

1 JOHN

This study is centered on the first of three letters written by the Apostle John. John's letters actually make a fitting tie-in to the study of living a Holy life that was incorporated in the Daniel222.com Leviticus study.

For our introductory lesson, although we will be bouncing in and out of several chapters in this book, read 1 John 1:1-10 in preparation for the questions below:

1. What is the purpose John states for writing this letter, and why does he feel this letter is so important to the believers who make up the church? (See 1 John 5:13.)
 - a. ANSWER: There are times in every Christian's life when doubt begins to creep in. We may ask ourselves, "Am I saved?", "Is Jesus the true Messiah?", and so on. John wrote this letter, documenting what he saw and heard while physically with Jesus. He wanted us to know that Jesus is the real Messiah, and he wanted us to know this so "that you may know that you have eternal life." If we have put our faith in Jesus, we can know for certain that death has no grip on us; we can know that we have eternal life through Christ. This is the purpose of John's first letter, his first epistle.
2. What are the two primary focuses of John's first letter? (See 1 John 1:5, 4:8, and 4:16.)
 - a. ANSWER: The two primary principles of John's first epistle are (1) that "God is light," and (2) that "God is love."
3. Read the following verses and list the things that Christians are NOT to do in order to live a Holy life.
 - a. 1 John 2:15
 - i. ANSWER: John instructs us to not "love the world, or anything in the world."
 - b. 1 John 4:1
 - i. ANSWER: John instructs us to "not believe every spirit."
 - c. 1 John 5:21
 - i. ANSWER: John instructs us that we are to "keep yourselves from idols." It's easy to see the connection between this question and Question 2 above. If God is light and God is love, then the fallen dark world and everything in it is not from God, neither are the evil spirits and false prophets who go out into the world to deceive, nor is believing in idols—as there is only one true God. All of these things drive a separation between us and God and keep us from living the life that God has planned for us.
4. Read 1 John 1:1-4 and the Gospel of John 1:1-3. To whom, or to what, is John referring when he refers to the "word of life" and "the life appeared" in these opening verses of his first letter?
 - a. ANSWER 1: In 1 John 1:1-4, John gives us some very personal insight into the life of the Apostles as early disciples of Christ. They lived daily with him, they saw him, heard him, touched him, and so on. John is telling us that Jesus, "the life," appeared physically to them. and John is attesting to that truth.
 - b. ANSWER 2: In John 1:1, John is telling us that Jesus was with God from the beginning—from before anything was made. In John 1:3, we read, "Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."
5. In 1 John 1:1-4, what evidence does John give that Christ is real? (Hint: there are three.)
 - a. ANSWER 1: They heard him.
 - b. ANSWER 2: They saw him.
 - c. ANSWER 3: They touched him.

Can you imagine what it must have been like to live, teach, and travel with Jesus? It is first-hand evidence that Jesus is real, and John wants us to know this—again, so that we may know that we are saved and have eternal life, not death. In 1 John 3:14, John writes, "we know that we have passed from death to life." What a glorious and comforting message, the Gospel, the Good News, is: that despite our sins, by putting our faith in Jesus, we can know that we have eternal life.

Bonus Question:

6. The three claims in 1 John 1:5-10 were also being made by the Gnostics of John's day. However, in addition, they claimed that they knew a higher truth and had a deeper wisdom that went beyond the scriptures. Do we have groups today who believe as the Gnostics did? Can you list a belief that these groups might have today that John's letter is addressing? (For example, it was common in John's day for people to believe that God did not create the earth, because the earth contains evil. Thus the earth could not have been formed by the spoken word of God. Many were led astray by this doctrine. Is this happening today?) See if you can identify some false doctrines and half-truths that are introducing apostasy into today's Church.
- a. ANSWER 1: Even in today's world, there is a belief that one if is truly "saved," then they can live any life that they wish, since Christ has already atoned for all of their sins—past, present, and future. Yet, clearly, this would entail "walking in darkness." God is light, but sin brings darkness into our life, not light. We cannot willingly live in sin, believing that that is okay in God's eyes—but man would like us to think so.
 - b. ANSWER 2: Many also believe that they have not sinned, i.e., that living a "good" life, being kind to their neighbor and so on will get them eternal life in heaven. A close second to this is the thought that God is a scorekeeper; in other words, that a person gets plus points for everything "good" that they do and negative points for everything "bad" they do. Accordingly, at the end of one's life, if the net score is a positive number, then they get into heaven. Of course, they define "good" in their own terms; similarly for the other side of the ledger, it's based on their idea of "bad." Based on this logic, they believe that you can work your way to heaven.
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Have a great week everyone!

In Christ,