



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Word of Life (1 John 1:1-4)

JANUARY 29, 2013

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule

- **Tuesday, January 29, 7 AM in HHR #5**
-Breakfast Provided
- **THERE WILL BE NO EVENING STUDY ON JANUARY 29. THEY WILL RESUME ON FEBRUARY 5.**

Our 2013 Bible study for legislators, judges and all staff will resume on Tuesday, January 29th at 7am in Hearing Room #5. These are non-partisan and non-denominational studies.

The mission of Capitol Commission is to carry out the Great Commission in the Capitol community. We are not a lobbying group trying to garner votes; we do not strive for changes in legislation but rather labor to see changes in the hearts of the legislators. We are a ministry of the church seeking to present the gospel message and help believers grow through the expository teaching of the Bible. Scripture reveals God's great concern for people, especially for those who have been placed in authority. This forms the foundation for our service to you.

INTRODUCTION

The New Testament book called "1 John" is a letter from the Apostle John, who was probably the last of those called "Apostles". The others, including Peter and Paul, have been killed for their faith by this time. It seems that John wrote this letter around A.D. 90-95; just a few years after writing the gospel of John (A.D. 80-90).¹

The letter, which does not have a specified recipient, has two purposes which stand out. The first was to address the false teachers of the Gnostics. Gnosticism generally taught that anything to do with the flesh was evil and that which is of the spirit is good. Therefore, they promoted that Jesus could not have been in the flesh and holy at the same time; so He must have been a spirit or something else. John addressed these wrong ideas by promoting the incarnation and Jesus' work of atonement (1 John 1:1-4; 2:2, 22; 4:2-3, 10).

These false teachers also advocated a wrong view of sin which minimized its seriousness which John corrected with strongly worded statements

concerning sin, one's relationship with God and obedience (1:6; 2:3-4; 5:3). John also addressed the lack of love which was a result of these false teachings (3:14; 4:7-21).

The second purpose was to "fortify the assurance of salvation believers are rightly to possess."² Due to the wrong teachings from the Gnostics, questions could arise concerning one's salvation. John wrote that assurance comes when one knows the truth (implying belief and trust) about the life and work of Jesus Christ (1:1-3; 5:12) and that faith has transformed one's life. In other words, "John summarizes the characteristics of true Christianity as right belief, righteousness and love";³ all signs of assurance.

Unfortunately, the remnants and ideas of the Gnostics are still alive and well in the 21st century. There are those today, even within the "church," who are teaching an unhistorical Jesus, watering down sin and its affects and promoting a false assurance of salvation. This letter of John still needs to be proclaimed and heeded.

Without giving any type of formal address, John jumped right to foundation upon which all else will be built. And that foundation is none other than the "Word of Life", Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:1-4 What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life--²and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--³what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

THE WORD OF LIFE IS JESUS

John opens his letter with one long, complicated sentence. The subject, "what" in verse one is followed by several phrases which repeatedly show the importance and proof of its existence. The main verb of the long sentence finally shows up in verse 3 "we proclaim".

CAPITOL COMMISSION BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS & STAFF: TUESDAYS @ 7AM, HEARING ROOM #5

LEGISLATORS: TUESDAYS @ 8:30PM, OFFICE #301

TRUMAN BUILDING: THURSDAYS @ 7AM, 4TH FLOOR CAFETERIA

PROCLAIMING THE GREATNESS AND GLORY OF GOD IN THE MISSOURI STATE CAPITOL

Missouri

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So what is the “what”? It seems best to understand that “what” is proclaimed is the message or “Word” about the work and person of Jesus Christ. John wrote that the message was about what they heard, saw and touched concerning life; a life that was revealed which they had witnessed. It was a life that is eternal, that was with God and finally revealed to them--and that life is Jesus Christ (John 1:1-4, 14).

In this opening statement, John laid out the truth that the person of Jesus Christ and the message about Him are central to Christianity. In fact, one cannot separate the person and the message of Jesus. The person of Jesus embodies the message. One cannot separate the historical person of Jesus from the message about what He has accomplished; thus, John’s emphasis on their eyewitness testimony of what they heard, saw, and touched.

John did not proclaim a system, he proclaimed a person. The Gnostics had a system; the Jewish religious leaders had a system. Many modern day religions have systems. But Christianity is a person. James Boice wrote,

...a system is not life, nor does it transform a life. A system in and of itself is nothing. What Christianity has and the others do not have is life, in fact, *the* life of Jesus himself, the one who is the creator and sustainer of all life and who as the life is also the light of men (John 1:4). It is Christ, then, who is proclaimed in Christianity.⁴

Without the Life (Jesus Christ), the Word (the message) is meaningless. And so John repeatedly pointed to the historical truth of what they witnessed.

THE WORD OF LIFE IS HISTORICAL

In refuting the Gnostic teaching that if Jesus was truly good and pure, thus could not have taken on flesh, John emphasized his personal interactions with Jesus. First of all, he and his fellow apostles heard the words of Jesus. He heard Jesus’ teachings and parables. He heard the powerful word that Jesus spoke which calmed the storm (Mark 4:39). He heard Jesus’ harsh rebuke of the Pharisees and religious leaders (Matthew 23), as well as, His compassionate words of healing and forgiveness (Mark 1:41, 2:5; John 8:10-11). “Have heard” is from the perfect form of the verb meaning that what was heard happened in the past but still has a lasting impact in the present--even though the present for John was 60 years after the words were spoken.

Secondly, John stated that they saw Jesus. Four times in this passage, he made reference to seeing Jesus. In verses 1, 2, and 3 he wrote that they had

seen Him with their own eyes. It was not a metaphorical use of the word “see”. They physically saw Jesus and they looked upon Him with understanding.

But in verse 1, John also noted that they not only saw Jesus, but “looked at” Him. The Greek word from which this is translated indicates a studious observation, a long searching gaze. John spent three years with Jesus and observed His actions, miracles, power, interactions and authority. John had plenty of proof to write, *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw (a long searching gaze) His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth* (John 1:14--parenthesis mine).

BECAUSE OF THE SINFUL FALL OF MAN IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN THESE HAVE BEEN SEVERED AND BROKEN. ONLY THROUGH CHRIST CAN THE FELLOWSHIP THAT GOD CREATED US FOR BE ATTAINED.

John’s third point of personal interaction was personal touch. Literally, the text says “...and the hand of us touched”. The word “touched” is like a blind man who feels something to “see” it. This is the same word Jesus used in a post-resurrection conversation with the disciples when He challenged them, *...touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have* (Luke 24:39).

In this passage, one can hear John’s argument to the Gnostics that their ideas about the person of Christ were dead wrong. He heard Jesus, continually saw Jesus, and physically touched Jesus. He saw Jesus, the Word of Life, revealed or manifested. It was no ghost, no spirit; it was a physical human being in which they closely interacted with in the past.

And it is this physical human being and His work that John proclaimed to his readers.

THE WORD OF LIFE IS PROCLAIMED

Three ways are described in communicating the truth of what was heard, seen and touched concerning the Word of Life. The first two, “testify” and “proclaimed” are similar but have subtle difference. “Testify” is what takes

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place in a courtroom. An eyewitness tells of what he saw, heard and experienced. “Proclaimed” gives the sense that the one who declares what he saw, heard and experienced has been commissioned to do--such as a town crier in the old days.

John and his band of fellow apostles did both. They testified of the truth which they have experienced and they proclaimed the good news of the gift of eternal life which is a result of what they have seen and heard in Christ. This communication was not an option to them. John Stott writes, “...He [Christ] not only manifested Himself to the disciples to qualify them as *eyewitnesses*, but gave them an authoritative commission as *apostles* to preach the gospel.” John was an eyewitness and called to give the message.

So has the message proclamation stopped since John and his band have long since passed? By no means!! The third way of communication was in the written word (verse 4). The eyewitness testimony and commissioned proclamation were put down into words for the people of John’s day, as well as in all the days to come. When believers proclaim these same time-tested testimonies concerning the “Word of Life”, the messages are still authoritative and powerful.

THE WORD OF LIFE PRODUCES FELLOWSHIP

The purpose of John’s testimony and proclamation of the Word of Life is that his readers may have a common fellowship with him, his colleagues, God the Father and the Word of Life himself, Jesus Christ. This fellowship “signifies a mutual participation in a common cause or shared life.”⁵ But it is more than just a group of people or entities working together for a common goal. There are a number of baseball stories where teammates hated each other personally but they worked together to win a World Series. The “koinonia” (fellowship) that John and the other biblical writers described is more than simply banding together for a common cause but includes “the mutual life and love of those who are one in spirit” (1Corinthians 6:17; Ephesians 5:30-32).⁶ Yes, there is a common work or goal, but there is also a true concern for those in the family.

Only when people hear the testimony and pay heed to the truth concerning the Word of Life is true fellowship found. God created us to have relationship with Him and each other. Because of the sinful fall of man in the Garden of Eden both of these have been severed and broken. Only through Christ can the fellowship that God created us for be attained.

John repeated this similar sentiment again in verse four. He wrote so that “our joy may be complete.” Some ancient manuscripts read “your joy” instead of “our joy” as found in the New American Standard Update. This variant seems to be a simple copying error since both Greek words are very similar in spelling. Both versions would be correct in their meanings. The joy of the author and the joy of the recipients are only complete when they are found in Christ, the Word of Life.

CONCLUSION

The Apostle John wasted no words getting to the heart of the matter as he confronts the blasphemous messages of the false teachers that plagued the church in his day. And as was stated in the intro, similar teachings are still infecting the church today.

The essence of John’s prologue is simple, but profound: He heard, saw and touched the historical human being, Jesus Christ. It is Jesus and His message which bring true life; as well as, a true fellowship or relationship with God, Jesus Himself, and other people. John will flesh this out with a line of “if/then” statements throughout this chapter.

Friend, you will not find righteousness or salvation in any type of system, discipline, religion or dedication. You cannot make yourself right before God. BUT, through Christ, God can truly forgive all your sins--are you interested?

¹ John MacArthur, *1-3 John* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2007), 7.

² Daniel L. Akin, *1, 2, 3 John*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, Tenn.: B & H Publishing Group, 2001), 30.

³ Ibid.

⁴ James M. Boice, *The Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1979), 22.

⁵ MacArthur, 18.

⁶ MacArthur, 19.