

Lesson for July 10, 2005

The Book of I John

Chapter 1

Verse 5

“This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you”

Having now defended the doctrine of the Hypostatic Union, John begins to teach the believer how to have fellowship with God in Time. Fellowship with God, and with fellow believers, is possible only because of the Hypostatic Union. The God-Man, Jesus Christ, provided this potential by His substitutionary spiritual death on the Cross. The message that is going to be delivered to the believer is a message that John personally heard declared by the Lord Jesus Christ. (John 8:12, 9:5)

There are three key words in this passage:

- 1) Message – Greek “angelia”, which means to proclaim or to bring a message. In some manuscripts the word in Greek is “epangelia”, which means a promise (epi [upon] + angelia).
- 2) Heard – Greek “akouo”, which means to audibly hear.
- 3) Declare – “anangelo”, which means to bring back tidings or an announcement. One commentator states that “ana” could mean upward or heavenly in characteristic. (John 4:25)

“that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all”

In order to properly understand this statement we must examine the words “light” and “darkness” in the Scriptures. Jesus declared that He is the “Light of the World” and the “Light of Life” in John 8:12. This verse also says that in Christ there dwells no darkness. The analogy of light versus darkness seems obvious. However, without knowing the Biblical meaning of each, an accurate interpretation cannot be reached.

Light in the Bible is used for:

- 1) The glory of God’s dwelling place – I Timothy 6:16
- 2) The nature of God – I John 1:5
- 3) Impartiality of God – James 1:17
- 4) The favor of God – Psalms 4:6
- 5) Jesus Christ as the illuminator of men – John 1:4-5, 9
- 6) The illuminating power of God’s Word – Psalms 119:105
- 7) God’s guidance – Psalms 112:4
- 8) Salvation – I Peter 2:9

The word *light* in Greek is “phos” and metaphorically means “to make evident” or “to make to appear.” Jesus Christ, as the Light of the World, makes God evident and makes Him “appear.” Light, when used to describe God’s nature, denotes the highest quality of character and the absence of any impurity.

With this definition of light and its usage in Scripture, we can see that when “light” is used in reference to God it encompasses the entire character of God (His nature and impartiality) and His work in the life of the believer (His favor, illumination and guidance). It is God’s “light” (we are called “the light of the world”) that is being reproduced in the life of the advancing believer as the character of Jesus Christ. (Matthew 5:14-16; Galatians 5:22-23) And the believer will spend all eternity in the “light.”

Darkness in the Bible is used for:

- 1) Intellectual darkness – Romans 2:19
- 2) A place of punishment – Jude 13; II Peter 2:4
- 3) Moral or spiritual darkness – John 3:19
- 4) Evil works – Romans 13:12-14

The word *darkness* in Greek is “skotia” and metaphorically means “a condition of spiritual or moral depravity.” Therefore, in God is found no spiritual or moral depravity. God’s character is the exact opposite of darkness (a term often used to describe Satan, his cosmic system and man’s sinful nature). (Ephesians 6:12; I Peter 2:9; I John 2:11)

The believer who chooses to reside in God’s power system under the control of the Holy Spirit can avoid intellectual, spiritual and moral darkness. The believer can also avoid the evil works of darkness by residing in God’s power system. And, of course, the believer will avoid the eternal place of punishment (hell). (John 12:35-36; II Corinthians 4:1-6)

Verse 6

“If we say that we have fellowship with Him”

The key word here is “fellowship.” In Greek the word is “koinonia” and means “to have things in common with.” Remember that John is continuing to defend the doctrine of the Hypostatic Union while teaching us how to have a relationship with the Person of Jesus Christ. John has used the contrast of light and darkness to introduce the doctrine of fellowship with God.

Those Gnostics who deny the humanity or the deity of Christ are walking in perpetual spiritual darkness just like the “out of fellowship” believer. The unbelieving Gnostic certainly has nothing in common with God. The believer who is out of fellowship also has nothing in common with God, experientially.

“and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth”

The believer always has the choice to either “walk in the light” or to “walk in darkness.” You cannot walk in darkness and be in fellowship with God at the same time. Therefore, we need to understand what the Bible means by “walking.”

Walking is the Greek word “peripateo” and means “your manner of living.” Walking is a metaphor for the course being pursued by the believer. In God’s power system, walking is an analogy for aligning your experience with your position in Christ, as royal family of God. In other words, the believer is either pursuing a course according to the “light” (God’s power system) or according to the “darkness” (Satan’s cosmic system).

If the believer says he is pursuing a course according to God’s power system and yet he is operating according to Satan’s cosmic system he is lying and out of fellowship with God. “Not doing the truth”, means the believer is not doing what the truth teaches him to do. The truth, “aletheia” in Greek, means any body of truth that is believed. Bible doctrine (truth) teaches the believer how to think divine viewpoint and how “to do” divine production. This is possible only when the believer is in fellowship with God.

Verse 7

“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light”

We have already seen that “walk” is a metaphor for aligning your life with the royalty that you are in Christ. We have also seen that “light” is a metaphor for God’s perfect character, personified in the person of Christ. Therefore, walking in the light can be easily understood as aligning your life through correct thinking with the character of God, as the character of Christ is being produced in you. The believer cannot think correctly, as God would have him think, without the persistent and consistent intake and application of Bible doctrine. We know this can be accomplished only under the guidance of God the Holy Spirit.

“we have fellowship with one another”

We have also found out that fellowship means “to have things in common with.” Contrary to popular belief, true Christian fellowship is not a social function. True Christian fellowship is centered in learning God’s Word together under our right pastor-teacher. What we have in common is salvation and a positive mental attitude toward accurate Bible doctrine.

“and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son”

The blood of Christ is a technical, theological and symbolic word for divine judgment. Jesus Christ did not bleed to death on the Cross, nor was His physical blood the payment for our sin. When the Lord Jesus Christ was on the Cross He made a statement that should be clear to anyone that He was alive when He paid for our sin. Jesus said, “It is finished.” The work of salvation had been accomplished and then He dismissed His spirit and died physically. It was the spiritual death of Christ that is the payment for sin, not His physical death.

Having said that, I must point out that the physical death of Christ and His resurrection from the dead are both part of the salvation work of Christ. Christ died physically in fulfillment of prophecy so that He could conquer death by the Resurrection and give the believer hope (confidence) of our future resurrection.

All of the animal sacrifices in the Old Testament pointed to Christ and the judgment that He would face as our Sin-bearer. As the priest laid his hand upon the animal, the sin of the believer was symbolically transferred to the animal and the animal was killed as the payment for the believer’s sin. It was the blood of the animal that symbolized God’s judgment, a symbol of the judgment that was poured out upon Christ when the sins of the world were imputed to Him and judged.

“cleanses us from all sin”

A better translation of this verse is that His blood “keeps on purifying (Greek “katharizo”) us from all sin.” What this verse is teaching is that the basis for forgiveness is and always will be “the blood of Christ” (Christ’s substitutionary spiritual death).