

THE CHRISTMAS MESSAGE OF LIFE

1 John

INTRODUCTION

The Nicene Creed: I believe in one God the Father Almighty; Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds [God of God], Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance [essence] with the Father; by whom all things were made; who, for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary.

READ 1 John 1:1-4

John writes with clarity and with certainty in his time, which was an age of confusion.

John makes the Incarnation the touchstone of doctrinal orthodoxy and spiritual authenticity ... right from the beginning.

Proposition: 2 Great Incarnational Christmas Truths

Both of these truths are directly from the text.

One is right at the beginning of chapter 1 and verse 1.

The other spans across the entire book.

I. The Word of Life

II. The Result of Life

So That: John 20:31 – “these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.”

1st Great Incarnational Christmas Truth ...

I. The Word of Life

1 John 1:1-3a

Point – “**the Word of Life**”

- lifespring/source of **Life** all the way through the book

Jesus is both the Preacher of God’s message and the Message itself. He is the Substance and Source of Eternal **Life**.

John was writing this gospel as the apostle of love. He is a ‘Son of Thunder’. He is also the apostle of truth. Love and truth don’t need to be harmonized. They go together and are part and parcel of what John is writing here.

Here, he uses strange grammar. He is drawing our attention to the nature of Christ.

- High Energy!
- Captures our attention.

As important as the proclamation is, John’s emphasis here is on the nature of the object that is proclaimed rather than the act of proclaiming

Point – **Word of Life:**

- A. Eternal**
- B. Personal and Physical**
- C. Universal**

A. Eternal

Point – The eternal nature of Christ, of the Word of Life

Proof – **1 John 1:1a** – “**What was from the beginning,**”

Gen 1:1; John 1:1 - Eternal nature of Christ

And ...

- reminded of the stability of the gospel message
- it is not subject to change due to current worldly fads or philosophical thinking

No references to persecution (like Peter) – the real danger lies in the attitude of the readers – they must be warned against loving the world – they are in danger of reinterpreting their faith in terms of “modern” light. -> Return to what has already been delivered!

Application – unchanged original content of the gospel – the timeless truth

B. Personal and Physical

Point – Personal eyewitness testimony of the resurrected Christ

Proof – **1 John 1:1b** – “**what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life**”

“**have heard ... have seen**” –using perfect tense– similar to when Jesus uses the perfect use to describe Scripture when He said “It stands written”

- it has abiding continuity and importance to the person
- abiding possession

The vivid recollection of Jesus that John still has even in his old age.

- For John, even 60+ years later, these memories are permanently etched on his mind as if the events had just happened.
- He had direct personal experience

An eyewitness – John is the only surviving apostle at the time of writing.

Point – Physical - Audible, Visual, Corporeal

“our hands handled” – touched

Progression - moves from audible to visual to the corporeal
– **heard ... seen ... touched**

Luke 24:39; John 20:24-28

John was writing this with the backdrop of heresy.

Gnosticism/Docetism – They believed that Spirit is good and matter is bad. This heresy denies the humanity of Jesus. They believed that He only appeared to be a man and His sufferings were only apparent.

Proof – **1 John 1:2 – “—²and 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—”**

Point – parenthetical explanation – to make it clear

- awkwardness of grammar here calls attention to its importance

“manifested” – literally means revealed, exposed, made known – from which comes our English word “epiphany”

2:28 – same word that is translated as “manifested” above is translated as “appeared” in this verse referring to the Second Coming

“eternal life” – literally, the life, the eternal

The Gnostics also had the idea that there is secret knowledge. A higher truth known only to those in on the deep things. Only the initiated have the mystical knowledge of truth that is higher even than Scripture. That is not the case with the Gospel and John is

making the point that Christ, the son of God, came into the world.

God is disclosing Himself, revealing Himself, making Himself known

- Openly – against the secret knowledge of the gnostics.

C. Universal

Point – Salvation available for all the peoples.

Proof – 1 John 1:3a – “**what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also,**”

“**have seen and heard**” – perfect tense in the Greek

“**bear witness ... proclaim**” – change from perfect tense to present tense

- we are witnessing and proclaiming to you – continual

“**bear witness**” – authenticity of his experience

“**proclaim**” – authority of his commission

John’s repetition pointedly reminds us that his personal testimony refutes the false teachers who boast arrogantly and wrongly about the Christ they have never seen or known.

Application - The manifestation “to us” becomes a proclamation “to you”

2nd Great Incarnational Christmas Truth ...

II. The Result of Life

1 John 1:3b

The purpose of John’s gospel is evangelistic.

The purpose of this epistle is pastoral.

The ultimate purpose is for God’s glory.

John has a deep concern for the spiritual welfare of his readers.

4 ἵνα (*hina*) – Purpose Statements (1:3, 4; 2:1; 5:13)

Point – 4 Results of this Life:

- A. Unity
- B. Felicity
- C. Purity
- D. Certainty

1st Result of Life ...

- A. Unity

Point – Fellowship - that is the commonality, the unity

Proof – 1 John 1:3b – “that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

“**fellowship**” – having in common - an eternal abiding life in Christ

- Phil. 1:5; 2:1; 3:10

John equates fellowship with salvation

- not merely “getting along”
- fellowship in eternal life!

The Proclamation is for the whole world.

The Revelation was given to a few for the blessing of the many.

When **John** wants to cultivate fellowship with a group of people, he writes them a letter filled with theology.

3 John 4 – “I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”

Similarly, what did **Paul** do? What did **Paul** do when we wanted to cultivate fellowship with Rome and prepare a missionary fellowship to support him and send him on to Spain?

What did he write?? → **Romans!**

The deeper and stronger you want your fellowship to be, the more theology must be shared. Exalting the great doctrinal truths of Scripture rather than avoiding these great doctrinal truths.

To water down biblical theology to the lowest common denominator of acceptability is the death knell of worship and orthodoxy and missions and morality and growth.

Illustration – I had lunch on Thursday with two customers - both are believers. After discussing work, our conversation moved to such theological topics as Baptism, End Times, and Election.

Application – True Fellowship only comes from the True Message (v. 5).

The teaching of the Word of God is the food for the soldier and the map for the traveler.

2nd Result of Life ...

B. Felicity

Point – **Joy; supernatural abiding joy that is in Christ**

Proof – **1 John 1:4** – “**And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.**”

“so that” – ina (*hina*) – Joy – this is the heart of pastor John - to give true assurance.

The divine order: Message ->Proclamation ->Fellowship -> Joy

Unity à Felicity

His opening prologue sweeps from eternity past (from the beginning) to eternity future (our eternal joy **with Christ**)

“**made complete**” – made perfect – state of fullness accomplished in the past and sustained in the present - fullness of joy

One biblical phrase that best sums up the Christmas Message is surely **Luke 2:9** – “I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people” → **That a Savior has been born**

The Son of the Most High came from a pre-existence in glory to be “*despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief*”. He who was eternally rich made himself a poor man.

When he entered this world he laid aside His garb of heaven.

Luke 2:10– “But the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;”

This means eyes to the *blind*. This means ears to the *deaf*. This means feet to the *lame*. This means cleansing for the *leper*. This means the forgiveness of sins and life everlasting.

Luke 2:11 – “for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”

Illustration – When a baby is born he is born to his parents. He is theirs. When he is the firstborn son of the King, then he is born a prince to his people and a future King to them.

Application – In the same way, “**There has been born for you a Savior.**” To every one of us, a Savior has been born – for us to receive as Prophet, Priest and King.

The very heart of the Christmas Message is a promise of salvation.

3rd Result of Life ...

C. Purity

Point – **Unity gives Felicity** which produces **Purity**

Fellowship -> Joy -> Holiness;

Proof – **1 John 2:1** – “**My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin.**”

1 John 1:6-7 - “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

One author said this – *“Without the incarnation, Christianity isn’t even a very good story, and most sadly, it means nothing. ‘Be nice to one another’ is not a message that can give my life meaning, assure me of love beyond brokenness, and break open the dark doors of death with the key of hope ... The incarnation is an*

essential part of Jesus-shaped spirituality.”

John wants us to build up our spiritual muscles.

We don't build up our spiritual muscles to show them off.

We build them up to use them!

Illustration – I used to lift weights just to lift weights. When I really started getting into BJJ and MMA, Margie said she like my muscles a lot better. They looked more real than those muscles built up in bodybuilding for show. These muscles were built up to use.

Application – God wants us to use our spiritual muscles in our neighborhoods and workplaces. Not just for show and for our blessing, but so that we have sanctified Christ in our hearts.

4th Result of Life ...

D. Certainty

Point – Lifespring/Source of Life all the way through the book

Proof – **1 John 5:13** – “**These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life.**”

The gospel message → Why we can be certain ... because of upon whom our salvation is based. It is not based on something you or I did or did not do, it is based on what Christ did and did not do. In His humanity, He lived a life of perfect obedience to God. He never sinned. Our salvation is based on His life, His death and His resurrection. That is why Jesus Christ gets the glory.

To give true assurance (5:13 comes from John 20:31)

To remove false assurance (2:4)

To warn and to instruct. Polemical and practical.

CONCLUSION

The great masters of imagination, like Edmund Spenser or John Bunyan or Paul, have thought of life under two metaphors, a pilgrimage and a battle. Sometimes it seems more like a pilgrimage, and at other times more like a battle.

For example:

In this warfare some of us are only raw recruits. All we know about the battle is the music of the bands, the cheering of the populace, and the waving of the banners in the sunlight. Our uniforms are new and unstained, and our step is eager and elastic.

Others are in the midst of the strife, standing in the forefront of the hottest battle, their uniforms stained and torn, their faces blackened with powder, their dreams of anticipation changed into a desperate reality.

Others, again, are nearing the end of the battle, their armor well hacked and dented with the blows of the foe, and their visage marred, and soon for them will sound the trumpet of recall.

But for one and all, life is a battle. When a royal infant is born, his name is at once inscribed on the roll of one of the regiments of the army. In like manner, man is born to a place on the battlefield. Is there not a warfare appointed unto man? The puzzle of life begins the moment we forget that it is a struggle and a battlefield, not an end in itself, but a battle where, by the conflict we are trained and tested and put on probation for the life which is to come.

These two **Great Incarnational Christmas Truths** from the first Epistle of John are lights to guide us along the Way as we remember that the Word of God is a map for the traveler and food for the soldier.