



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

1 JOHN 1:1- JESUS CHRIST THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD!

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In his Epistle, John gives us a fundamental understanding of Christianity in its absolute sense, and he does it with love and tenderness. This young disciple had been tempered by Christ. Yes he was a son of thunder, but Jesus wanted John's strength, resolution, boldness and commitment, but Jesus needed to get rid of all the hints of selfish ambition and pride. Christ transformed John into one who loved people so much that he would call them to the truth.¹ And so John writes with a sense of warmth, affection and with a seriousness and urgency!²

This last living Apostle was serving in the capital city of Ephesus in Asia Minor which is modern day Turkey. It formed a land bridge between Europe and Asia. Through this land bridge flowed migrations of people, armies for invasions, philosophies and new ideas. This capital city of Ephesus was home to the worship of many gods. In fact, the temple built for the god Artemis in Ephesus was considered one of the 7 wonders of the world. And in the midst of all this paganism, was the Christian church, shining as a light of truth in the darkness of false philosophies and ideologies, sin and immorality. The church of Jesus Christ was constantly threatened by the many philosophies of that day with false teachers and their religions.³

This pressure and influence took its toll on the Asian churches as noted in Revelation 2-3. Though much older, John's age did not temper his fiery zeal for Jesus Christ or the truth. He saw the dangers for believers under his care and he picks up his pen and defends the faith. He was a light in a very dark place writing to warn and refute the false, and encourage and reassure believers of the truth and their faith.⁴

I. 1 JOHN 1:1- JESUS CHRIST THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD!

"What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life (2) and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us..." 1 John 1:1-2

1 John is a message written to believers no matter where you live. It is an appeal to every believer, in every land, in every age. There is a theme of life...eternal life not referring to merely endless existence, but the very life of God revealed in Jesus and shared by all who put their trust in Him. This eternal life is secured in God through Jesus Christ His Son.⁵

John writes to confused believers who want to know if they have the real thing. A destructive untruth was circulating in the church. Apparently some were teaching that God never really took on human flesh. They said human flesh is sinful and evil. So God may have appeared as a human in Jesus but he did not really take on flesh. Basically they separated the human Jesus

of flesh and the divine Christ as spirit. These false teachers had come teaching that Christ was not fully human. Does this really matter? Without a fully human and fully divine Mediator, we cannot have the atoning sacrifice for sins that we need and we are lost eternally. And so John writes with absolute certainty as an eye witness about the truth of the matter.⁶

Remember, we live in an era that looks with suspicion on any certainty or conviction about the truth. We have abandoned any idea of absolutes and believe rather any opinion or philosophy. Can God really be unable to reveal Himself? Usually those who deny Scripture are likely motivated by rebellion against its clear message. So John launches into writing this Spirit inspired truth about the Person and work of Jesus Christ with 5 certainties about Him.⁷ The last surviving Apostle gives this Epistle a note of authority that's full, final.

A. "WHAT WAS FROM THE BEGINNING" - 1 JOHN 1:1A

John begins by establishing that the gospel concerning Jesus Christ, the "Word of Life" (1 John 1:1) is permanent and unalterable. False teachers in the church were attacking the truth at the very heart of the gospel, from the very beginning. Paul warned about this in Galatians 1:6-9 where he said that some believers were quickly deserting Christ for a different gospel. These words from John give us the starting point of revelation; the disclosure of God in Christ. The focus of John's interest is the Incarnation of Jesus Christ with "the beginning" referring to the events recorded in Luke 1-2, the actual birth of the Son of God as a man. Jesus, the Son of God appeared in a visible form beginning at Bethlehem.⁸ From the beginning, the proclamation of the gospel has always been the same. Though many were denying that Jesus Christ came in the flesh, John gives his eyewitness testimony to the fact that Jesus is God Incarnate.

It is this most awkward truth of all; Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man in one Person, that John pulls together as essential for the gospel because only with this doctrine does what happened on the cross make sense. Who Christ is and what Christ did are bound together. If you try to parse away Who Jesus is, you may have a neater philosophy that's easier to believe, but you will misunderstand Christ and forfeit the gospel. And if you don't understand Who Jesus is, then John says you are not a Christian. You must know that in His love for us God Himself took on flesh, lived a perfect life, died the

BIBLE STUDIES

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JESUS CHRIST THE INCARNATE SON OF GOD!

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death sinners deserve, and then arose in victory over sin and death. Do you believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, fully God and fully Man? The most important question you could ever ask and answer is, who Jesus is!⁹

B. “WHAT WE HAVE HEARD” – 1 JOHN 1:1B

John heard the Lord speak and teach. The perfect tense Greek “have heard”-“*akouo*” refers to a completed occurrence in the past with an impact on the present. John heard Jesus personally and repeatedly and these words were still ringing in John’s ears. What he heard had a transforming impact on his life, resolved to the truth. Though John wrote some 60 years later, what he heard first hand was still a vibrant truth in his heart.

“What” clearly refers to God Incarnate in each phrase. It is Jesus Christ the disciples walked and talked with those three years and gave testimony to. The “we” mentioned 6 times in the first three verses, refers to a certain group of people who have heard, seen and touched. It was those few who were qualified to be Apostles because they witnessed all Jesus did. (Acts 10:41) This witness was more than just John, it was a united witness by all the Apostles to the reality of Jesus Christ.

C. “WHAT WE HAVE SEEN WITH OUR EYES”- 1 JOHN 1:1C

John had also seen Christ visibly. Again, “seen” is perfect tense in the Greek, implies that what they had seen still lingers in their mind’s eye. This was not something spiritual, but actually something John saw with his own eyes, and not only him but all the disciples. Jesus was not a ghost or it was not a vision John saw. No, he saw and observed Jesus, a real man for three years with his own eyes.

D. “WHAT WE BEHELD” 1 JOHN 1:1D

Yes John is restating and affirming that this was not a casual glance at Christ, but rather refers to a long, searching gaze. This word “beheld” in the Greek “*theaomai*” in the aorist tense, refers to an intelligent looking, careful and deliberate vision of its object. For several years, the disciples saw the unmistakable realities of who Jesus was. He was Lord, God, Messiah, Savior in the flesh with supernatural powers over demons, disease, nature and death.¹⁰ The aorist tense refers to a completed, historical reality carefully observed by the Apostles’ witness.

E. “AND OUR HANDS HANDLED” 1 JOHN 1:1E

John emphasizes the material manifestation of Jesus to men’s ears, eyes and hands. Indeed, John’s Epistle reminds us that faith in Jesus is **NOT** a matter of credulity, mysticism or superstition. Our faith is belief that is founded on evidence. The Apostles were men of reason.¹¹ Jesus was a true flesh and

bone body as witnessed by the Apostles; both before Christ’s death on the cross, witnessing His death, and after His resurrection. They heard Jesus Christ, they visibly saw and touched Jesus in the flesh before and after He rose from the dead. The Christian faith is founded upon evidence!

F. “CONCERNING THE WORD OF LIFE” – 1 JOHN 1:1F

What John gives collective testimony with the Apostles is “concerning the Word of Life”, the Person and work of Jesus Christ. This is the unifying theme and historical reality of Jesus Christ. What John had written in his Gospel was that Jesus came in the flesh (John 1:14). Jesus was the God-Man (John 10:30), fully Divine (Philippians 2:6, Colossians 2:9), fully human (Luke 1:31, Philippians 2:7-8, Hebrews 2:14, 4:15) John experience all of this through his own senses and was a true witness to Christ’s incarnation. He heard, saw with his own eyes, beheld and touched Jesus Christ the Word of Life.¹² Every verb used makes one great point, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is not a speculation, an idea or an opinion. *It is a fact!*

The Incarnation of the Son of God lies at the very heart of our Christian faith. In no other way could God justly deal with the sin that set us under His just judgement and provides us with the righteousness that would fit us for fellowship with Him. As 2 Corinthians 5:19 tells us that it was in Christ, the God-Man, was reconciling the world to Himself. This is the uniqueness of Christ that the world stumbles over. The gospel of Jesus is not one of a number of options for men and women to consider...it is the one and only way for sinners to be reconciled to God and rescued from the coming wrath.¹³ And John says this is an indisputable fact!

¹ MacArthur, John, John MacArthur Sermon Tape Series: 1 John. Grace to You: Valencia, CA, 2002. Tape #1.

² Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg.xiv.

³ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg.1-2.

⁴ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg.9.

⁵ Erdman, Charles R., *The General Epistles: An Exposition*. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, PA, 1919. Pg. 114.

⁶ Dever, Mark, *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept*. Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2005. Pg.475.

⁷ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg.13-14.

⁸ Hiebert, D. Edmond, *The Epistles of John: An Expository Commentary*. Bob Jones University Press: Greenville, SC, 1991. Pg.37.

⁹ Dever, Mark, *The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept*. Crossway: Wheaton, IL, 2005. Pg.477.

¹⁰ MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg.17.

¹¹ Erdman, Charles R., *The General Epistles: An Exposition*. The Westminster Press: Philadelphia, PA, 1919. Pg. 115.

¹² MacArthur, John, *MacArthur Commentary Series on 1-3 John*. Moody Press: Chicago, IL, 2007. Pg.16.

¹³ Hamilton, Ian, *Let’s Study the Letters of John*. The Banner of Truth Trust: Edinburgh, UK, 2008. Pg.2.