



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

LAST MAN STANDING!
COLORADO JANUARY 16, 2018

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We will begin our 2018 year with a study on the book of 1 John. John is the last surviving disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ. He writes some 60 years after Jesus Christ had risen from the dead and then ascended into heaven. Paul had long since been executed in the city of Rome for his faith in Christ.

John's fiery brother James was the first disciple of Jesus to be executed for the Christian faith. Peter would follow asking to be crucified upside down on a cross because he was unworthy to die as his Lord. Andrew, another disciple of Christ took the gospel message to western Greece and was martyred for the faith by hanging on a cross; tied not nailed. He hung there for two days before he died. And in those two days, he proclaimed the gospel to all those who passed by, never wanting to miss an opportunity to share about his Lord and Savior. Philip was scourged and crucified because he preached Christ.

Thomas preached the good news in Greece and India and was run through with a spear for his faith. Mark (John Mark) had a rope put around his neck and he was dragged to death, because of his faith in Jesus Christ. Matthew took the gospel to Ethiopia and was martyred, stabbed because he preached Christ. Bartholomew preached in India and was crucified, skinned alive and then beheaded. But that would not stop the spread of the only message that could ever save a soul. James the son of Alphaeus lived to the age of 94 when he was beaten and stoned. Even as an old man they couldn't silence his faithful voice. Thaddaeus was crucified and Simon the Zealot took the good news to Africa and then England. Simon was crucified in the end for his unrelenting faith in Jesus. All were martyred because they were compelled to share the only salvation message for the world...even though it would cost them their life. And John was the last man standing of Jesus' twelve disciples. In this study we will take a look at his life as he writes to leave the next generation with the truth of the only lifesaving gospel of Jesus Christ.

It cost all to follow Christ! And we are the beneficiaries of their sacrifice if we know Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Is this a cost you are willing to pay that others might come to know the only truth that saves and offers eternal life?

I. JOHN...THE DISCIPLE OF JESUS CHRIST!

John and his older brother James were the sons of Zebedee a prosperous fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. They lived to fish, but that would soon change. It is thought that John was a disciple of John the Baptist from John 1:35-40. When John the Baptist pointed to Jesus Christ as the Messiah, John left and followed Him. John would return to fishing with his father but not for long. Soon after, Jesus was walking by the Sea of

Galilee and He was preaching the gospel of God. (Mark 1:14-20) Jesus came upon Peter and Andrew who were fishing. He called them to follow Him and they immediately left their nets. Walking on from there, Jesus saw two other brothers fishing, James and John. He called them and immediately they left their boat and their father to follow Jesus Christ for the rest of their lives. (Matthew 4:18-22)

Now, you may think of John as meek and mild. But was he? In Mark's Gospel, it is recorded that Jesus gave James and John the nick name "Sons of Thunder"! (Mark 3:17) We must understand, these two had quite a fiery temperament! They were hardworking, outgoing, highly charged, bold and assertive. When a Samaritan village refused to receive Jesus, it was James and John who responded with indignation, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luke 9:54) To which Jesus rebuked them. This same arrogant and assertive attitude is exposed in Luke 9:49 when John told Jesus, "Master, we saw someone casting out demons in Your name; and we tried to hinder him because he does not follow along with us." Thinking to be commended by Jesus, John was once again reproved. But Jesus Christ would transform John over these three years and John would never be the same.

John was part of the inner group of the twelve; it was Peter, James and John. (Mark 5:37, Mark 13:3, Matthew 17:1) It was Peter, James and John who were summoned to go up the mountain and witness the transfiguration of Christ, with Moses and Elijah appearing to them as well. They witnessed the glory of God in Christ with the voice of God saying, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him." (Matthew 17:1-8) Following this incredible experience, they were on their way to Capernaum with the rest of the disciples and what were James and John discussing? They were talking about which one of them was the greatest. Again they were rebuked by Jesus for their self-ambition and instructed that they must be servants of all and reminded that the last shall be first. Would they ever learn?

Evidence of a true transformation is revealed by the way John wrote in his Gospel account. John never used his name to refer to himself. When Jesus was on the cross, He looked down at His mother. Standing by Mary was the "disciple whom He loved" referring to John and Jesus asked John to take care of his mother. (John 19:25-27) This was how John always

BIBLE STUDIES

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JOHN...THE LAST MAN STANDING!

referred to himself in his Gospel... *as the disciple whom Jesus loved.* It was as though any opportunity to refer to himself was a chance to celebrate his intimacy with Christ.

Indeed, John's pride was changed to humility as he recognized the great love his Lord and Savior had for him as a sinner, willing to die for him on the cross to pay for his sin. His character was transformed by Jesus as a fisherman to a fisher of men. He was an eye witness to Christ's death and resurrection. It was Peter and John who raced to the tomb, with the younger John arriving first to find it empty. Their Lord had risen from the grave just as He said! (John 20)

John was transformed by God. His zeal for the Lord, his love for Christ and his passion for the truth of the gospel only grew. His life would never be the same.

II. JOHN...THE APOSTLE OF JESUS CHRIST!

After Jesus ascended into heaven, the apostles planted the gospel seeds in many churches around the world. They invested their lives in Christ's great commission given at the time of His departure. *"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:19-20) Jesus warned His disciples of the persecution that would come because of their faith in Him. The world would hate them because they hated Christ. John wrote about this in John 15-16 and how Jesus would send the Holy Spirit as their Helper.

Right after Pentecost, the disciples were preaching the gospel and many were being saved. The religious leaders who put Christ to death, wanted to silence His disciples as well. So as the church was established, John remained in Jerusalem becoming, along with Peter and James, one of three pillars of the church. (Galatians 2:9) John would eventually go to Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) where Paul had spent three years establishing churches in this capital city and surrounding region. John went to nourish and strengthen the churches in their faith. You will recall Timothy also served in the Ephesus church as well, left there by Paul in AD 64.

These churches were a light shining in a very dark world, filled with every religion and philosophy of the day along with immorality of every kind. False teaching and heresy began to infiltrate the church just as Paul had warned the leaders in Ephesus in Acts 20:29-30 *"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know after*

my departure savage wolves will come in among you not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things to draw away the disciples after them."

So John took up his pen in the latter part of the century, around 80-90 AD, writing his eyewitness account in the Gospel of John as an older man. He remained overwhelmed with the reality that he had been a beloved companion of Jesus Christ and loved so dearly by Him. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, John writes his Gospel with the purpose *"that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name."* (John 20:31) He wanted all to know the truth about the Savior of the world Who had come so they might believe.

Following his Gospel account, John would write the Epistles of 1-3 John around 90-95 AD. You might remember that by this time Titus had come down to Israel, destroying Jerusalem, ravishing Jewish towns with the slaughtering arm of Rome in 70 AD. The churches were persecuted and the seeds of compromise, sin and deception were creeping in along with a confusion about the truth. John clearly saw the dangers for believers under his care. So, he again takes up his pen writing these Epistles, as an eyewitness to assure believers of their faith in Christ. Though old, he was still a fiery proclaimer of Jesus Christ yet with a sincere love for believers. Unwavering in his faith with a concern for the church, John writes his authoritative Epistles with simple words and clear certainties regarding the truth to assure them in their faith. For good reason, John was called a living and abiding voice for God.

Because of his preaching and teaching, around 95 AD, John was persecuted and exiled to the Island of Patmos under the cruel reign of Domitian. John would have been maybe 90-95 years of age at this time. But it was there that the Lord Jesus gave him the book of Revelation to record. This portion of Scripture would encourage a very discouraged apostle and a disheartened, compromising church; offering hope for the future return of Christ and the perseverance of believers.

Before John died, he was able to return to Ephesus finishing his days there in service to the Lord. He remained as the last disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ standing, living to almost 100 AD. He was the disciple whom Jesus loved. He remained faithful and was always overwhelmed by the love His Lord had for him. He stayed on task, preparing the next generation to carry the torch for the gospel of Jesus Christ. This is the writer of the Gospel of John, 1-3 John and Revelation!