

1 John Intro Part Two

Last week we began the introduction to the book or letter of 1 John. We covered a lot in the introduction, but didn't quite get finished. I want to pick-up where we left off, but I also want to bring to remembrance a couple of the things we shared last week, just so we keep it all in the context of what and why John is writing.

1. One of the first things we shared was the fact that although no name is mentioned in the book, it has been the common consensus of the Church through the ages that it was the Apostle John, one of the sons of Zebedee, the brother of James and the same author as the Gospel of John, the book of Acts and the book of Revelation who wrote 1, 2, and 3 John. He is an old man by this time and writes as both an Apostle and a Pastor.
2. Some of the things he writes about are simply the direction of life that Believers must have if they call themselves Christians. It is about the choices we make and the prejudices we put away. Our actions are very important as a testimony and validation of our life in Christ – these are some of the internal battles faced by the Church and the individual members.
3. He also writes against the outside attacks, the main battles the Church was facing at the time from false teachers and their false doctrines:
 - a. Teachings such as Gnosticism, the idea that **real life existed only in the spirit**. This included the thought that you are able to sin in the flesh, yet have no effect on the spirit – they are totally separated.
 - b. Gnostics also had the belief that they possessed **elevated knowledge, a “higher truth”** which only a few were able to obtain. This higher truth wasn't obtained from the Bible, but through some mystical realm.
“Gnostics see themselves as a privileged class elevated above everybody else by their higher, deeper knowledge of the divine.”
 - c. Another area of concern was the teachings of **Docetism** – the belief that **Jesus didn't have a real flesh and blood body**. Without a real body He could not have been tempted in the same way as us (as Hebrews tells us

He was), nor could He have been a real sacrifice, with the shedding of real blood as a payment for our sins.

- d. Thirdly, we looked at the teachings of Cerinthus, held to a form of Gnosticism which felt that **God is so holy that He could have no direct dealings with humans**. He taught that Jesus was born only as a human the son of both Joseph and Mary, without divinity at His birth. The Divine Christ descended upon Him at His baptism.

All of these teachings, as well as others were settling into the Church in a powerful way. John wrote to combat their heresies.

4. We also spoke about the fact that the truth necessary for the Believers growth was both a learned truth as well as an imparted Truth.
 - a. The Believer was responsible to grow in the knowledge of the Truth through a consistent study of the Word of God;
 - b. And there would also be times when the Holy Spirit would impart truth to the faithful and obedient servant of God, supernaturally gives us a fullness of understanding beyond our experience.
5. Then I shared with you that on top of what we find in the context of his teachings, there are four direct statements given by John as to a part of the reason for his writing. I gave that to you as a homework assignment and some of you have shared with me throughout the week that you were able to find those four reasons. Some of you have the Pastor Chuck Smith, Word for Today Bible and you found those four reasons listed right in the intro to 1 John.

However, my four reasons are a little bit different than Chucks. He lists 1:3 and 1:4 separately while I list them together. This isn't a problem, they all come out the same. Also, I have included 2:26 where Chuck does not. Again, no issue, just a different way to look at it. Here is the breakdown I have –

1. **(1 John 1:3-4)** *And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.*

For you and me, and every Believer, when we are walking in the Truth, Fellowship and in the knowledge that comes from a growing relationship with God, and experiencing Him on a daily basis, **our joy becomes full**. But if we are troubled by every wind of doctrine, if we are being pulled around by every new wave of belief that comes up, there's no piece in our life – only a continual struggle to find the next new thing.

This is one of the oldest tricks of the enemy. He did it in the Garden, “*God’s word wasn’t enough, it wasn’t sufficient, and in the end it wasn’t true*”. But when Adam and Eve bit into that lie, the joy they had been experiencing in their life vanished and they were left naked to the world and all of its thorns and deceits. In response to those who are false teachers bringing in false doctrines, Jesus, Himself said that *the thief comes in to kill, steal and to destroy, but that he came to give us life and to give it more abundantly* (John 10:10).

Here in First John, John wants the Church to recognize the liars and their lies... John wants to be certain we are walking in Fellowship with God... he wants the Church to walk in the Truth... he knows that only then can we have that true *joy unspeakable and full of glory* (1 Peter 1:8)

2. (1 John 2:1) *My little children, these things **I write to you**, so that you may not sin.*

This is a great challenge for every Believer. Sin seems to hit us continually. Everywhere we turn, the opportunity or even the pressure to sin is staring us right in the face. Some are even walking in habitual sin.

When we get to this section, I believe the Lord will open our eyes to see and understand, not only His perfect will for us as His children and representatives, but also our personal responsibility as such. John’s words are challenging, but I do believe that with the right understanding we will see that they are not impossible words but words of release and freedom.

3. (1Jo 2:26) *These things **I have written to you** concerning those who try to deceive you.*

As I shared earlier, the First Century Church had so many enemies. The world around them was against them and even within the Church false teachers abounded. All of this with their own personal struggles dealing with each other. How the Church ever survived is truly a miraculous work of God. But we need to remember, it wasn't just the First Century Church... the Twenty-First Century Church has the same issues and it is still only by the miraculous hand of God that we survive and thrive.

Knowing the Truth is absolutely necessary for our maturity and growth. But we also need to know the tactics of the enemy, in order that we might guard against his deceitfulness and trickery. John wanted to be certain that the Church wasn't deceived.

4. **(1Jo 5:13)** *These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know (oida – have a full and complete knowledge of the fact) that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.*

Some within the Christian community declare that you **cannot really know for certain that you are saved**, that you have eternal life. Yet, here John says that one of the reasons he is writing to the Church the things he has written is in order **that we might know** our eternal state. John assures us that it's not through the parroting of some special prayer, nor is it simply the association with a particular group of people. *You don't gain eternal life by signing a card.*

John says there are particular things we can look at in our own personal lives that help to give us assurance of our eternal status. Even the Apostle Paul agreed when he declared:

2 Corinthians 13:5

Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you? --unless indeed you are disqualified.

God has given us the ability to have assurance of our salvation. Here in First John we are going to find that John gives us several "pop quizzes". In these he will give us:

- **Doctrinal Tests** – yes, doctrine is necessary. Without the right doctrine how do you know how to be saved, what it means to be saved, who is responsible for your salvation, and what do I do now that I am saved. Doctrine is a necessary

ingredient in our salvation.

There will be **Doctrine Tests**

- **Social Tests** – yes, it makes a difference in how we treat those around us. If the love of God truly abides within us, we will treat people the way God would treat them. John speaks greatly about love for the Brethren, but this test also goes on to touch how we treat those who are in the world.

It matter how you treat others – there will be **Social Tests**

- **Moral Tests** – John brings out the clear truth that how you and I live our lives in this present world just may be a **telling reality of where we live in the next world**, FOR ALL ETERNITY. He doesn't speak of gaining our salvation through good works, but along with James, Paul, and even Jesus he confirms the fact that someone who is Born Again by the Spirit of God does not continue to live a life outside of the will and plan of God.

We are not saved by how we live, but how we live will verify if we are truly saved. There are **Moral Tests**

Remember, whenever you take a test, **the test is not the channel by which you gain knowledge**. The test is to determine rather you have the knowledge or not. In the same way, as John writes to the Church here in First John, he wants the Church to know that they know that they are truly saved - *that you may know (oida) that you have eternal life (5:13)*.

Before we get into the actual verse by verse study, I want to take a few more minutes to look at the author, John the Apostle, one of the sons of Zebedee.

In Mark chapter 1 we read of Simon Peter and his brother Andrew being the first two who began to follow Jesus, then James and his brother John... Mark 1:20

“...immediately (Jesus) called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.”

James and John become what are known as the “**Sons of Thunder**”. We find some rather humorous incidents that they are a part of...

In Luke’s Gospel account we find John coming against others who weren’t doing ministry in the way he thought it ought to be done... **(Luke 9:49-50)**

“They’re not a part of OUR Church...”

Then, when a Samaritan village didn’t receive Jesus and His disciples, it’s James and John who react to the situation... (Luke 9:51-56) *“And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?”*

They might have been students of the **Word of God**, but they were certainly missing the **heart of God**.

*But He (Jesus) turned and rebuked them, and said, “You do not know **what manner of spirit you are of**. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them.” And they went to another village.”*

Then we find that it’s James and John that try to sneak in to get a special position in the Kingdom of God, sitting on the right and left hand of Jesus... (Mark 10:35-41)

“Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to Him, saying, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask.” And He said to them, “What do you want Me to do for you?” They said to Him, “Grant us that we may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on Your left, in Your glory.”

I think that’s why very quickly we find that Peter and the two brothers James and John become what appears to be an inner circle of confidants to Jesus. They seem to be separated from all the others by the choice of Jesus on more than a couple of occasions. I think Jesus wanted to keep His eyes on these guys!!

When Jesus went to the **ruler of the synagogues house, after his daughter had died**, Mark tells us... (Mark 5:37) *“And He (Jesus) permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James.”*

There on the Mt. of Olives, in the Garden of Gethsemane, both Matthew (26:37) and Mark (Mark 14:33) tell us... *“And (Jesus) took Peter, James, and John (the two sons of Zebedee) with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed.”*

We also read that on the Mount of Transfiguration... Matthew 17:1; Mark 9:2; and Luke 9:28 all tells us that... *“Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves;”*

I believe this particular event, more so than any of the others, actually comes into play in the opening words of **John’s Gospel record** as he writes... (John 1:14) *“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”* It was on the Mount of Transfiguration **where Jesus appeared in His glorified form.**

John is believed to have been the youngest of all the disciples and the one who sat next to Jesus at the Last Supper, resting his head on Jesus – (John 13:23) *“Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved...”*

Now that phrase, *that disciple whom Jesus loved* is only used in John’s Gospel account... **and John uses it to describe himself.** He never gives his own name, but he refers to himself as *that disciple whom Jesus loved.* (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7; 21:20)

In the early pages of the book of Acts, we find that his brother James is beheaded by Herod. As John aged, God used him in a powerful way, not only writing the Gospel account and these three letters, but also the very powerful and only fully prophetic book of the New Testament, the book of Revelation.

Adam Clark tells us:

Early Church Father, Tertullian (a prolific writer of the early Church), as well as others say that Domitian (the Roman Emperor from 81-96) declared war against the Church, in the 15th year of his reign, A.D. 95. He had John banished from Ephesus, and carried to Rome, where he was immersed in a cauldron of boiling oil, out of which however he escaped unhurt; and that afterwards he was banished to the isle of Patmos, in the Aegean Sea, where he wrote the book of Revelation. With Domitian having been slain in A.D. 96, his successor Nerva recalled all the exiles who had been banished by his predecessor; and John is

*supposed to have returned the next year to Ephesus, being then about 90 years of age. He is thought to have been the **only apostle who died a natural death**, and to have lived upwards of 100 years. Some say, having completed 100 years, he died the day following.*

What we have before us in this study is someone who has experienced the Lord Jesus in a close and intimate way, up close and personal. One who knows what it means to **suffer for the truth**. Someone who **gave up comfort and freedom**; one who **lost loved ones for the cause of the Gospel**.

What we have before us in this study is the heart of a Pastor caring for the Sheep God had placed under his care, as well as for those who would follow in *the journey to that great Celestial City, the place where God dwells*.