

1 John 1:1-4

“Eternal Life Made Manifest”

Of the inner circle that surrounded Jesus; John alone remained. All of the other apostles (with the exception of Judas) had died a martyr's death for the cause the gospel. John as well had been sentenced to a martyr's death but having been placed in a cauldron of boiling oil only to continue living he was banished to the isle of Patmos where he would receive what's become the book of Revelation. God wasn't finished with John therefore John would be here until God's purpose for him had been fulfilled. It's good to know that as believers God keeps *His* hand on *our* lives, that He will never leave us nor forsake us; that we need not fear those who can destroy our *body*, because we fear Him who can destroy both the body and the *soul* in hell... (Matt 10:28) Of all the apostles John would be the one who would go on to lead a very long and full life; such to the extent that by the time he wrote these last 3 epistles of his he may've been in the upwards of even 100 yrs old.

You know, as you sift through the scriptures, the NT in particular it's fairly easy to sense the personalities of guys like Peter, and Paul. Peter seemed to be a very straightforward boisterous kinda fella who spoke 1st and thought later; at least initially. As the early church came into existence we find him operating as a Spirit-filled man who became what we might consider to be the “premier” apostle in that he had the primary leadership role with in the church. Paul came onto the scene like a storm and considered it his personal mission to conquer the world for Christ. Oh not with military might; the weapons of warfare that he would employ would be mighty in God, for pulling down strongholds and every high thing that exalted itself against the knowledge of God. 2/3 of our NT would be penned through the apostle Paul.

However John isn't so simple, John would be relatively quiet, seemingly obscure, a behind the scenes kinda guy who would operate in such humility that when penning his gospel he wouldn't even refer to himself by name but would simply/indirectly refer to, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” John, this evidently young man at the time Christ had called him would be the one who would be found at the last supper in the closest possible place to Jesus that he could be. There he was leaning back upon the breast of Jesus, feeling Him breathe, hearing His heart, looking up *at* Him and asking that question *to* Him, “Lord, who is it?” “Who is it who will betray You?”

It's interesting to me that though Paul would surface as the apostle of faith and Peter would become the apostle of hope, John would emerge as the apostle of love; why? What makes that so fascinating? The fact that when Jesus *called* John he seemed to be just about *anything* but loving; as a matter of fact it would be James and John (they were brothers) whom Jesus would give the name, “The sons of thunder” these guys had thunderous temperaments; as is typical of youth there was a *passion* about these guys that had yet to be bridled. Perhaps you

recall that day that they were passing through Samaria on the way to Jerusalem. It was James and John who went before them to seek to find lodging for them; but the Samaritans refused them (there was long time ethnic tension between the Jews and the Samaritans). So James and John confronted Christ on the issue ...

“Lord, do You want us to command fire to fall from heaven and consume them just like Elijah did?” These guys were hot! We read, “*But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.’*” Luke 9:55 So they went to another village; a quick life lesson on the Lord’s agenda. He came to bring salvation, not condemnation.

On another occasion the disciples happened upon a man who was casting out demons in Jesus’ name who wasn’t in their circle, he wasn’t of their denomination, didn’t do ministry exactly like they did. “We told him to quit” John said, “Because he doesn’t follow along with us.” Jesus issued another hearty rebuke saying, “Don’t forbid him; the one who isn’t against us is on our side.” Life lesson #2, not everyone has to do things exactly like we do to be right with the Lord. God can and will bless the endeavors of others who do what they do in Jesus’ name even if it’s with a little different take, even if they don’t go to your church. If they’re legitimately serving the Lord, than praise the Lord, leave ‘em alone. John, in his zeal had completely missed the heart of Christ in the matter.

Then there was that other incident, do you remember? It sorta completes the portrait for us. He and his brother whisper to their mother; then in short order she approaches Jesus with a request. “Can the 2 premier places of authority (the seat at Your right hand and Your left hand) be reserved for my boys when You come into power in Your kingdom?” Jesus told her that that decision really wasn’t His to make but later on the other disciples heard of their endeavor to get the “one up” on them which caused them to react in understandable anger. Of course Jesus had to explain once again that when it comes to greatness in the kingdom of God it won’t be found in authority but in servanthood. An attitude far removed from the present self-centered agendas of James and John.

But I think we can all identify with John, we’ve all had hotheads, or have been hotheaded. We understand the drive to succeed; the hunger to be somebody and the desire to gain a high place even if it’s at the expense of your friends. They’re ambitions and attitudes common to this world; yet the bible calls us as believers to crucify these kind of tendencies and lead lives of holiness. We understand young John all too well... why is that? Because he’s so much like us.

But by the time John begins to pen his writings he too is an altogether different man, he's man whose favorite word is *love*, a man who is gentle and meek and concerned not for himself but for the well being of others. This guy has been *transformed*; Jesus had taken this young man who was so set on self, who was hotheaded and at times ill-willed toward others and created a man of compassion, of tenderness, of care, of concern...of love.

You see when John refers to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved, I don't think that it's with the thought that Jesus loved him, or preferred him above the others. But rather as John looked back on who he'd been, the attitude he'd taken, it wasn't that, "*Even Jesus loved me.*" But rather it was that "Jesus loved...*even me.*" "He looked at me, he knew all that was with in me and yet He *loved* me." John could see Jesus loving on Him and through that working transformation in Him; and I'm so glad that Jesus is still in the business of looking into our hearts today and choosing to love us, despite what He finds in us; and He takes us and transforms us. God does exceedingly great things, in the lives of anything but great people.

He looks into you, and He *loves* you. He takes a hothead and makes a man of tenderness and love. He can take a rude and otherwise inconsiderate and unthoughtful individual and transform him into a tactful, sensitive to the situation kind of guy who seeks to bring healing and hope to people's lives. Here's the point; as we spend time *with* Jesus we become more *like* Jesus. Being transformed from glory to greater glory as by the Spirit of the Lord...

Ok, why did John write this epistle? Because by the time John was preparing to pass from the scene there were some pretty prominent thoughts beginning to surface and circulate concerning Jesus and who He was. The church wasn't even a century old and already there was speculation concerning the person of Jesus Christ

The primary perspective thought to be in view is that of Gnosticism. The word "Gnostic" means "to know," you may be more familiar with the word, "agnostic" which basically means, "I *don't* know." The Gnostics claimed a superior kind of an elitist knowledge, and there were 2 groups found with in Gnosticism, 1 were the Docetists; the other Cerinthians. The Docetists didn't believe that Jesus came in the flesh because any physical matter (they taught) was evil. Therefore Jesus was more like a phantom that had the appearance of a man. The Cerinthians (though they agreed with the Docetists concerning the essential evil of matter) believed that Jesus was basically accepted as "a Christ" (if you will), that the "Christ – Spirit" came upon Him at His baptism and departed from Him at the cross.

There were also 2 schools of thought regarding sin in the Gnostic philosophy. Because they all maintained that all matter was evil it caused one group of people to be more stoic, they gave way to asceticism, punishing their bodies seeking to bring it into subjection through dealing with themselves harshly and severely. The other group went the polar opposite way, since the spirit was pure but the body was evil by nature they fed it it's every desire so it wouldn't plague them, taking more of an epicurean perspective maintaining that the spirit and the body were distinctly separate from one another so that what you did in the body was irrelevant as it pertained to your spirit.

John will deal with all of that; that the flesh in and of itself is not evil, that Jesus was fully Divine and fully human; that we *can* sin in the body and it very directly impacts our spiritual disposition. He also will advocate testing the spirits by 2 primary tests. Don't believe everything and everyone you hear no matter how intelligent they may sound or how convincing their argument may be. Put them to the test in these areas, #1 A moral-ethical test; do they keep the commandments of Christ and the apostles, do they obey the word and love the Christian community? #2 A faith test, do they have the proper perspective and understanding of Jesus?

Once again you might just note that in refuting various heresies John didn't attack the false teachers but rather he simply expounded on the truth. If you know the truth you recognize the lie. Let's look at these 1st 4 Vs together as we begin our journey through 1st John.

Vs1-4

So John makes it very clear here right from the beginning that he wants to talk to us about the Person and the nature of Jesus Christ One has said that the gospel of John sets out to show the Deity of Jesus taking His humanity for granted while 1st John sets out to show the humanity of Jesus taking His Deity for granted. Obviously we could spend considerable time in the very 1st Vs.

John begins, "That which was from the beginning." The question comes up, "Which beginning is John talking about?" The bible references 3 beginnings, there's the beginning referenced in Genesis 1:1, "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" Gen 1:1 Is John referencing the beginning of creation here? There's also the beginning found in the gospel of John, "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*" John 1:1 That beginning takes us back *before* creation just as far back as you want to go, from the point that you can no longer comprehend a time so long ago the Word was with God and the Word *was* God from before then.

Jesus comes out to meet you from before that time. Then there's the beginning of the gospel message which begins about 2,000 yrs ago when God sent forth His only begotten Son to be born of a virgin and lead a sinless life so that He could die a sinners death on your behalf and mine. "*But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be Ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth are from of old, From everlasting.*" Mic 5:2 That time when according to the 14th Vs of the 1st Ch of John's gospel, the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us...

Now to me it doesn't really matter which beginning you ascribe to because they're all equally true. It would seem to me that John is perhaps pointing to the origin of the gospel message simply because he references in more than one occasion the things that they've been taught from the beginning meaning from the time they originally heard the gospel message. His whole intent is to take people back to the fundamentals of the faith that they'd learned so long ago from those who were actually there lest their perspective be perverted by heretics. "Let's get back to the beginning" John is saying, "Don't deviate from the things you've been taught by the apostles of the Lord."

Regardless of which view you take I think it's important to note the word "was" in the phrase, "That which *was* from the beginning" not that which "is" from the beginning. Whatever point in time and eternity you want to point to the important thing to realize is that Jesus (the 2nd Person of the triune God) was already there; He is eternal in nature.

But John is here issuing a warning against receiving a message *about* Christ from someone who didn't even *know* Christ, who wasn't there listening *to* Christ with their own ears. That's why it's so critical that when it comes to the local assembly you want to find a place that teaches straight from the word of God. Who receives their doctrine from those who've known the Lord in an "I've been there *with* Him, spoke straight *to* Him while He was here on the earth" kind of way. Be careful of "fresh revelation" in the sense of something someone "receives from God" that has no bearings in the Word of God. God will never issue a word that in some way conflicts or contradicts His *written* word. Where did the whole idea of "Holy Laughter" come from? Remember that a # of yrs ago, the "Toronto blessing?" Well, I guess it came from Toronto because it didn't come from the Lord; it's not supported by the scripture stay away from it. I was watching a You tube video whereby the Pastor tried for 5 minutes to read a verse of the scripture but he couldn't because every time he'd begin to quote scripture people would break out in laughter and so God's word couldn't go forth, now I don't see anything "holy" about that. Be careful of what you're receiving and who you're receiving it from, does it line up with that which was from the beginning; God's word as given through the apostles of the Lord?

John says, "We've heard Him with our ears."

That word “heard” speaks of *perceiving the sense of what is being said*. In other words, “I learned from Jesus personally, He taught me and gave understanding to me.” It’s also in the perfect tense which speaks of a past action with present ongoing results. The point being, “I heard Christ in the past but His words are still impacting my life today.” Listen, here’s the deal; if your heart is open *to* the Lord and you’re learning *from* the Lord the same will be true for you. Because God’s word is alive; remember Jesus said, “*It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.*” John 6:63 God’s word has this way of permeating you, and resonating in you, you may’ve heard something 15 yrs ago and it still stirs in you, shapes you and resonates in you today and it will continue to till the day you die. Decades had passed since Jesus and John had walked side by side physically, yet the things He’d taught him in the past were still impacting him presently. Think it through, does God’s word make an ongoing impact in your life, does it penetrate you, make changes in you and influence you in a way that maintains its resolve beyond your time at church? Do you have “ears to hear” what the Spirit is saying?

John says, “We’ve heard Him” “We’ve *seen* Him and *looked upon* Him.” The words “looked upon” speak of “gazing intently” “viewing attentively” it’s not a passing glance. It’s the word from which we get our word “theatre”, that place you go and sit so as to stare at something for hours with a mind to glean even the details. Now *we’re* in a place where like Peter said concerning Christ, “Whom having not seen we love” but for John it wasn’t that way. He’d seen Christ, for over 3 yrs he’d gazed upon Him intently; he was taught and changed by Him personally. It was John who recorded the words of Jesus for us as Jesus applied that scene in the wilderness wanderings of Israel to Himself. “*And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*” John 3:14-15 Due to sin and rebellion the children of Israel were being bitten in judgment by serpents and they were dying. God told Moses to fashion a bronze serpent and lift it up on a pole and whoever would look to that serpent would be saved, that is spared the penalty of death. Jesus applied that to Himself and was saying in essence, “Mankind has been bitten by the serpent of sin, but I’m going to be lifted up on a cross, and whoever will look to Me will be saved, that is spared the penalty of death; eternal separation from God.” We’re to look in faith to Jesus alone for salvation, but what John is saying is that we should really go beyond the simple saving glance and gaze upon Him intently, let Him work change into us personally. You might understand it like this, to really *see* Jesus, to *look to* Jesus saves, to *gaze upon* Jesus sanctifies. John 1:14, “*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld* (same word) *His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.*” Can I challenge you and say that there are some here today who need to move beyond simply looking to Jesus for salvation and really begin to *gaze upon* Him and let Him work sanctification into your life...

“Our hands have handled concerning the Word of life” John takes it to the next level here. He did more than even gaze upon Him, he handled Him, touched Him, not only on the pre-side of the resurrection but on the post side as well. You remember that when Jesus appeared to them after the resurrection they all freaked out (understandably so) was wondering if maybe they were seeing a ghost. Jesus said, “*Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.*” Luke 24:39

That word handle is the same word we have here, they handled Him, they touched Him, He had a body, He wasn't a Spirit or some phantom that only appeared human, He had flesh and bones. The 2nd person of the Triune God (the Word of Life) was made flesh or was manifested (notice Vs 2).

Vs2

What does it mean to be made manifest? The word means, “to make actual and visual” or “to be plainly recognized, thoroughly understood.” John says that the life was *manifested*. That is it was made visual, tangible, plainly recognizable and thoroughly understood; what is “the life” it's not what...it's *who*. We read in John's gospel where Jesus said, “*I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?*” John 11:25-26 He said, “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.*” John 14:6 Jesus is that *eternal life* which was with the Father made manifest to John and the other apostles and those to whom Jesus ministered during His ministry upon the earth. If I were to ask you to define for me “eternal life” what would you say? “It's not going to hell, but getting into heaven.” I would say that's part of it, but it's certainly not the essence of it, “It's living forever in eternal bliss with my friends and loved ones” that's part of it, not the essence of it. Understand that eternal life is not a place, it's not a philosophy, it's not a certain ideology; eternal life is a person *specifically* and that Person is Jesus Christ Now; you either have Christ in your heart, or you don't; you've either come to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God or you haven't. You either trust in Him with all that you are, or you don't; it's that simple. If you trust in Christ, you have *eternal life*, if you don't trust Christ, you don't have eternal life. So here's the question, do you have eternal life? Do you abide in Christ, does His word abide in you?

Again we note the eternity of His nature, He was *with* the Father. Remember when He was praying just prior to the cross and He said, “*And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.*” John 17:5 Yet He was made manifest to us, “*And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh,*” 1 Timothy 3:16

Vs3

Notice that John is emphatic concerning his identification of who Jesus is, He's the Son of God, the Son of the Father. Over and over again we'll see Him refute and reject those who deny the fact that Jesus in the flesh is the Christ, and that the one who denies that fact is a liar and is not of God; and if a person isn't right about Christ, then they're not right about God because Jesus is God's complete revelation of Himself to man.

But you can already see the importance of these things in that John continues even in these 1st few Vs to repeat himself over and over again. It's because he wants it to penetrate our hearts and our consciences. So that we might be on the same page with him so that we might have what? Fellowship with one another, you see if you and I am to have fellowship with God and fellowship with you than something needs to happen.

Because how can a holy God fellowship with sinful man? 1st of all let's consider the word the word "fellowship" it's *koinonia* it speaks of having something in common. God is holy, we're sinful, how can 2 walk together lest they be agreed? We have nothing in common with God; So God sends Christ, He somehow and in some way wraps Himself in our humanity, goes to the cross for the sins of the world and makes a way where there was no way so that God might forgive us and actually make family of us.

The bible teaches that when we trust Christ we become "partakers (2 Pet 1:4) of the Divine nature" that word "partakers" in Peter's epistle is from the same Greek root that is translated "fellowship" here in 1 John 1:3. What am I saying? That Christ took on the nature of man so that we might by faith receive the very nature of God!

So that we might "fellowship" with one another, it's in the heart of every man, we all want to be wanted, need to be needed, (ok I'm done with the cheap trick reference). But the point is well made, man hates loneliness, Christians have genuine fellowship with God and with one another, Jesus promised "I am with you always."

But that's why it's so important that we have a proper understanding of who Jesus is, so that we might *know* Him, be forgiven *by* Him and experience fellowship/communion *with* Him.

Vs4

We'll pick up on this point next time; there's a very distinct and definite difference between true joy and simple happiness, God wants you to have fullness of joy, the joy of the Lord is your strength.

Eternal life has been made manifest in the Person of Jesus Christ Fix your gaze upon Him, let Him take you and make you who He desires you to be, Come out from among them And be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, And I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, And you shall be My sons and daughters, Says the Lord Almighty. 2 Cor 6:17-18 Give to Jesus *His* way in *your* heart today...

Prayer Points:

Lord help us to turn our eyes upon You and to learn what it means to fix our gaze upon You; that You might change us, that we might decrease so that You might increase in our lives. We thank You for loving us, for looking into us, and yet choosing to love us and to give Yourself for us. Thank You for making whole our otherwise torn, beat up and battered lives; and for becoming the Son of Man, that we might become the sons and daughters of God. May we lead lives of holiness to the glory of Your name.

A little earlier I asked you a question; do you have Christ in your heart? Do you have eternal life? If you can't say with certainty that you do, then why not do something about that right now? If you can't recall a time when Jesus came into your life, and made you different, filled you, forgave you, made you whole and healed your hurting heart than now is the time for you to receive Jesus into your life, into your heart. God has loved you with an everlasting love; He'll forgive you of your sin and wash you whiter than snow, all you have to do is trust Him for it, will you do that?