

In search of...



Truth & Right

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The Apostle John

Sometimes we today get into the habit of thinking about people mentioned in the Bible as characters in a story rather than historical people who lived just like us. Because of this shortsighted practice, it is good to look back at what we know of their lives and think about what it must have been like.

Here is what Foxe's Book of Martyrs says about the apostle John:

The "beloved disciple," was brother to James the Great. The

churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea, and Thyatira, were founded by him. From Ephesus he was ordered to be sent to Rome, where it is affirmed he was cast into a cauldron of boiling oil. He escaped by miracle, without injury. Domitian afterwards banished him to the Isle of Patmos, where he wrote the Book of Revelation. Nerva, the successor of Domitian, recalled him. He was the only apostle who escaped a violent death.

Such a brief summary of course could never come close to really describing to us what his life was like, or his perspective on faith. But pause for a moment and take all of that in. This man followed Jesus while He was here on Earth and saw the signs and wonders that Jesus performed as well as hearing all that the Lord taught! In addition, bear in mind that John was part of "the inner circle," the three that Jesus spent the most time with, along with Peter and James. This means he was present at Christ's transfiguration (Matt. 17), when Jesus raised the ruler of the synagogue's daughter (Mark 5), and in the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14). And furthermore, he was entrusted with taking care of Jesus' mother, Mary, during the crucifixion! Talk about close & personal!

He afterwards went on to, inspired by the Holy Spirit, detail an account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus, what we have today as the book of John. What is perhaps most interesting about John's account when comparing it to the other three is that John directly says why this was recorded for future generations in John 20:30-31, "Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are

written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

That final statement used to close out the book just goes to show the simplicity of the message of the gospel. I can never say enough about God's plan of salvation, and how our faith must be living & active, and we must be moved by godly sorrow to repentance, but in the end what John said says it better than I ever could. This from a man who could do nothing while his own brother was murdered (remember that James was the second martyr, right after Stephen) and saw so many of his fellow Christians die for the cause of Christ.

Bear in mind that John was by no means a perfect individual. In fact, we see in Mark 10 where he and James asked for preeminence among the disciples. "And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came up to Him and said to Him, 'Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.' And He said to them, 'What do you want me to do for you?' And they said to Him, 'Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.'" (Mark 10:35-37) This was before everything was made known to them on the Day of Pentecost, so they did not yet understand how the kingdom would work. They

were thinking in human terms.

John did not just write an account of the life of Christ, though, he also wrote three letters to the early Church. These writings, inspired by God, dealt with a number of different issues confronting the saints, including temptations, false teachers, doubts, and divisive people, but beyond all else in his letters John wrote about love. He wrote about the fact that God is love, about the love we are to have for God, and about the love we are to have for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ.

"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love. In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us." (1 John 4:7-12)

History tells us that after trying to execute him, the Romans exiled John to the Isle of Patmos. It was here that he was given a vision, a revelation

from God of prophecy and instructions for the Church. He was told to write all of it down and send it to seven churches in Asia Minor. The prophecies had to do with both the severe persecution that Christians were facing at the time, the coming fall of the Roman Empire and end of its persecutions, and of the coming judgment after this life are over. It ends with a dire warning not to add to or take away from the words spoken within (Rev. 22:18-19), a message more today need to wake up and pay attention to!

Yet history tells us that John did not die on Patmos. He was allowed to be brought back to Ephesus, and died there of old age around the year 100. Imagine being the only apostle of Jesus not dying a painful death for the cause of Christ! Imagine after all that he had seen, both good and bad (remember, apostasy had started in a big way by the end of the first century), how much he desired to leave this life behind and be at rest.

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Romans Six

I I X C I V X F C O N T I N U E R S Q D
G G L J U S W Y A L I V E V E M Y I N F
C B O E K H H O J F B X M L U H Q Y O S
E G B F J T Y P M E P M D D I Y J K O L
F I I B M L S R L J M E V Y L M C D N O
M J R Q Z I A E T C F F O Z N Z N X N M
J V R F Q H Q S F B I C R E X Q P G G I
R R L H R V G E F O K Q G Z C W K E K O
U U R N U B Y N Q V R Z X G I G H O Z R
I B B T K Z M T E D M H G Z B W C V W S
X E T N D E K Q K H J N S N K C E N G T
G X C Y S T Z B U M O U R E W X D D R C
T V G E S M S X Y X L H F W W J A T A R
K U X B S E R O B E D I E N T D X Q C U
X F K I B T J W I R M I G E S N F R E C
L X V T E E P X R J W Q B S X R B L F I
W C C Y A R I G H T E O U S N E S S G F
H B R S C N H U A R E D O M I N I O N I
E O U D L A L G B B C N X U B M X C A E
N V U N J L E P D L F D B D Y M P Z O D
V D H G L N T S S Q R B U R I E D I Z B

- We are not to continue in sin that grace may abound (vs. 1)
- Christians have been buried with Jesus by baptism (vs. 4)
- This is so we might walk in newness of life (vs. 4)
- That done, our old self was crucified with him (vs. 6)
- Christ is raised; death has no dominion over him (vs. 9)
- We must consider ourselves dead to sin and alive to God (vs. 11)
- Do not present your members as instruments for sin (13)
- Today we are not under law but under grace (vs. 14)
- We are obedient slaves of what we choose (vs. 16)
- Let us be slaves of righteousness leading to sanctification (vs. 19)
- The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus (vs. 23)