



DESERT VIEW BIBLE CHURCH

SERIES: 1 JOHN • 1 JOHN 1:1-4 • 9/3/2023

MAIN POINT

The authentic Christian life is only possible through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

INTRODUCTION

Share about an experience or season of your life when you experienced true fellowship. Was this with family, friends, or a local church? At work or on a team?

What made this time significant and memorable?

Wanting something real and finding something real are two different things. This is where the apostle John's first epistle comes in. This letter deals with a theme that is always applicable: the life that is real. John had discovered that satisfying reality was not found in things or thrills, but in a person—Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

UNDERSTANDING

READ 1 JOHN 1:1-2.

Why do you think John emphasized the humanity of Jesus so much? Why is the incarnation (Jesus becoming flesh) so pivotal for our relationship with God?

What does it mean that Jesus is the “Word of life”?

It is difficult to read the opening verses of 1 John without being confronted by the tangible nature of Jesus. John used repeated sensory language (seeing, hearing, touching) to affirm the reality of Jesus Christ as a person. It’s as if John was saying to his flock, “I saw Him with my own eyes. I touched Him with my own hands. Everything He said and did was true!” The Word of God (logos) took on flesh in the person of Jesus. He wasn’t a figment of anyone’s imagination. He wasn’t a spirit or a ghost. He was flesh and blood.

READ 1 JOHN 1:3-4.

Why did John emphasize fellowship? Why is fellowship with other believers so important? Why is it important for our fellowship with God?

Why do you think John concluded the prologue focused on joy? What does it mean for one’s joy to be “complete”? How did this get to the point of John’s letter?

John had a purpose in making sure that his fellow believers rightly understood the person of Jesus as the Word of life. He wanted them to experience fellowship with God and with one another. After all, life with God always means life in community with other believers.

READ JOHN 1:1-18.

What common themes do you notice when comparing this passages to 1 John 1:1-4? What words, phrases, and ideas are repeated in both?

Why are both Jesus' deity and humanity essential to the gospel? Why can't the gospel just include one of these doctrines?

Reading the prologue of 1 John, it is likely readers recall John 1:1-18. The language and content are strikingly similar. In both his Gospel and Letter, John emphasized Christ's existence from the beginning, Jesus as the "Word," seeing and hearing Jesus in the flesh, and the fellowship of God with Christ. Where John's Gospel emphasized the preexistence of Christ and His glory as the Word from the beginning, John's Letter emphasized the humanity of Jesus as experienced in the flesh. Together we see the miracle and mystery of Jesus, who is fully God and fully man.

APPLICATION

Are there any ways that you struggle to believe in the full humanity of Jesus? What other Scriptures point you to the reality that Jesus is fully human?

How is your faith authenticated by Jesus coming in the flesh? How does this encourage you as you wrestle with the flesh?

Where do you need to experience fullness of joy? Are you lacking fellowship in certain areas that might be contributing? How might you pursue this fellowship with God and others?

PRAYER

Take time in prayer to thank God for sending His Son in the flesh. Thank Him for being a Savior who knows our struggles and temptations intimately, because He has experienced them. Ask Him to fill you with joy as you walk with Him and walk with other believers.

COMMENTARY

1 JOHN 1:1-4

1:1. Verses 1-4 form a prologue for 1 John, telling us that throughout the rest of the book John will proclaim to us what he has observed about Jesus, the Word of life. It begins in an odd way. He said he had heard, seen, and touched the Word of life. Why would John talk about hearing, seeing, and touching Jesus? The answer seems to be related to false teaching that his readers were hearing. More than likely, false teachers were suggesting that Jesus' physical body was not a normal body; or that he was an angel, not a man; or that his physical body was an illusion; or some other erroneous speculation. John met this false teaching head-on by saying that he had firsthand experience with Jesus, and based on that experience, he is telling us what he knows about Jesus.

That which was from the beginning might refer to Jesus' eternal coexistence with the Father, or to the beginning of creation (Gen. 1:1; John 1:1), but in light of the context, John was probably referring to the beginning of Jesus' ministry. It seems that false teachers had spread bad information about Jesus. However, John was with Jesus from the very beginning of his ministry on earth. Based on that firsthand experience, John determined to set the record straight. The false teachers, whom John called "antichrists," brought new ideas about Jesus, not ideas that could be verified, firsthand, from the beginning of Jesus' ministry. These false teachers apparently denied the incarnation (God's taking on human flesh in the person of Jesus), a fact that could easily be refuted by eyewitnesses, of whom John was one.

The Word of life might be a name or title for Jesus, as the translators of the NIV decided (since they capitalized Word), or it might mean "the message about life." Either interpretation is possible.

1:2. This life is eternal, was originally with the Father, and now has appeared on earth. This supports the historic Christian teaching that Jesus is coequal and coeternal with God the Father (as well as the Holy Spirit, who is not mentioned in this passage).

1:3. John proclaimed what he knew about Jesus so that you also may have fellowship with us. Since John made it clear in 2:12-14 that the readers of this letter were already believers, he was not referring to the fellowship with other Christians that begins at salvation. Rather, he was referring to the ongoing fellowship of people who are already believers. They needed to be sure of who Jesus was and of their salvation. If they doubted their salvation, their fellowship with the Father and Son would be limited. If Christians are not in fellowship with God, they cannot be in full fellowship with other devout Christians. Christian-with-Christian fellowship is rooted in fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Apparently, the false teachers had called into question the salvation of the readers, so John was reaffirming their faith.

1:4. The prologue concludes by linking John's own joy with the spiritual welfare of his readers. He reaffirmed these truths so that their joy could be made complete. John was so concerned about their welfare that he could not experience complete joy himself as long as they were struggling with doubt created by these false teachers. If the readers had their salvation reaffirmed, their joy would be made full, and in their joy, John's joy would be made full.