

1 John

Introduction

1/7/19

As we begin our study on the book of 1 John, I want to encourage you to familiarize yourself with this short letter. Take some time to read it, hopefully several times. Note themes, repeated words, or points of emphasis that you see the Apostle John writing about. As with any book that we study from the Bible, it is so important that we understand what is actually being said. In addition, it is important for us to ask the question, “What are universal truths that apply to us as well?”

It seems the letter of 1 John was written to a group of small churches most likely associated with the church of Ephesus. John is writing as an Apostle and also, it seems, as a pastor for some of these churches. As John begins, the introduction sounds very much like his introduction or prologue to the Gospel of John.

First, John begins by establishing the truth that he and others (“we”) have seen and touched the Word of Life. John is writing as an eye witness about the very revelation of truth from God to mankind in the person of Jesus Christ. As John wrote in the prologue to his Gospel of John, the Logos (word, expression, revelation) of God became flesh. It seems that John is addressing a heresy that had already developed claiming God had not really taken on flesh. Evidently, there were those who did not understand the incarnation – they thought it was physically impossible, and therefore had to come up with some other explanation. As Neil said on Sunday, the nature of Jesus – God taking on human flesh – is at the very heart of the gospel. If we eliminate the unique union of the divine and human, we eliminate the truth of the gospel, thereby eliminating the power of the gospel.

John is writing about eternal life which is found only in Jesus. He also is writing about the inevitable results of that life in us. This life received or appropriated through Christ inevitably leaks out into our interpersonal relationships. This letter was obviously important for John as he wrote to first century churches who already misunderstood, questioned, and debated the nature of Jesus. John understood that for his readers in the first century after the life of Christ, the person and work of Christ must be clearly understood and appropriated.

That is still the issue. Understanding and appropriating the person and work of Christ is the definition of Christianity.

I hope you are excited to think through this book together. I am!

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER:

1. What issues do you see coming out in this letter?

