

The Apostle John

Introduction:

There is not as much geography to cover when studying the life of John as there is when looking to Paul. John appears to have stayed in Jerusalem working and worshipping with the church there after the death of Jesus (cf. Acts 15:6ff). Later in life, John was known as a “pillar” in the church (Gal. 2:9). He was eventually exiled to the island of Patmos “for the word of God and the testimony of Jesus” (Rev. 1:9). John wrote four books of the Bible (The Gospel of John, I, II, III John, and Revelation). Let us examine the life of this beloved apostle of Jesus Christ and learn valuable spiritual lessons.

I. Why Do a Character Study?

- A. Character studies help motivate us to do those things that we know we are capable of doing yet lack the fortitude at times to do them.
- B. We learn courage (II Cor. 10:10-11).
- C. We learn to rid ourselves of timidity when faced with an opportunity to preach (Phil. 1:12-14).
- D. We learn to view our struggles in life as nothing in comparison to the glories of an eternal heaven (II Cor. 4:16-18).

II. A Look at John’s Life:

- A. The son of Zebadee and Salome (Matt. 27:56; Mk. 1:20; Lk. 5:10).
- B. John had a brother named James (Mark 3:17; Acts 12:2).
- C. John was one of the first disciple of John the Baptist (Jn. 1:35-42).
- D. Jesus called John to be an apostle (Matt. 4:18ff).
- E. After the church was established, John suffered persecution and imprisonment due to the truth he preached (cf. Acts 4:3; 5:17-42; Rev. 1:9).
- F. Came to be known as a pillar in the church (Gal. 2:9).
- G. John apparently served as an elder in the body of Christ (II Jn. 1; III Jn. 1).

III. John, The Disciple whom the Lord Loved (cf. Jn. 13:23; 20:2; 21:7, 20):

- A. John affectionately leaned on the Lord’s breast at the Supper (Jn. 13:23).
- B. One of only three (with Peter and James) whom the Lord allowed to witness His transfiguration (Matt. 17:1ff).
- C. John, Peter, and James again were the only ones called into the house of Jairus when his daughter was raised from the dead by the Lord (Mk. 5:37ff).
- D. These same three were asked to pray with the Lord at Gethsemane on the night in which He was betrayed (Matt. 26:37ff).
- E. Jesus entrusted His mother to John’s care (Jn. 19:26).
- F. John was possibly the only apostle to witness Jesus’ crucifixion (Matt. 26:56).
- G. John was the first to the Lord’s tomb after hearing of His resurrection (Jn. 20:2).

IV. John, One of the “Sons of Thunder:”

- A. Jesus referred to John and James as “*the sons of thunder*” (Mk. 3:17). “This does not mean that John was boisterous in speech, crude of manners or tempestuous in disposition; it was assigned to him because it reflected the **courage** and **conviction**

he felt and his willingness to lay the axe at the root of the tree when duty demanded. Though gentle and kind he was not a weakling and his positive convictions gave him constancy and courage to face up to any situation confronting him. He was a ‘son of thunder’ in teaching the truth, in opposing error, in challenging the enemies of the Lord; qualities and characteristics the Lord approved and appreciated.”¹

- B.** With a spirit of conviction John forbid that a man perform an exorcism in the name of Jesus (possible due to his thinking that Jesus had not authorized the man to do so) (Lk. 9:49ff).
- C.** On another occasion John and James were ready to call down fire from heaven that the village of Samaritans would be consumed for not receiving Jesus as the Christ (Lk. 9:54).
- D.** Determined to come to the brethren of III John and expose the wicked work of Diotrephes (III Jn. 10).
- E.** John’s writing displayed a conviction to expose all who would teach false doctrines (I Jn. 2:26).
- F.** Those who exhibited a love for Jesus and His commands were equally loved by the apostle John (I Jn. 1:4; II Jn. 4; III Jn. 4).

V. Four primary subjects that John focused on in his Writing:

- A.** The deity of Jesus:
 - 1.** Jesus is the Word that was God (Jn. 1:1).
 - 2.** Jesus, as the Word, became flesh (Jn. 1:14, 29-30).
 - 3.** Jesus revealed his deity to the Samaritan woman at Jacob’s well (Jn. 4:26).
 - 4.** Jesus never sinned (Jn. 8:46).
 - 5.** John reveals Jesus’ equality with God at John 5:18
 - 6.** Jesus is the great “I Am” (Jn. 8:58).
 - 7.** John proves the deity of Jesus by quoting from Isa. 6:10 and 53:1 applying the passages to Jesus at John 12.
 - 8.** John records the confessions of Jesus’ deity:
 - a.** Nathanael confessed the deity of Christ (Jn. 1:49).
 - b.** The Samaritans confess the deity of Jesus (Jn. 4:39-42).
 - c.** Martha confesses the deity of Jesus (Jn. 11:27).
 - d.** Thomas confesses the deity of Jesus (Jn. 20:28).
 - e.** Jesus confesses His deity to Philip (Jn. 14:8ff) and to
 - f.** The twelve disciples confess the deity of Jesus in the upper room during the Feast of Passover (Jn. 16:30).
 - g.** John pronounces the deity of Jesus at I Jn. 5:20.
- B.** John teaches on abiding in truth:
 - 1.** The word abide means “stay, stand fast, stay where one is” (LS 498). “Remain, stay – a person or thing remains where he or it is... live, dwell, lodge” (AG 503). John intended his readers to understand that as Christians we are to take up residency in truth and never move away.
 - 2.** The word abide is used 12 times in John 15 and 11 times at I John 2 (consider I Jn. 2:24; II Jn. 9-11).

¹ Guy N. Woods; New Testament Commentaries (The Gospel Advocate Series) pg. 13-14.

C. John teaches on Bible Love:

1. We are to love Jesus by keeping his commandments (Jn. 14:15).
2. We are to love each other (II Jn. 5).
 - a. We are to care for each other's physical and emotional well being (cf. I Jn. 3:17).
 - b. We are to care for each other's spiritual well being as God does for us (cf. I Jn. 4:7-17).

D. John teaches on receiving Eternal Life:

1. The central thought of John's writings may be found in I Jn. 5:13, where he said, "*these things have I written unto you, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God.*"
2. The assurance of eternal life is set forth in John's writings for the faithful. John said, "*And this is the promise which he promised us, even the life eternal*" (I Jn. 2:25).
3. John equated eternal life with faith and faith with obedience (cf. Jn. 20:30-31; I Jn. 2:3-4).

Conclusion:

Secular history tells us that John likely died of old age in the city of Ephesus. The truth of the matter remains unknown. What we do know is revealed in John's four epistles. The apostle's teachings were inspired of Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:5). When John or other apostles teach of heaven, hell, and judgment I can rest assured that it will come to pass.

We learn much from the apostle John. We learn what being filled with conviction, zeal, and hope is all about. We learn to love and defend truth. We learn to love the souls of those who are lost and gain courage to speak out at the opportune times.