

1 John-by Tommy Lee

Chapter 1

This chapter has two profound parts. In vs.1-4, we have the prologue, where John outlines some ideas he will be unpacking throughout the letter. Here we see that the gospel of Jesus was no afterthought; it was *"from the beginning"* (v.1). Having just finished a study in Genesis, we should know that very well. John loves to hammer truth into our hearts and heads with repetition, and it starts right here. Jesus was not a shadowy, mythical figure like the pagan gods; he was a real, historical, physical person, whom they heard, saw, and touched. He came saying *"I am... the life"* (John 14.6), and John affirms that this is true: in Jesus, *"the life was made manifest... the eternal life"* (v.2). And John wants us to enjoy *"fellowship"* (sharing, partnership, a binding together) with him in this life that is found in Jesus (v.3). In vs.5-10, John names two things that will obstruct the joy of that fellowship: **1.** If we continue to live in darkness; mere religious words and feelings are not enough. **2.** If we claim we have no sin; there's no truth in that. The answer? Confess our sins, trusting the blood of Jesus (vs.7,9).

Chapter 2

This chapter is bursting with rich themes; it's difficult to choose what to highlight. But one can't go wrong by exploring the ways in which Jesus is here described... **First**, he is *"Jesus Christ the righteous,"* our *"advocate with the Father"* (v.1). As guilty, condemned sinners we are unworthy and unable to approach God. Someone must speak to the Father on our behalf, as our advocate, and that someone must be in perfect standing with the Father in order to plead for our deliverance from judgment. And that's why Jesus is here called *"the righteous"* instead of something like "the merciful" or "the gracious." His righteousness before God is absolutely necessary to our salvation. God's moral law is not bypassed in our forgiveness. It is fully established and fulfilled in Jesus. **Second**, he is *"the propitiation for our sins"* (v.2). This word means that because of what Jesus did for us, God's wrath against our sins (Romans 1.18) is totally removed, totally appeased, totally turned away. On the cross, God's holy wrath against sin was not ignored; it was absorbed. **Third**, he is both Christ and Son (vs.22,23).

Chapter 3

A big theme stressed throughout 1 John is *"love."* The word appears 46 times in one form or another in the ESV version of 1 John. In such a short epistle, this is something we better not miss. Love is first of all seen in this epistle as the self-giving revelation of God in Christ; for instance in 1 John 4.9,10: *"In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."* But then love is also seen in our response to what God has done for us; for instance in 1 John 4.11: *"Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."* With those two "loves" in mind, consider how John is teaching and applying this theme in 1 John 3, noting verses 1, 10, 11, 14, 16, 17, 18, & 23. In v.11 we see John insisting again that love is the first command, it is *"from the beginning."* It is at the very heart of the Christianity. Love is the reality and love is the test of that reality. *"By this we know love,"* John says—pointing us to Christ (see v.16).

Chapter 4

Here we are, one week away from Christmas, and our reading today starts off with a reflection on how important it is to confess that *"Jesus Christ has come in the flesh"* (v.2). The world has always been filled with people claiming to have a message from God for you, but how can you tell if the "spirit" in that person is true or false? That's John's concern here: *"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world"* (v.1). Being a Christian does not mean being gullible just because someone uses some religious-sounding language. Quite the opposite. There is a test. And the heart of that test is how that message, that person, that "spirit" deals with the incarnation. Because this is the ultimate "message" from God to you: Jesus of Nazareth is God in the flesh (see also John 1.14; 2 John 7). So... *"every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God"* (v.3). And why did Jesus come in the flesh? He came *"to be the propitiation for our sins"* (v.10) and *"to be the Savior of the world"* (v.14)... *"because God is love"* (v.8).

5 - John wrote his gospel *"so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name"*

(John 20.31). He wrote this, his first epistle, so that *"you who believe in the name of the Son of God... may know that you have eternal life"* (1 John 5.13). So, now that we're at the end of this epistle, what have we learned about the assurance that we have eternal life, the assurance of our salvation, the assurance that we are "in" the faith & not out of it? Historically the church has spoken of three "signs" of salvation in our lives, from 1 John. **1. The Theological Sign.** Do you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, the Messiah (or "Christ"), who came in the flesh to save us (1 John 2.22; 4.2, 14-16; 5.1,5,10-13)? **2. The Moral Sign.** Do you repent of your sins, refusing to live in habitual sin but striving to live a righteous life (1 John 1.9-10; 3.6-9,24)? **3. The Church Sign.** Do you love other Christians? Are you generous towards them (1 John 3.14; 4.7-12,21)? These are ***not*** three ways to ***earn*** eternal life; *they are indicators that you have it.* (2.4,6; 4.20; 5.2).

Reflecting on 1 John-

Before moving on to our next book of the Bible (after some Advent / Christmas readings), take some time today to reflect on what we've read in 1 John. Perhaps revisit a favorite chapter or an especially meaningful passage. Or read the beginning chapter(s) again, now that you've read the whole. Or go back to a part of the book that struck you as curious and see if it makes more sense now. Or speed-read the whole thing again, seeking to reinforce its main themes. Or... perhaps you need a catch-up day to finish 1 John before we move forward?

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path." Psalm 119.105