

The Letters of John The Apostle - 1 John 1

Introduction:- There is no doubt that these three letters were written by the Apostle John. He also wrote the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation. He was one of Jesus' inner core group of disciples - Peter, James and John - and is sometimes called the "One whom Jesus loved". NB This is not a claim to any kind of superiority but an expression of an *awareness* of just how much God loved him. Jesus promises this relationship to all who follow Him. Do you know how much God loves you?

It is thought that the letter was written sometime between AD 85 - 95. We can't be sure if the letter was written to any specific church. It seems more likely to have been some kind of circular letter to the churches in the vicinity of Ephesus. We know that John (possibly succeeded by Timothy) was based in Ephesus.

Whilst John addresses many issues it seems as though his main reason for writing was to counter a heresy (Gnosticism) that was becoming increasingly dangerous towards the end of the first century AD. Gnosticism was - and still is - a powerful heresy based on a kind of dualism. The spirit is entirely good and the body (matter) is entirely bad. From this *unbiblical* standpoint several heretical conclusions were drawn.

- Briefly:-
1. Our bodies (matter) are evil.
 2. Salvation is the escape from the body - not by faith in Jesus but by a special 'knowledge'.
 3. Jesus humanity was denied - Jesus only 'seemed' to have a body or that His divinity came after His baptism and left Him before He died!
 4. Since the body was evil it had to be kept under strict control.
 5. Since the body (matter) and not the breaking of God's Law was considered evil, the breaking of God's Law was of no moral consequence.

It was against the rise of such false teaching that these letters were written. John was intent on exposing the falsehood of such teaching (Chapter 2 v 26) and to assure believers of their salvation (Chapter 5 v 13). John did this by striking at these false teachers' complete lack of morality (Chapter 3 v 8 - 10) and by giving his own powerful testimony to the incarnation - God as man (Chapter 1 v 3 and 4).

And so to Chapter 1.

Please read the whole book through as you prepare to follow these notes. It would be good to keep in mind the opening verses of John's Gospel and the whole of the Upper Room passage from John chapters 13 - 16. (Go on - do yourself a power of good and read the whole gospel - many, many people have encountered God in a new way by so doing!) It is my view that John had the occasion of the Last Supper constantly in his mind. He alone records such detail of the night and the extraordinary teaching/ministry of Jesus at that time that led to his own life being so transformed. I'm sure that the events of that evening eventually led - 'him upon whom Jesus Himself leaned' - to burn with such a passion for the truth that could not be extinguish throughout his long and eventful life. (John was not only the Gospel writer, he was a church leader according to tradition at Ephesus, he suffered persecution and banishment to Patmos. He was a travelling evangelist and, by this time, an old man!)

Verses 1 - 4.

Heard, seen and touched! Verse 1. This led to the expression, "Word of Life" who is none other than Jesus with whom he and the whole church enjoys the fellowship of the Father and the Son. (echoes of John 14 verse 6) "The Life appeared and we proclaim to you the eternal life." Jesus the Life (John 14 v 6) and He alone offers eternal life through His blood shed on the cross. Hebrews reminded us that it was for the joy set before Him that Jesus endured the cross. Here, John reminds us that the truth concerning Jesus - the 'life' and the 'light' of the world makes ours - and his - "joy complete". Verse 4.

Verses 5 - 10

This is the message which we have declared to you - God is light. It is now, therefore, important for us to walk in the light as He is "in the light". In Him there is no darkness at all (Verse 5). As we walk we have fellowship. (I am reminded of Luke 24. The walk from Jerusalem to Emmaus and the promise that when we walk we shall hear a voice saying this is the way, walk in it - Isaiah 30 v 21) It is the blood of Jesus that purifies us from all sin - echoes of Revelation 7 v 14 and 12 v 11.

The next verse reminds me of Morning and Evening Prayer - 'If we say we have no sin' etc. is used as a call to confession. Often I would be overcome by my own sinfulness and forget the next bit! Look carefully at what it promises God is faithful and just and WILL forgive us our sins and PURIFY us from all unrighteousness. That's the thought I want to end with this week!

Studies on the Letters of John have been asked for. Please pray that I will do them justice! It's not about satisfying a request but it is about glorifying God. Have you thought about how you can best do that this week?