

## “The Prologue: Jesus and Joy”

(Part 2)

1 John 1:1-4

- INTRO. - You probably know this, but we live in a world of “fake news” today. The line between truth and falsehood has become so blurred that it is difficult to really know what is *factual* and what is *fictional*.

- How many times have we read a touching story (or seen a moving video) only to find out it was all staged. You watch “Storage Wars” on A & E – and then you find out it’s all staged. It’s all rigged. People didn’t really find abandoned treasures in auctioned-off storage units.

- You hear that Tim Tebow once knelt in protest to the National Anthem, and then you find out that this is totally untrue. It never happened that way.

- You hear that Starbucks is replacing plastic straws with paper straws wrapped in plastic, and then you find out that was a joke. You read that a man who sued MacDonald’s for being depressed after eating a Happy Meal – and then you find out that was just a hoax.

- How can you know the truth anymore? It seems that no one is telling the truth. Everything is “fake news.” Why, it’s gotten so bad that the only people we can really believe is politicians! (I’m being sarcastic!!!)

- No, (seriously), from written accounts to various forms of media, from sports heroes to community leaders, we

are constantly being deceived. How can we know what is really true today?

- Even in religion there is deception and falsehood. Sin and corruption is often covered up. Theological heresy has become a constant danger. TV evangelists are teaching all kinds of error without ever being challenged. And the vast majority of Christians are at least confused – if *not* downright deceived.

- And yet, we are also being misled if we begin to think that we are the first generation that has ever had to deal with these kinds of things. Even back in the first century (when the NT was being written) there were similar dangers.

- Of course, they didn’t have the Internet (to spread these kinds of lies in an instant), but they *did* have false teachers and much deception. The “father of lies” (the devil) has always made sure that this world is full of deceit.

- Where can we find the truth? Where can we turn for knowledge that we can count on? Where can we go for principles to live by that are unchanging and absolute? There is only one place: The Word of God – the revelation from the unchanging, eternal God Himself.

- I hope you know, that if you read something on the Internet it may *not* be true – but if you read it in God’s Word you can take it to the bank. There’s no “fake news”

in Scripture. The revelation given there is absolutely reliable.

- And *not only* is the revelation of Scripture reliable, but the truth concerning the Person and work of Jesus Christ is reliable as well. In the testimony of the NT we have a first-hand, eye-witness account of men who walked with Christ during the entire time of His earthly ministry.

- Like the Apostle John, these men could give first-hand, personal testimony to the reality of Jesus' incarnation. As John said, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; 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..."

- And we started going through this prologue last week, but we didn't get through all of it. Even though our world (today) looks with suspicion on any sort of dogmatism, the Apostles of Christ spoke with a great deal of authority as eye-witnesses to His life and ministry.

- And even though our world seems to have given up on absolute truth, we can know God's truth because we have it in His Word. We can cling to it as that which does *not* change and it always reliable.

- And in this letter called 1 John we find clear, dogmatic proclamation of the truth of God from an authoritative voice of the last of Christ's Apostles. *All* the writers of

the NT communicate in this authoritative way – but perhaps none as forcefully as John. This apostle speaks with bold, dogmatic clarity. He speaks in terms of black and white. He talks about absolutes.

- The prologue (of vv. 1-4) is really one long sentence in the Greek. This is unusual for John, but here he verifies the heart of the gospel – namely that eternal life has been made manifest in the incarnate Son of God. In v. 1 he proclaims that this is all "concerning the Word of life."

- "Jesus is the noun of God, the verb of God, and the adjective of God. Jesus articulates God!" We know God through Him. Apart from His person and work we would *not* know God (in a full and complete way).

- Now, we're breaking this prologue down into 6 divisions, and we looked at the first four last time. We began with:

## I. THE PREMISE (v. 1a)

- Look with me (again) at v. 1, "What was from the beginning..." (Stop right there!) We spent a lot of time on this phrase, but to summarize, John is speaking (here) primarily of the incarnation of Christ. He does acknowledge His eternity (in v. 2), but he is focused more on the time of His incarnation in which the Apostles were able to verify His full humanity (as well as His full divinity). But from this John moves on to:

## II. THE PALPABILITY (v. 1b)

- That's *not* a very common word anymore, but it means "that which is obvious, evident, or plainly seen." Here John points to evidence that Jesus was (in fact) fully human. That is something the Gnostics had denied, so John hits this head on (right here in the very beginning of this letter).

- Look at v. 1 again, "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..."

- Jesus Christ (in His incarnation) was *not* just some sort of phantom. He was *not* just some sort of mystical, spiritually transcendent being. He had a real, physical body that could be empirically verified by the eye-witnesses who were with Him in the days of His ministry.

- John testifies that he had personal, first-hand experience in the presence of Jesus Christ, that could be verified through his own natural senses as confirmation of His humanity. Then in v. 2 we saw:

### III. THE PARENTHESIS (v. 2)

- Verse 2 is a parenthesis containing additional information. Look at it with me again, "...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..."

- In the incarnation of Jesus Christ, "the life was manifested." The word that is used for "manifested" means "to reveal" or "to make visible what was hidden." This includes the entire process whereby this life became visible and tangible.

- This verb denotes more than mere appearance. It means "to be revealed in one's true character and nature." The nature and character of God was hidden until Christ came into the world.

- We could *not* fully know God apart from the Person and work of Christ in this world. But with the coming of Jesus Christ into the world as a man, we could have a better understanding of the nature and character of God.

- Both the concept of "the life" and "eternal life" is equated with Jesus Himself. This is made clear by the fact that "was with the Father." That's where He was before He "was manifested to us."

- But this statement also implies that He was eternally co-existent with the Father. In *this* phrase John is going back to emphasize what he did in the very first verse of his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

- The preposition "with" depicts a face-to-face relationship with the Father. This is important because it indicates that these were two separate persons and yet sharing the same nature.

- He came to bring eternal life to all who receive Him as Savior and Lord. He is the source of true “life” and “eternal life.” The Father and the Son have the same divine life, and they work together to grant eternal life.

- John will put it this way in the last chapter of this epistle: “He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.” Jesus put it this way in John 5, “You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.”

- Life, true life, eternal life, is only found in Jesus Christ! If you are unwilling to come to Him and receive Him as Savior and lord, you will *not* have that life. The apostles were eye-witnesses to this truth. Their job was to bear witness of this gospel – and that leads us (fourthly) to:

#### IV. THE PROCLAMATION (v. 3a)

- For John (as for the other apostles) these truths were *not* just academic or theological – they were extremely practical. Look with me at the first part of v. 3, “...what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also...”

- For John, that which “was manifested to” him – the “word of life” – became the basis for his proclamation of that truth. He wasn’t given the privilege of being with Jesus Christ (in personal communion for three years) just for his own benefit. No, this privilege became the foundation of his responsibility as an apostle. The

apostles were eye-witnesses in order that they might proclaim the truth of the gospel to all the world.

- John was a dependable and credible witness. Other NT books written by Apostles or their associates also carried the same kind of authority.

- The Apostles had the unique responsibility of bearing witness that Jesus came in fulfillment of Scripture and that His witness is true, and that those who believe in Him will be saved forever. And it is that witness we now call the New Testament.

- Now, this is where we left off last time, but let’s move on (now) to a 5<sup>th</sup> aspect, which is:

#### V. THE PURPOSE (v. 3b)

- Look with me at v. 3 again, “what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

- John proclaimed the “word of life” *so that* (“hina,” *in order that*) all believers would have fellowship with God and other believers.

- This is John’s purpose for writing these things. It is for the purpose of fellowship. Twice that word “koinonia” is used in v. 3, and I hope you understand what that is. Fellowship is *not* simply “two fellows in the same ship.”

It is much deeper than that. In fact, it is a richly significant theological term.

- The Greek word literally means “an authentic partnership.” It means “to share together” or “to hold in common.” The adjective “koinos” means “common.” It *can* denote joint ownership or an active sharing in some common thing. In biblical terminology it signifies a mutual partnership in a common cause or a shared life.

- But what we need to understand, is that “koinonia” is a uniquely Christian term. Only genuine believers in Christ experience “koinonia.” Unbelievers do *not* experience it, *nor* do they understand it.

- Hiebert says, “Any other ground for entering into the fellowship of the Body of Christ than the true gospel does *not* result in genuine Christian fellowship.” This fellowship is not limited to those of a common culture or racial background but is solely grounded in a mutual adherence to the apostolic gospel.

- Listen, there are only two families in the world today. There is the family of God and the family of Satan. Now, some churches teach that God is the Father of everyone and that we are all brothers. That *sounds* good, but it is *not* what the Bible says.

- The Scripture makes it clear that you are either a part of God’s family or you are still a part of Satan’s family. You can’t be somewhere in between. You are in one category or the other.

- And some might think that a child of the devil would be a person who lives in gross sin and immorality, but that is *not* necessarily the case. You can be a very moral person (and even religious) and still be a child of Satan.

- You can go to church three or four times a week and still be a member of his family because you have *not* been born into the family of God through faith in Jesus Christ. You can do all kinds of “good deeds” and still *not* be a born-again child of God.

- You see, you enter both families by *birth*. The Scripture says that when you are born physically, you enter into the family of Adam (which is another reference to the family of Satan). But when you are born again, you enter God’s family through the spiritual birth.

- Someone once said, “You will either be born once and die twice or you will be born twice and die (only) once.” If you are only born physically, then you will die physically and spiritually. But if you are born both physically and spiritually, then you will only have to die physically.

- But you see, once you are born into God’s family (by placing your faith in Jesus Christ) you become part of the greatest fellowship in all the world. And (of course) the Bible has a lot to say about this fellowship.

- For example, in Phil. 2:1 it talks about the “fellowship of the Spirit.” That is something that you cannot touch,

you cannot put it in a test tube and analyze it, it is something you can hardly explain, and yet it is as real as anything can get. It is something that a Christian experiences on a daily basis.

- In Acts 2:42 it says (of the early Christians) that they "...continued steadfastly in the Apostles teaching and fellowship and in the breaking of bread..." In other words, they were enjoying the things of God together; enjoying studying the Bible, enjoying the Lord's Supper and enjoying being witnesses for Christ.

- In 2 Cor. 6:14 we have an interesting passage. It says "Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers." Listen, a Christian should never marry an unbeliever!

- Someone might say, "Well, preacher, that's pretty narrow," but notice *why* that is the biblical standard. If you go on in that verse it says, "for what fellowship does righteousness have with unrighteousness? And what communion does light have with darkness?"

- You see, a believer cannot have true fellowship with a non-believer. Friendship, yes, but fellowship, no. It is impossible. Why? Because they don't share the same things. It is like night and day – in fact, it is darkness and light.

- But notice that John is writing to believers here. In v. 3 he says, "what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us..." John is saying that each and every one of us can know

Christ personally, and therefore to be in fellowship with other believers.

- And (of course) the Bible tells us we know Him by faith. We were *not* privileged to be eye-witnesses of Jesus Christ in His earthly ministry (like John was), but we can still know Him. We can know Him by faith. In other words, faith becomes the eyes and ears and hands of the soul by which we know Him.

- And when we come to know Christ, we come into fellowship with all other believers in Christ. We begin to experience that "fellowship" of the saints.

- And again, this is *not* just some sort of "cookies and Kool-Aid social gathering kind of thing." It is the sharing of spiritual life. It is the sharing of eternal life. It is becoming a spiritual family.

- It is not wrong to call this a "radical union," but notice that John says it is *not only* with other believers, it is *also* with God. The end of v. 3 says, "and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

- Christian fellowship involves a horizontal relationship (with other believers) and a vertical relationship (with God). So this makes it clear that this is only for Christians. Non-Christians are *not* in fellowship with God the Father and Jesus Christ the Son.

- On the other hand, those of us who are born again need to understand what an awesome thing it is to be in fellowship *both* with other believers, and also in fellowship with God Himself.

- Listen, do we really understand that the God who created this universe wants to have fellowship with us? What an incredible thing to think about! If we could grasp the significance of that, we would never miss another opportunity to have quiet fellowship with God.

- If we really understood that, we would make time in our schedules to read our Bibles and to pray. We would make time to praise and worship Him. We would value that privilege and relationship with God Almighty.

- And (by the way) notice that last phrase in v. 3 again. It says, “and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.” This tells us that there is a clear distinction between these two Persons of the Trinity.

- Hiebert says, “The use of the preposition and the definite article with both marks the distinctness and equality of the Father and the Son; the Father and the Son are one in Godhood.”

- Notice also the use of “Jesus Christ.” Jesus is his human name while Christ is His divine title. Christ is the Greek translation of the Aramaic or Hebrew word for “Messiah,” which means “Anointed.” It is the title of His divine office.

- And once again John is emphasizing He is *both* fully human and fully divine. John’s designation (here) clearly identifies God’s Son with the man Jesus Christ. They are one and the same.

- And as Burdick puts it, “This identification leaves no room for any kind of Gnostic distinction between the divine Son and the human Jesus.” So in this way, John repudiates *both* Cerinthian and Docetic heresy. But there is one more element John includes in this “Prologue” of this book – and that is:

## VI. THE PRODUCT (v. 4)

- We find the *product* in v. 4. Look at it with me, “And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.” The product is joy, and God wants our joy to be “complete.”

- Now, that’s the NASB but the KJV has “full.” The Greek word that is used here means “completely full” or “overflowing.” Listen, God wants our joy to be full to the brim. *Not* half full, *not* almost full, but completely full. It means “completely full to the point of overflowing.”

- What produces that kind of joy? Genuine fellowship with God and other believers. Do you have that kind of joy? If *not*, maybe you should check the quality of your fellowship. How is your walk with God? Are you fully plugged into the church? Are you truly in fellowship with other believers? It makes a huge difference!

- Now, I also believe that v. 4 applies to the entire book as well. This is one of three statements of purpose for this book. John is saying that this is one of the main reasons why he is writing this epistle.

- And there is another important issue John is going to deal with that robs us of our joy. That is the issue of sin. It is possible for you to be a Christian and yet *not* to have joy in your life. In fact, there are Christians everywhere who are defeated and burdened down with a load of guilt.

- Sin and compromise robs us of our joy, so the HS (through John) wants us to understand that there is an answer for our guilt. Sin does *not* have to rob us of our joy. So we're going to see that well-known verse 9 of this chapter, which says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

- And, by the way, *joy* is another word that is unique to Christianity. A person who does *not* know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior does *not* experience genuine joy. They may have some level of temporary happiness or pleasure, but they cannot know the abiding joy that comes from knowing Christ and having eternal life.

- Biblical joy is *not* dependent upon good circumstances. In fact, it is a state of fulfillment (in the life of a genuine believer) that can never be lost. Happiness is *not* the same thing as joy, and only those who are in Christ can experience true, biblical joy.

- Jesus told His disciples in the upper room, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full." Paul said (in Rom. 14:17), "for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit."

MacArthur says, "the secular, dictionary definition of joy – 'the emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires' – is thoroughly inadequate when applied to the Christian life."

- Our joy is *not* based on that. Our joy does *not* go up and down based on our circumstances. It is permanent and unwavering because it is based on our eternal salvation.

- Martyn Lloyd Jones wrote, "Another thing we must bear in mind, in any definition we may give of New Testament joy, is that we do not go to a dictionary; we go to the New Testament instead. This is something quite peculiar which cannot be explained; it is a quality which belongs to the Christian life in its essence, so that in our definition of joy we must be very careful that it conforms to what we see in our Lord. The world has never seen anyone who knew joy as our Lord knew it, and yet He was 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.' So our definition of joy must somehow correspond to that."

- He goes on to say, "Joy is something very deep and profound, something that affects the whole and entire personality. In other words, it comes to this; there is only

one thing that can give true joy and that is contemplation of the Lord Jesus Christ. He satisfies my mind; He satisfies my emotions; He satisfies my every desire. He and His great salvation include the whole personality and nothing less, and in Him I am complete. Joy, in other words, is the response and the reaction of the soul to a knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

- And (going back to 1 John 1:4) there *may* be an eschatological element in this verse as well. The joy we experience *now* is only a token of the ultimate joy we will experience when Christ returns. *Then* our joy will be full in an eschatological way.

- Someday we (who know Christ) will experience joy to the nth degree, but for now God wants our cup of joy to be full, and there are mechanism for accomplishing that. These are the things he spells out in this book – confessing our sin, turning from sin, making sure we are in full fellowship with God and other believers, focusing on Christ, etc., etc.

- Perhaps you are thinking, “Pastor, my life is *not* full of joy? Why is that? I’m a Christian but I don’t have that kind of joy John is talking about. What do I need to do?”

- Well, you should begin by asking yourself, “How is my walk with God? Am I really fellowshiping with the Father and with the Son? Am I spending time in God’s Word? Am I spending time in prayer?”

- Listen, some of us need to turn off the TV (and your devices) and get in the Word of God. Some of us need to get rid of some distractions and focus on our walk with God. The first aspect of fullness of joy begins with the quality of our relationship with God. Are we really focusing our lives on Christ?

- And then how is your fellowship with other believers? How much time are you spending with your brothers and sisters in Christ? This is another key. Are you trying to be a lone ranger Christian? Are you trying to go it alone? That’s *not* God’s plan. His design is for us to be in fellowship with the people of God, receiving encouragement and support from others who share the same biblical values and commitment to Christ.

- Thirdly, is there some sin you need to deal with? Sin and compromise robs believers of joy. It’s *not* bad circumstances that remove joy - it’s sin. John is going to be dealing with this later in this chapter.

- MAKE APPEAL

- PRAYER