

1John 2:7-17 – Walking in the Light

1. Missing the Point

John's first epistle is like that picture.

There's all sorts of details, but how do you see the forest from the trees?

For example, the strange wonders in John's letter:

- Funny addresses throughout the letter – Dear children, Beloved, My little children,
- Imperative commands at odd places – “Do not love the world”
- A poem chucked into the middle of the letter?
- Where is the introduction? Where is the purpose statement? Where is the body of the letter?
- Who is the mysterious group that ‘went out’ from us?

Well, before I get to answer these questions...

For centuries scholars have postulated that John's letter was about a huge division of the nature of Jesus' incarnation...

That heresy had crept into the early church about the nature of Jesus coming down to earth.

But now a scholar has come along and flipped the picture the right way up...

Rather than seeing the incarnation in the foreground, this scholar put it in the background.

And rather than seeing the resurrection in the background, this scholar put the resur'n in front.

So, the key theme in 1John is this – the resurrection demonstrates that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ.

That within the realm of Judaism – this new offshoot – called the way is actually THE way.

This new offshoot – is actually the true Messiah that all Jews must follow.

Rather than John being anti-Jew as many have argued,

John is seeking to persuade Jews that Jesus is the Messiah, and therefore following him is the only path, and rejecting him is tantamount to rejecting God.

Now, the key to unlocking 1John is probably the last place we'd look,

2. The Resurrection Reality – You Know Him (The Poem - vv. 12-14)

The resurrection reality is found in the little poem in vv. 12-14. << read vv. 12-14 – 2 slides>>

The Manner – Continuous tense (“I am writing to you” - vv. 12-13)
vs. Timeless Tense (“I write to you” - v. 14)

Firstly, notice the manner of the poem.

There is repetition of “Fathers”, “little children”, and “young men” << intimate rel’nshp>>
And there is the repetition of the verb “I write”.

In vv. 12-13, it is the continuous, ongoing tense, but in v. 14 – it is a timeless tense.

Why is this important? This is the little bit of thread that starts to untangle the whole letter.

Because this change in tense actually splits the whole of 1John into two parts.

That is, 1John 1:1-2:13 form the first section, where John uses only the tense “I am writing”
And 1John 2:14-5:21 form the second section, where John uses only the tense “I write”.

That is, this poem is the hinge between the two sections of 1John.

On one side of the hinge is everything that John says in 1:1-2:11

On the other side of the hinge is everything that John says in 2:15-5:21.

Again, you may ask why is this so important?

Well, the hinge summarizes what John has said in the first section,

AND also summarizes what John will say in the second section.

This is the executive summary in John’s letter – it shapes what will happen in the future,

It reminds us of what happened in the past.

And so, actually, this poem summarizes the core of John’s letter.

So what does it contain? What is the heart of John’s message?

The Matter

Four points that summarize the matter.

i) Knowing the Father and the Son

Firstly, ***the resurrection reality is that we know the Father and the Son.***

v. 14 – “I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning”.

- Different to John 1:1 “in the beginning” vs. ‘from the beginning’ to describe Jesus.

God revealed himself to us, in Jesus, when Jesus walked the face of the planet,

And more importantly, God revealed himself to the disciples when Jesus rose from the dead.

Therefore, it is because of this resurrection reality that we know Jesus, and we know God.

ii) Your sins are forgiven

Secondly, it is because of this resurrected Jesus that our sins are forgiven.

v. 12 - “your sins are forgiven for his name's sake” << Aside 1John 1:9-10 >>

More, ch 2:1-2 – Jesus is our advocate who died for our sins.

Jesus propitiated for us – he turned aside the just anger of God.

iii) The Word of God abides in You

Therefore, because our sins are forgiven, and because we know the Father and the Son,

Thirdly, the word of God abides in you.

v. 14 – “because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you”.

- their strength comes from the word of God remaining, not their own might.

iv) You have overcome the evil one

And therefore, fourthly, you have overcome the evil one.

Twice in vv. 13, and 14, John says “young people, ... you have overcome the evil one” - <joke – twice>

That is, because we know the Father, and the Son,

Because our sins have been forgiven,

Because we have God’s word abiding in us,

We have overcome the evil one.

The devil is a toothless tiger – he looks scary, but all he can do is give us a bad gumming.

Now, this doesn’t mean that we will lead a sin-less life now.

This doesn’t mean that we will no longer struggle with sin.

This doesn’t mean we live some kind of spiritually triumphalistic life,

Ignoring the fact that we still live in a sinful and broken world.

John knows this.

In fact, the rest of 1John – Chs. 2-5 will deal with how we should live in this world as God’s people.

4. Relating to the World– Do not love the world (The Imperative -vv. 15-17)

And so, we move onto to the issue of the church in relationship to the world. << vv. 15-17 >>

The Manner – The world is passing way (v. 17)

Firstly, notice the manner of the world – the world is passing away.

Now, this is more specific than just the created order that is passing away,

The world is, in John’s writings is the created order that stands in rebellion against God.

The world, bound by sin, decay and death is passing away.

The Matter (vv. 15-16)

More specifically, John lines up three aspects of this world which is passing away?

i) The desires of the flesh

v. 16 – First is the desires of the flesh.

The desires of the flesh are not limited to our sensual desires, although it includes them.

Rather, the desires of the flesh are the inherent sinful desires that are part of our spiritual DNA.

Furthermore, the desires of the flesh also contrast to the desires of the Spirit.

ii) The desires of the eyes

Second, the desires of the eyes,

On one level, *our eyes desire*, we live in a visual culture,

and so we understand the destruction that can be wreaked with our eyes,
from eye-candy in trashy mags, to porn on the internet.

But on a deeper level, the Jewish understanding of eyes,

Eyes are about, not what goes into them, but what comes out of them.

What our heart desires, is what our eyes reveal our intent to be.

Therefore our eyes are intimately connected to the desires of the flesh.

iii) Pride in Possessions

Finally, there is pride in possessions.

Now, this phrase could mean – pride that generated out of possessions.

For example – “wow, when I look my possessions, I’ve made it

- House, tick, car, tick, weekender, tick, i-phone tick, latest fashion tick’
- Wow look at all I’ve got, I’m pretty good.

Or it could mean – pride that is actually in the possessions that you have.

- For example – ‘I just bought the latest model ... and I’m so proud of it’.

This is pride in possessions.

5. Walking in the Light

To finish then.

During Eastertide, we focus on the risen Lord Jesus.

And the lectionary, has very helpfully mapped out 1John so that we read the letter during Eastertide.

Why is this so helpful for us?

Because John's first letter connects the Risen Lord Jesus to living in the world,

Connects the resurrected Messiah to living as God's people, relating to God, each other and the world.

So, as we read through 1John we should be asking the question - how do we walk in the light?

How do we continue in fellowship with the Father and the Son

How do we love those inside the church and outside the church?

And how do we relate to the world around us.

The application for today:

The risen Lord Jesus reshapes our desires so that we no longer desire the things of this world.

For there is no greater desire we have than knowing God and being known by him.

The risen Lord Jesus reshapes the way we view the world so that we no longer desire with our eyes.

For there is no greater desire than in our eyes than seeing the risen Lord Jesus.

The risen Lord Jesus reshapes our pride in possessions,

For there is no greater possession than the word of God abiding in us.

Let's pray that we'd continue to walk in the light of the Risen Lord Jesus.