

## Bible Study for January 8, 2020

In this world of special effects, one might well ask “What is Real?” Is seeing really believing? After watching a blockbuster stockpiled with special effects, it is interesting to watch the “Special Features” that show how the movie was made. If you do this, you will discover that what you thought you saw in the movie, didn’t really happen the way you thought it did.

The stock market took a nosedive a several years ago after questionable and illegal accounting practices by major corporations has left many investors on Wall Street wondering if the earnings on which the company’s stocks which they own are “real” numbers.

So, what’s real? The Epistle of 1 John was written by the apostle John. The evidence for this is two-fold: the similarities to the Gospel of John (life, light, word, love, etc.) and the tradition of the early church which always ascribed this letter to the beloved apostle. The letter was written near the end of the first century A.D. in order to correct false teaching, primarily concerning the doctrine of Christ, but also having serious ethical implications. These false teachers denied that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh and also seemed to indicate that Christians could live in unconfessed sin and still be considered Christians. John writes to correct both errant views by asserting the truth of the incarnation of Christ, as well as the necessity of practical righteousness in the lives of professing believers.

A little over 1900 years ago, an aged apostle sat down to write to the churches of his day a warning concerning those false teachers who were denying that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh. These false teachers were also denying the seriousness of sin by teaching that one could be living in known unconfessed and unrepentant sin and still be called a Christian. This letter of warning is our Bible’s 1st Epistle of John. In the first four verses, which are really only one sentence in the Greek, John states his purpose in writing this letter: to declare the Word of Life, Jesus Christ. The message which he wrote deals with reality. There are three realities that John alerts us to in this morning’s text: a theological reality, a historical reality, and an experiential reality.

### A Theological Reality (deity of Jesus)

“That which was from the beginning . . .” “the Word of life” “that eternal life, which was with the Father”

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. Gospel of John 1:1-2

This “Word of life” is the one “whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2).

Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. Psalm 90:2

### An Historical Reality (humanity)

“heard, seen with our eyes, looked upon, hands have handled”

The eternal Son of God took upon Himself human nature and was known personally by John and the other apostles. John said it this way in his gospel:

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. John 1:14

Another Apostle, Peter, said it this way in his second epistle:

For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 2 Peter 1:16

1. Heard: along with seen are in the Gk. perfect tense which is used of an event in the past with ongoing consequences. What they heard is still ringing in their ears and what they saw is still lingering in their minds’ eye.

2. Seen with our eyes: specific reference to eyes = in the flesh

3. Looked upon: not meaningless repetition, describes a careful and deliberate inspection of the object in view.

4. Hands have handled: post-resurrection appearances:

**Weekly Bible Study  
meets on Wednesday at  
two times (11:30-12 and  
12-12:30). Both in  
Capitol Annex 436 or, if  
occupied, the 4<sup>th</sup> floor  
lounge (404).**

Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have. Luke 24:39

Then saith he to Thomas, reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. John 20:27

Manifest - "to make visible or known what has been hidden or unknown"

This is an amazing statement (v. 2) of the purpose of the incarnation.

This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him. John 2:11

Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. John 9:3

I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world: thine they were, and thou gavest them me; and they have kept thy word. John 17:6

And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. 1 John 3:5

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. 1 John 3:8

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. 1 John 4:9

This is what John was getting at in John 1:18,

No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. John 1:18

What happened in the first century was not a reduction of deity to humanity as if Jesus was only a man. It was, instead, a manifestation of the mystery of deity in human flesh. God made Himself manifest in Christ.

When cargo is transported from one country to another a manifest must be signed. A manifest is an itemized list of a ship's cargo which must be shown to custom's officials when traveling into another country. Christ is God's manifest. He is the declaration of the unseen qualities of God's character & nature. Christ is God's official declaration of who He is.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. 1 Tim. 3:16

### **An Experiential Reality, vv. 3-4**

I stated earlier, that these four verses are only one sentence in the Greek. The main verb in the sentence doesn't come until verse 3. It is proclaim which means "to make known openly." The message declared is "real!"

*Fellowship with God and Witnesses (koinonia)*

"that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

I've often heard it said that here in 1 John, our fellowship can be broken by our unconfessed sin, but our relationship can never be broken. That's not what 1 John teaches. For John fellowship = relationship. To have fellowship with someone is "to hold something in common with them." The fellowship which we have with other believers is based upon the fact that we "hold in common" that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God come in the flesh to bear our sins on the cross of Calvary. This unites with each other and with God and His Son. To place one's faith in the incarnate Christ is to enter a fellowship which includes God the Father and God the Son as well as all those who possess saving faith. Thus, fellowship is inseparable from eternal life. John's purpose statement in 5:13 agrees.

It is only by knowing Jesus Christ that we are able to have the fellowship with God for which we were created.

*Joy Fulfilled "That your joy may be full"*

When we have fellowship with the Father and Son our Joy is fulfilled. The verb form speaks of a continuing state of joy (continuing results/past action)

"Thou hast made us for thyself and our hearts are restless until we find our rest in thee." St. Augustine

According to the Westminster Catechism, the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

The kings of this world possess many palaces in different parts of their realm. The flag of the country never flies from their towers unless the ruler is in residence. It was this idea which caused someone to pen the line: "Joy is a flag flown high over the castle of our hearts when the king is in residence there." Do you have this joy? The only way to have this joy is to get into fellowship with the Father and His Son. The only way to know the Father is to know His Son Jesus.