

Jesus: Actual, Factual & Real (1 John 1:1-4)

Introduction:

- I. On the Northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee, in a city called Capernaum, there lived a man by the name of Zebedee. Zebedee had two sons, James and John, who were called by Christ to be His disciples and who were destined to be two of His twelve apostles. While James became the first martyr from among the apostles, John remained as one of the more prominent apostles throughout the New Testament.

- II. John was responsible for five books of our New Testament: The Gospel of John; 1, 2 & 3 John and of course The Book of Revelation. It is clear from his epistles that at the time of their writing, John was in a battle with false teachers who had invaded the church. We can't be sure who these false teachers were exactly, but there is little doubt that the Gnostic teachings that began to flourish during the second century were an outgrowth of what John was wrestling with in his epistles. This morning I want to look at the first four verses of First John chapter one, in a sermon simply entitled, "Jesus: Actual, Factual & Real. Let's look at four things that we learn from this text.

Lesson:

I. **Jesus Has Existed Eternally with the Father.**

1 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; 2 (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you THAT ETERNAL LIFE, WHICH WAS WITH THE FATHER, and was manifested unto us).

This truth that John reveals to us here should significantly raise one's view of Jesus. You see, Jesus is not just another created being. Jesus is eternal. Jesus has been with the Father from the beginning and that fact is a declaration to us of His divinity (**Jn. 1:1-2**). Listen to me: when the beginning began Jesus was already there. When the heaven and the earth were created and darkness prevailed upon the face of the deep, Jesus was there. When the first glimmer of light broke through that darkness, Jesus was there. When the firmament was created in the midst of the water and the waters that were under the firmament were divided from the waters that were above the firmament, Jesus was there. When the waters under the heaven were gathered together in one place and the dry land was called Earth, and the waters were called Seas, Jesus was there. When the day was divided from the night and the two great lights were made, the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the

night, Jesus was there. When the seas were filled with living beings, the skies with the fowls of the air, and the earth with cattle and creeping things, Jesus was there. And when, as the crowning point of creation, man was created in God's own image and after His own likeness, Jesus was there. You see, when the beginning began Jesus was already there. How do I know this. I know it because John says that Jesus was with God in the beginning. And Jesus Himself affirmed His eternal nature.

Rev 22:13

I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.

Sadly, there are those who teach that Jesus is just a created being and that He is not divine, but the Bible doesn't teach that (**Jn. 1:3; Col. 1:16-17**). So then, Jesus is eternal and that means that He is God and has been God from the beginning which presupposes the fact that He was God before the beginning and has been God since the beginning. You see Jesus was God and is God; Jesus has always been God and will always be God and this is a fact verified throughout the word of God.

Titus 2:13

Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.

Heb 1:8

But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of thy kingdom.

II. Jesus Was Factually Manifested in the Flesh.

I John 1:1

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;

John is emphasizing here the reality of Christ in the flesh. Jesus, ladies and gentlemen, was actual, factual and real. How do we know this John? John would say because we have seen Him with our own eyes and have even touched Him with our own hands.

Now, this is the point when we need to look at the form of false doctrine that John was refuting. As I suggested earlier, the Gnostic doctrines of the second century may not have been fully developed in the first, but it is clear that the beginning rudiments of it, or what we might call the embryonic stages of it, did exist and John had to deal with it.

There were two kinds of Gnostics – Cerinthians and Docetics. The Cerinthians denied the deity of Jesus and the Docetics denied the humanity of Christ. As we have seen, John has already refuted Cerinthianism. Now he refutes docetism. These Gnostics denied the incarnation of Christ. The reason for this denial is that they believed that all matter was evil and sinful. The physical body being matter, they didn't believe that it was possible for Christ to inhabit it. Their conclusion, then, was that Christ was just an illusion. Here is what the Collegiate Dictionary says about Docetism.

Docetism

"A belief opposed as heresy in early Christianity that Christ only seemed to have a human body and to suffer and die on the cross (Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary).

In our text, John is clearly refuting this false doctrine.

1 John 1:2

(For the life was MANIFESTED, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the father, and was MANIFESTED unto us).

What is John saying? He is saying that Jesus took on a real body. Paul also affirmed this truth.

1 Tim. 3:16

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.

Listen to me: Jesus was a real man with a real body. He lived a real life at a real time and in a real place. Jesus experienced real pain as He died a real death on a real cross and He secured for us a real hope of a real salvation. Jesus was not just an illusion. Jesus, ladies and gentlemen, was Actual, Factual and Real!!!

Why is this so important? It's important because without a real body, Jesus not have been a real sacrifice and we would still be lost. Thank God that Jesus was willing and ready to take on a human body (**Heb. 10:1-10**). This is why when we partake of the Lord's Supper we don't just drink the fruit of the vine. We first partake of the bread which represents His body, don't we? Why? Because without a real, flesh and blood body there could be no real sacrifice for sin and thus we would have no real salvation. Thank God Jesus was willing to take on a human body.

Phil 2:6-7

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: 7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Again, it was this act of being made in the likeness of men, that allowed Jesus to become our propitiation and to pave the way for our salvation. John, can we be sure that Christ really took on a body? “Yes,” John would say, “because we have seen and looked upon it, we have touched and handled the Word of life.” Now listen to me: anyone who denies this truth about Jesus, that is, that he is the Christ and that he lived a real life here on earth in a real body cannot be saved.

1 John 4:2-3

Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: 3 And every spirit that confesses not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God...

2 John 1:7

For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist.

III. Through Jesus We Can Have Fellowship with the Father & with Other Christians (ver. 3).

1 John 1:3

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

We should feel as John felt. As Christians we should want to enlarge our fellowship as much as possible. In fact, this should be our first objective in life. Our main mission, our primary purpose, our fundamental focus should be to get as many people as we can into fellowship with us. Why? Because we are so important? No, but because our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ and that is important. Now John looks at fellowship from two standpoints—vertically and horizontally.

A. Vertical Fellowship (*with God*).

This is the most important of all fellowship. Let me tell you, ladies and gentlemen, you want this fellowship. You see, fellowship with God means you have escaped the clutches of Satan and the control of sin. Fellowship with God means you have attained redemption and achieved justification. Fellowship with God means that you have become partners with the Supreme Being and

recipients of His amazing grace and saving power. This, ladies and gentlemen, is what fellowship with God really means.

It means when you are all alone on earth, you have the company of heaven. It means when you get tired of life, you have Someone who can give you the strength to keep on living. It means when you need assistance, there's always a helping hand. It means when you need Someone to talk to, there's always a listening ear. It means when you fall, there's always Someone to pick you up. This is what fellowship is all about. We have a One to see us through the ups and downs, trial and tribulations, dangers and difficulties of life and to finally save us in the end.

But be assured of this—fellowship with the Father, only comes through fellowship with the Son. Did you notice John said, *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that you also might have fellowship...”* John declared Christ because he knew that apart from the proclamation and reception of Christ, there can be no fellowship with God.

John 14:6

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 10:9

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

Jesus is the door that leads to the Father and the gospel is the key that opens the door. Jesus told Peter, “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven...” (**Matt. 16:19**). And Paul emphasized that the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (**Rom. 1:16**). Do you want fellowship with the Father? If so you must get to Him by way of the Son, and the only way you can do that is by obeying the inspired word of the Holy Spirit (**Acts 2:38**).

B. Horizontal Fellowship (*with Christians*).

The other fellowship John speaks of is horizontal. This is the fellowship that exist between fellow Christians and it too is a blessing from God. It is our fellowship with each other in Christ that helps us make it through the dangerous path of life. In fact, many of the blessings of our fellowship with God are realized through the instrumentality of other Christians. And remember, fellowship in the New Testament means sharing and sacrificing, not fun and frolic. Nowhere in the N.T. does the word fellowship imply fun and games.

The primary word for fellowship is *koinonia* and it is a word that always indicates either financial help for fellow Christians in need or some sort of spiritual activity. Listen: in Christ we are partners in prayer and associates in serving God. Through our common bond with Jesus, we commune with each other in spiritual things and thereby assist one another in our goal of pleasing God and making it to heaven. And let me tell you brethren, this is much better than trying to fight Satan alone.

IV. A Desire for Full Joy.

1 John 1:4

And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.

Joy is a vital characteristic of Christianity.

Ps 5:11

But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defends them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

Joy, ladies and gentlemen, is a divine directive and should be a part of every true Christian's life. *"But this world is full of disappointment and discouragement,"* someone says, *"so how can we be happy in such a place."* I didn't say happiness is a divine directive, I said joy is. There's a difference between joy and happiness and in fact they come from two different sources. Happiness comes from the world but joy comes from the Spirit of God. Happiness is derived from the circumstances of life while joy is a divine dimension that is not restricted by those circumstances. Happiness relies on situations, surroundings and our present state of affairs but joy transcends all of that. Joy is attained, not because of where we are, but because of where we are going. And thus we can have real joy even when life becomes problematic. Please know that I'm not saying that there is something wrong with being happy, in fact we will be happy in heaven. I'm just saying that earthly happiness is fleeting while the Christian's joy is fixed if we love the Lord and have the proper perspective of life.

Hab 3:17-19

Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labor of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: 18 Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. 19 The Lord God is my strength...

You see, ladies and gentlemen, we can rejoice always because God is our strength. No matter how bad things get we know that God can make things better. No matter what trouble tries to trounce upon us, we know

that God can deliver us from danger. This is why David was able to confront a giant and Daniel was able to face lions. This is why the apostles sang from prison and early saints praised God in the midst of fire. It is because God is our strength and in Him we can rejoice. It is because our joy rests not in the expectation of earthly grandeur, but in the promise of heavenly glory.

And what kind of joy can we have as Christians? John said "full joy." The Greek word for full means, "to make replete," or as Strong says "to cram." Have you ever crammed something full. You stuff and stuff and stuff until you can't fit any more into whatever it is your filling. That's what it means to cram. John is simply saying that he wants our lives to be filled, crammed-packed if you will, with the joy of Jesus. And the Bible encourages us as Christians to have this joy, partly because this is the characteristic that Jesus wants the world to see in us. Jesus doesn't want the world to see His followers as grief-stricken, regretful creatures who are forced into living a life they don't enjoy. Jesus wants people to see in His followers the benefits of becoming a Christian right now. And when we realize what we have in Christ, our joy can be full and others around will be able to see it.

Conclusion:

Well, this joy that we can have is real. And it is real because our fellowship with the Father is real. And our fellowship with the Father is real because Jesus is real. How can we be sure John? John says, "I tell you. It's because That which was from the beginning, we have heard, we have seen, we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, the Word of life."