

A Study of the General Epistles

(NT Survey Lesson 205--Introduction to the Epistles of John)

Introduction: The apostle John was a man of loyal devotion to Christ and uncompromising love of truth. Both of these qualities are manifest as he writes the three epistles that bear his name. All of them contain unmistakable marks of a common author, particularly in the vocabulary and themes used in them. The early church accepted these epistles as having been written by John.

Lesson aim: To become familiar in a general way with the later life of John and the main themes in his first epistle.

The Life of John

1. John's mother was named _____ (See Mt. 27:56, Mk. 15:40) and his father was _____ and his brother was _____ (Mt. 4:21).
2. Jesus gave James and John a nickname. What was it? (Mk. 3:17) What might this say about John's personality?
3. John identifies himself in the Gospel of John how? (13:23, 19:26; 21:7,20-24) Why might John have chosen to use this description?
4. What evidence did John offer to prove that he knew the Lord's life intimately? (Jn. 19:35; 1 Jn. 1:1-3)
5. What did Jesus urge John to do for his mother? (Jn. 19:26-27)
6. Let's trace John's activities after Jesus' ascension. What is said about John in each of these passages? (Ac. 3-4; 8:14-15; Gal. 2:9)
7. After the Jerusalem meeting, John's whereabouts are not recorded in the Biblical record. When the book of "Revelation" was written, where was John? (Rev. 1:9).
8. The early church fathers reported that John spent his later life teaching in Ephesus, dying there at about 100 years old. See if you can find any confirmation of this in reference works you may have.

Survey of 1 John

1. To whom was this book written? (5:13) Do we know who specifically they were or where they lived?
2. John states his main and underlying purposes for writing this epistle in several passages. Read these passages and state in your own words what the gist of the book seems to be (1:3-4; 2:12-14, 21, 26, 5:13).
3. John's message centers around two statements about God: God is _____ (1:5) and God is _____ (4:8).
4. John's message centers around two Christian obligations. What are they? (3:23)
5. Many analysts of 1 John have often pointed to the various tests of righteousness John proposes in the form "hereby we know" or "by this we know". Read these and supply the missing complement:

By this we know that we know him, if _____
(2:3).

By this we know that we are in him, if _____
(2:6).

We know we have passed out of death into life, because
_____ (3:14).

We shall know by this that we are of the truth:
_____ (3:18).

We know by this that He abides in us, by
_____ (3:24).

By this you know the Spirit of God:
_____ (4:2-3).

By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error:
_____ (4:6).

By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us,
_____ (4:13).

By this we know that we love the children of God,
when _____ (5:3).

6. John ends his book with several closing assurances. What things does John affirm that we know? (5:18-20).

7. With what warning does John end the book?

(Since the 2nd and 3rd epistles are short, we will not survey them now).