets us free) from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

19. In order to continue to have both God and Jesus in their life they must what?

20. Who should the Christian not welcome into their homes or their lives?

21. Just like us, letters are nice, but to see our family and friends face to face – completes our joy!!!! Can’t wait to see you all the next time we meet!!!!

### III JOHN 1:1-13

1. To whom was this letter written?
2. Was John very close to Gaius?
3. What kind of physical health does John want for Gaius, and what does he compare health with?

(can we desire that for each other?)

4. Whom have you shared the Gospel with to the point wherein they became a Christian?

How are they doing?

What would give you continued joy in regard to them?

5. What kind of compliment does John give to Gaius in verse 5? And does it remind you of Jesus' words in Matthew 25:34-36?

6. Vs. 7 may sound strange to some, why should it not surprise any Christian?

7. What are some unrealistic expectations that we have of people in the world?  
Ex. Expecting someone who does not know Jesus to come to church.

8. What ought the church do for one another?

9. Define Hospitality: Literally means: love of strangers or guests

10. Why should the church show hospitality in this case

11. What was Diotrephes problem?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

12. What is John saying in Verse 11b?

(does this do away with the excuse that: "we only did it because someone else did it first?")

13. Who was it (vs. 12) that was well spoken of?

## **APPLICATION**

1. Based upon the example of Diotrephes, what are things that we should not participate in?

2. In what ways ought we to show hospitality?

3. If you were sent to represent your local Church of Christ, what kind of recommendation would you have to go with you?