

WHY DID HE WRITE IT?

1 John 5:13 - Introductory Message

Intro: This morning I am beginning a series of messages on the First Epistle of John. The writings of the Apostle John in the NT are very important beyond the fact that they make up five books of the Bible. All of the books of the Bible are important, very important, or they would not be in the Bible. But what adds to the importance of the writings of the Apostle John is that they are the last books to make up the completed canon of Scripture.

It is generally believed that the Apostle John wrote five books of the New Testament. They are the Gospel of John, the three epistles of John, and the book of the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The dates given by the scholars who have studied the background of these books, place them between the years 85 and 95 A.D. So this means that they were the last books of the NT to be written.

As far as we know, the Apostle John was the only survivor of the Apostles at the time of his writing. In the Gospel which bears his name, we can see that the Apostle John still held to the basic truths concerning the Person of Christ and the work of Christ. After all of these years, the Apostle John was still in full agreement with Matthew, Mark, and Luke concerning the Deity of Christ, concerning His marvelous teaching and His miraculous works. He believed in the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ. There was no change in the Gospel according to John from what had been written years before in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and the Gospel which was preached by John and other apostles in the book of Acts. John still believed that salvation from sin could only be found in Christ.

All of this was meant to be strengthening to the hearts of believers both in that day, and even down to the present day. The Apostle John had had plenty of time to think over the teachings of Christ, to look at Christ in the light of the OT, and to do other comparisons between the OT and the ministry of Christ. And the result is total agreement in his old age with all that he had learned and had himself preached many years before.

But there are other matters of importance when we read especially the Gospel of John and John's three epistles. The book of the Revelation stands really by itself containing much information, as it does, concerning

1 John - Introductory Message (2)

the end times which had never been revealed before. But what I am referring to has to do with John's teaching about the Gospel and the Christian life.

Again, it seems to be generally agreed among evangelical expositors, that 1 John 5:13 expresses the main reason that the Apostle John had in writing his First Epistle. He wrote especially for those who believed in the Name of the Son of God, that they might know that they had eternal life. The better MSS omit that last part of verse 13, "and that ye may believe on the Name of the Son of God." I am always a little hesitant about changing or deleting anything that has been in the Authorized Text, but I don't know of any changes which have been made in recent translations that alter any of the basic teachings of Scripture. Of course the Apostle John wanted them to continue to believe in the Name of the Son of God, or he never would have written this epistle, so leaving the verse as it is in the AV, or removing it because it is not found in some of the better MSS, the meaning of the verse remains the same.

Evidently the Apostle John was aware of the fact that there was a major problem in the latter days of the first century among believers concerning their assurance of their salvation.

But when we are speaking about any of the books of the Bible, we know something else about these books that is unique to Scripture. And that is the fact that the writers of Scripture not only wrote to meet needs which they were aware of, but they wrote, like the writers of the OT wrote, and as Peter said in his second epistle, "as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). Or, as the Apostle Paul said, "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God . . ." (2 Tim. 3:16). So we can say that the Apostle John wrote 1 John because he saw the need for what he wrote, but that was not the only reason. He wrote because the Holy Spirit moved upon his heart to write, guiding him in the very words that he wrote. That is why it is perfectly correct to say that this was the First Epistle of John, and yet at the same time to say that the First Epistle of John is the Word of God. This means that not only did the Apostle John see the need to write to the believers who first received this letter, but even before the Apostle John was aware of the need, the Lord was aware of it, and it was the Lord Who moved upon the heart of the Apostle John by the Holy Spirit in which this need was addressed. We don't understand how the Lord directed John in writing this epistle, but we know that He did! We don't have to understand how it all came about; we just know that it did,

1 John - Introductory Message (3)

and we believe it. This is one of many places where “we walk by faith, and not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7).

The Bible is the only book that has ever been written by men as they were directed by the Holy Spirit. What I have been describing to you is called by theologians, *verbal inspiration*. This makes the Bible uniquely different from any other book that has ever been written.

But let us think for a moment about the word “written.” We are going to be spending several weeks in this epistle. An epistle is a letter. A letter is something that we write.

Now it might come as a surprise to some of you, but the Apostle John did not speak English, nor did he write in English. He wrote in Greek. What we have is a translation of the Greek text into English. The original text was written by John, and the English translations have been written by others who knew Greek and English. But John’s work and the translators’ works have been “written.” The Holy Spirit directed the Apostle John in writing this epistle so that we would have a permanent record which also has been written. Why? Was it just so we would know about a problem that believers were having at the close of the first century? Well, that was part of the reason. But God has graciously preserved this message for us for another reason: *He knew that believers in every generation would have problems concerning the assurance of their salvation. We not only need to be saved, but we need to know that we are saved, and that once we are saved, we need to know that we will continue to be saved. There is no such thing in the Bible as having salvation, and then losing it. The people who think that they can be saved, and then lose it, don’t really understand what salvation is. It is possible for people to really be saved and yet be fearful that they have lost it, or could lose it. But again their problem is that they are deficient in their understanding of what salvation is. And that is why they are lacking in salvation. If what the Apostle John wrote over two thousand years ago, was written to help people be assured about their salvation, it can be, and will be, helpful for people in every generation from then until now to know that they are saved.*

The question always comes up in studying the various books of the Bible, *To whom was the Apostle writing?* Obviously it was written to people he knew, and not only knew well, but to people he loved and was deeply concerned about. Over and over again, he called them “Beloved.” As an old man, he called them, “little children.” This could have meant that he

1 John - Introductory Message (4)

had been responsible for leading many of them to Christ. Some expositors think that it may have been written to the churches to whom John addressed the book of the Revelation. But that is only a guess. Perhaps it is not addressed to any particular group of believers so that believers in any time-period or nation who believed in the name of the Son of God, would take this epistle as having been written to them. Let me suggest that we read it that way – just like you and I were personally acquainted with the Apostle John, and he had written this letter to us to help us in our walk with the Lord.

But how did he address his readers? He said, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the Name of the Son of God.” My Greek Testament reads this way: “These things I wrote to you in order that you may know that you have eternal life, to you who believe in the name of the Son of God.” The order of the words may be slightly different, but the meaning is the same. The Apostle John was writing to those who “believe in the name of the Son of God.” So he was assuming that, while they were lacking in assurance, they probably were truly saved, they were possessors of eternal life.

How would you define a Christian?

Several years ago I heard of a group of people who were professing Christians, and they were asked to define what a Christian is. And as I remember, not one of the people mentioned Christ. They said things like a Christian is a person who goes to church, or who treats others the way he wants to be treated, or who tells the truth. You know the ways people describe a Christian.

How did the Apostle John describe a Christian? He is one who believes in, or into, the Name of the Son of God. “The Name of the Son of God” is an expression which speaks of all that Jesus professed to be and to do for those who believe, or trust, in Him. A person who believes in the Name of the Son of God, believes all that the Bible teaches about Jesus Christ, and who trust in Him for the gift of eternal life. It is not a faith that is confined to some time in the past, but it is a faith that continues on day after day. To believe in the name of the Son of God is to believe why He came and what He did that those who are dead in their sins might have the gift of eternal life. Such faith produces assurance, and the fact that a person has eternal life is evident in what a person believes and the way he lives, as the Apostle John has explain in this epistle.

1 John - Introductory Message (5)

So assurance is based upon what a person believes about Jesus Christ and what He did to make it possible for us to have eternal life. Eternal life is not what we receive when we die. It is a present possession.

The word “know” is a key word in this First Epistle of John. The Gospel of John is a book that we all need to know and believe. The Apostle John said also in that book why he wrote it. And you will find his purpose in the last two verses of John 20, verses 30 and 31:

30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name (John 20:30-31).

So the Gospel of John is the book of the Bible to get a person to read who is not a Christian. I think that it was Dr. Griffith Thomas, a British Bible teacher who lived in the early part of the twentieth century who said that he had never asked a non-Christian to read the Gospel of John with an open heart, who had not trusted in Christ before they finished reading it.

The First Epistle of John is the book for people to read who have just trusted the Savior, or for people who are saved, but need assurance. This is what 1 John 5:13 tells us.

Now having seen all of this wonderful truth that the Apostle John has given for those of us who believe on the name of the Son of God, now let me call your attention to a couple of verses in chapter 1 which explain what we can expect to experience as we go through this epistle verse by verse. I am thinking especially of verse 3 and 4 of chapter 1, but I will read the first four verses so you can see how qualified the Apostle John was in taking us on our journey through this epistle, and what his purpose is for us. **(Read 1 John 1:1-4.)**

We will consider these verses more in detail next week, the Lord willing, but I want you to see where the Apostle John wants to take us.

The key word here is the word, “fellowship.” The Apostle Paul told the Corinthian church in 1 Corinthians 1:9,

God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

Think of this! This is a description, a Biblical description, of the Christian life. We have been called in our salvation to a personal relationship

1 John - Introductory Message (6)

with God and with the Lord Jesus Christ. And I emphasize, a *personal* relationship. And the more we enter into that relationship, according to 1 John 1:4, the greater will be our joy. It means that God is going to be making Himself known to us. We are going to be learning to know Him, and to know His Son, Jesus Christ. The Word of God will be the basis of that relationship, and the Holy Spirit will be our Teacher. We will see our need of the Lord as we learn of Him, and He will be showing us His sufficiency for the many ways we need Him. We have been saved to be made like the Lord. That is a life-long work that God will do in our hearts as we walk each day in fellowship with Him. God deals with us individually, and all that we experience in this life is designed to make us realize how much we need the Lord. This was John's concern for the people who first received this letter. And it continues to be the Holy Spirit's concern for all of us who read this letter and seek to understand this wonderful fellowship with God into which we have been called.

This is what salvation means – fellowship with God and with His Son, Jesus Christ. As we go through this epistle, let us be praying that we will be submissive to the truth that we will be exposed to and the relationship, the fellowship, that is our with the Members of the Godhead because of the wonderful calling we have. Read 1 John. Pray your way through it. Ask the Lord to make the life described in this epistle illustrated in our lives by His grace, that through us others may be awakened to their need of our Savior.