

“GOD IS LIGHT”

1Jno.1:5

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. V.5 is so characteristic of John’s style of writing – a brief statement put in short, forceful words and figurative language, stating the thought positively, then negatively, and using one of his favorite terms to identify God: “light.”
2. 1Jno.1:1-3 introduced us to “the Word of life’
 - a. The life eternally existent: “That which was from the beginning,” vv.1,2.
 - b. The life that was manifested in time: “the life...that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us,” v.2.
 - c. That eternal life manifested unto men (the apostles and others) was personally verified by John and the other apostles of Christ; “we have heard, seen, looked upon, and our own hands have handled,” vv.1,2.
 - d. That eternal life so manifested and personally verified was authoritatively declared: “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you,” vv.2,3.
 - e. Through this apostolic declaration of the Incarnate Christ you may have fellowship with both the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ, v.3.
3. Thus John has declared the reality of Incarnation, the reality of the Incarnate Christ, of God in the flesh; that the eternal Word of life has become flesh, giving a concrete revelation of the Father and enabling men to enter into spiritual fellowship with the Father and with the Son.
4. John has captured the attention of his readers in Vv.1-3 by plain, bold, captivating statements concerning the Incarnate Christ.
5. He continues to captivate and hold their attention by these forceful words of v.5: “This then is the message which we have heard from him...”
6. His statement is somewhat like the “Verily, verily, I say unto you” statements of Jesus, which John’s Gospel alone records.
7. Without a doubt, the implication is: This message is worthy of note!
8. Thus we begin a study of the message John had heard and was declaring unto his readers, v.5.

II. DISCUSSION

A. WHOM DID THE MESSAGE CONCERN?

1. “God,” i.e., God, the Father.
 - a. This brief, comprehensive message announcing something about the nature of the invisible Father is a personal revelation by the Incarnate Christ, and not a discovery by mere men; it’s a revelation.
 - b. We can know something of God by reasoning upward from the works of nature. For nature speaks of God as to his glory, his eternal power and Godhead, Psa.19:1; Ac.14:15-17; Rom.1:19,20
 - (1) The works of nature are a manifestation of God.
 - (2) But a very limited one; not a full, nor a clear one.
 - (3) Through nature we can know neither the true nature, nor the mind or will of God.
 - c. What we need and want is a testimony direct from God, as to Who he is, as to his thoughts toward us his creatures, and as to his will or plan for us; and here it is, as revealed to us by his Only Begotten Son who hath declared him. (Jno.1;18)

B. WHAT DOES THIS BRIEF, LIMITED, BUT COMPREHENSIVE MESSAGE TELL US ABOUT GOD?

1. Positively: “God is light”
 - a. Physically, light is the *splendor* in which all else is revealed.
 - b. Intellectually, light is *knowledge* and knowledge is *power*.
 - c. Morally, light is the emblem of *truth, purity, holiness*.
 - d. God is light by nature and character.
 - (1) He is not merely *the* light, nor *a* light.
 - (2) He *is* light; such is his essence.
 - (3) This says that God is omniscient – portraying to us his all-seeing, all-searching, knowledge. Cf. Psa.139:1-16.
 - (4) He cannot be deceived. Cf. Gal.6:7,8.
 - (5) Matters and mind are alike plain to his perception.
 - (6) Our motives, feelings and purposes are as obvious or as easily perceived by him as are our bodies.
 - e. God is pre-eminently “the Holy One” who alone possesses intelligence, knowledge, power, purity, and holiness without limitation.
 - (1) How blind are they who do not see or recognize this about God!

- (2) How foolish those who refuse to recognize him as such!
- f. Light is frequently associated with the Divine Being in the Bible.
 - (1) It is his vesture, or clothing, Psa.104:2: “Who (Thou, ASV) coverest thyself with light as with a garment.”
 - (2) It abides with him, Dan.2:22: “The light dwelleth with him.”
 - (3) It accompanies his manifestation, Hab.3:4: “His brightness was as the light.”
 - (4) He is the great Source of all illuminations, Jas.1:17: “The Father of lights.”
- 2. Negatively, of God, John says: “And in him is no darkness at all.”
 - a. Not the least speck; no kind of darkness whatever has any place in him; neither ignorance, nor error, nor sin, nor death is found in him. For he is absolutely pure and infinitely wise.
 - b. The opposite of light is darkness. And darkness in John’s writings is a figure of ignorance, superstition, sin and or moral evil, symbolizing everything that life should not be and everything a person should not do.
 - (1) Therefore to love darkness and to walk in darkness (as some were doing at that time according to v.6) is to love and to walk in sin and evil.
 - (2) 1Jno.2:15-17; Jas.4:4; 2cor.6:14-7:1; Jas.1:21; 1Cor.6:9,10 Gal.5:19-21; 1Pet.1:14-16.
 - c. To say then that God is light is to say that God is the opposite to all evil or sin: there is no sin or evil in either his nature or his practice.
 - d. John sets God’s moral perfection over against moral darkness, meaning not simply freedom from moral evil but also active opposition to all sin and evil; he is positively set against sin and evil!
 - e. God’s opposition to sin, however, means and involves his redemptive grace through his Only Begotten Son, the Incarnate Christ, by means of the gospel of Christ, the power of God unto salvation, but not redemptive grace to the exclusion of punitive justice.
 - f. God opposes sin by punishing the impenitent sinner, and by redeeming from sin the obedient believer.
 - g. Because of God’s opposition to sin and his redeeming grace, the Son of God came to seek and to save that which was lost

(Lk.19:10), and to destroy the words of the devil (1Jno.3:8; Heb.2:14-18).

3. To reveal this about God also contrasts him with and sets him apart from the heathen deities, the worship of which promoted immorality, ungodliness, and gross sin among their worshippers. (Cf. apostate Israel in the O.T. and the practice of the heathen priestesses at Corinth in the heathen temples)
4. Though there is much darkness in the world of Satan and of men, “darkness in God there is none whatever” – (emphatic in the Greek) – “no, not even one tiny particle.” There is no discoloration, no admixture of darkness in the pure light which streams from the character of God. Cf. Jas.1:17.
 - a. The devil and his agents are styled “the rulers of the darkness of this world,” or “the world rulers of this darkness,” Eph.6:12.
 - b. Their domain is called “the power (authority, dominion) of darkness (spiritual darkness or ignorance),” Col.1:13.
 - c. Those formerly involved in the practices of heathenism were said to have been “sometimes (or once) darkness,” “but now,” as the result of their conversion to Christ, “are ye light in the Lord” and are urged to “walk as children of light,” Eph.5:8.
 - d. In Col.1:12, Paul gave thanks to God, “Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.”
5. Perhaps we can’t even begin to sum up what this message revealed to John says about God in three words!

C. FROM WHOM DID THIS MESSAGE ABOUT GOD COME?

1. “The message which we have heard of (“from”, ASV) him”
 - a. That is, from the One identified in vv.1-3 – “the Word of life... that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us; that which we have seen and heard,” the One we declare unto you as Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, vv.1-3.
 - b. This message concerning the Father in heaven was brought directly to man by the greatest Messenger of all time, even greater than Moses, God’s great law-giver; it’s from the One who came from heaven to be God’s authoritative spokesman in this the final dispensation of time on earth, Jno.1:18; Heb.1:1-3 (Heb.3:3-6); Mt.3:16,17; 17:1-5; Deut.18:18,19; Ac.3:19-23; Heb.2:1-3; 12:25.

- c. Obviously, the value of any message depends on the Person who brings it and from whence it comes.
 - (1) The importance and value of this message can't be denied with any degree of reasonableness because of this One who brought it and from whence he came. Cf. Jno.1:1-4,14, 17.
 - (2) This is the distinctive assertion of Christianity.
 - (3) It is made, not doubtfully; not apologetically; not without ample authority; but categorically, positively, and authoritatively, for the whole-hearted acceptance and salvation of man.

D. HOW DID AND HOW DOES THIS MESSAGE REACH US?

1. "...this is the message which we have heard from him, and declare (announce, ASV) unto you." Cf. Lk.1:1,2; Heb.2:1-3; Jno.14:26; 15:26,27; 16:7,13-15; 17:8,20,21; 20:19-23; Lk.24:44-49.
 - a. See Ac.1:1-8; 2:1-4,14-41; 9:15,16; 26:9-20; Rom.15:15,16.
 - b. Gal.1:6-12; Eph.3:1-5; Col.1:5,6; Mk.16:15,16; Rom.1:16,17; 1Cor.15:1,2.
2. The Incarnate Christ asserted and proved his claims to be the Son of God, the Savior of the world:
 - a. While on earth, he proved it by the demonstration of miraculous power, Jno.3:1,2; 2:1-11; Cf. Ac.2:22.
 - b. His resurrection from the dead, which he proved by many infallible (positive) proofs, is the final, ultimate certification of the truth of his claims to be the Incarnate Christ.
 - c. The evidence is overwhelming.
3. His witnesses, his apostles, are creditable; their testimony will stand the test; their message as Spirit-revealed and Spirit-guided, and miraculously attested.
4. It is affirmed that when we read what they wrote by means of the guidance of the Holy Spirit we can understand, Eph.3:4,5; 5:17; Jno.8:32.

III. CONCLUSION

1. But why do we need to have this idea of the moral perfection of God emphasized as in v.5 that "God is light"?
 - a. Doesn't everyone know that God is perfect?

- b. Doesn't everyone believe that God expects his children to be holy as he is holy?
 - c. No! Not everyone knew it then nor believes it now!
 - d. The pagans of that day thought their gods were very imperfect beings, having much the same frailties and weaknesses as they themselves had. The people became like the gods they created.
 - e. Also, some of the Gnostic heresy of the day thought that their waling in the darkness of sin and evil did not nullify their fellowship with God; while others denied being guilty of sin even though they walked in darkness.
2. Therefore, the statements of V.5 are obviously designed to begin laying the foundation for and leading into his exposure and refutation of the errors of those denying the Incarnate Christ, and the false claims of some of abiding in fellowship with God while walking in darkness, and even denying the guilty of sin while doing so.
3. Thus John in V.5 states the character of God as revealed in any by the Incarnate Christ, leading us to the true and abiding spiritual qualities of those who become the children of God by faith in Jesus Christ, and thereby enjoy and experience the joy of having fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.
- a. John devotes most of his space in the Epistle to the qualities of the true children of God who enjoy fellowship with God.
 - b. But, at the same time, he leaves no doubt that the character of God determines and demands certain specific spiritual qualities and conditions of his children, qualities they must possess and conditions they must meet to enter into fellowship with him and his Son, and qualities they must continue to possess and meet to abide in that fellowship.