

BIBLE CHALLENGE

A 1 week study of the books of 1 Peter, 1 and 2 John

The story so far: Readings this week are from 1 Peter and 1 and 2 John. The author of 1 John does not explicitly identify himself, but tradition has associated the letter with the author of the Gospel of John because of similarities in language and emphasis. The author of 2 John (also 3 John) identifies himself as “the elder”, but again, tradition has often held that, because of similarities in features, the author of 2 and 3 John is either the same person, or comes from the same set of followers, as the author of the Gospel of John and 1 John.

Monday:

Read: 1 Peter 1:1-9, 13-21, 2:4-12, 21

What to look for:

- Peter recognizes early on (1:6) that his readers have been suffering for their faith, so his desire to offer encouragement and a way through the pain also appears early. Their hope lies in the fact that they have been given a new birth (1:3)
- One of Peter’s favorite themes is the idea of not allowing ourselves to be conformed to the norms of our social group, but instead to live a life that is consistent with Jesus. Peter addresses that theme in 1:13-16.
- We are set apart, which is what forms our identity (2:9-10). That is also the basis for the way we live our lives (2:21), by following Jesus’ example.

Tuesday:

Read 1 Peter 4:1-19, 5:6-11

What to look for:

- People suffer for any number of reasons. Suffering in itself has no value. Enduring suffering for Jesus’ sake is where value in suffering can be found. (4:12-14). But Peter also advocates, not just enduring suffering, but resisting the evil that gives rise to it (5:9). Resisting evil, standing over against it, both in terms of the evil that is in us as well as the evil that is inflicted upon us, is the calling of all Christians.

Wednesday:

Read: 1 John 1:1-2:6

What to look for:

- 2:19 give a hint as to why John is writing – there has been division in the congregation which have led to a split and some people leaving the church. One of the issues seems to be centered on what exactly they believed about who Jesus is. Into

this situation, John is proclaiming the gospel once again. (1:3)
John begins by claiming to be an eyewitness, one who has touched Jesus for himself. This is important because some are arguing that Jesus wasn't really human. But if Jesus wasn't really and fully a human being, how could John have seen and touched him?

- One of the reasons that John feels it is necessary to proclaim the "realness" of Jesus is because if Jesus were nothing more than a spirit, but not a real human being, then his death would have meant nothing. (1:8-2:2)

Thursday:

Read: 1 John 3:1-4:3a, 19-21

What to look for:

- Acknowledging the full humanity, as well as the full divinity of Jesus is important because if God didn't actually come in the flesh in Jesus, then his love would be a sham, and then what would it mean for us to love others? When we love others we do so in tangible, concrete ways, just as God loved us by becoming one of us. (1 John 3:16) There is a connection between the love that God gives us and the love that we give to others (4:20).
- 4:2-3 is the key to the letter. Is Jesus some spiritualized divine being that pokes around in human affairs and disguises himself as a human, or is Jesus actual humanity important? John says Jesus' humanity is very important, because if Jesus wasn't human then he didn't actually die, and then how could we be made right with God?

Friday:

Read 2 John

What to look for:

- Once again, as is so often the case in writings attributed to John, loving one another takes center stage. We're also warned to beware of those who would deceive, to examine ourselves, and to guard the doctrine of Christ.