

I John 1:1-4
(The prologue – establishes setting/background)
Week 2

Verse 1

A. From the beginning:

- *What does this mean? When exactly is this beginning?*
 - MacArthur: “When the reader first heard about Jesus.”
 - Calvin: From the beginning of His ministry (leads into “which we have heard...”). Even though we believe He always existed and also had an earthly beginning at His conception in Mary, this “beginning” refers to His earthly ministry.
 - Wright: *How are the opening verses of this letter reminiscent of Genesis 1?*
 - God’s presence is seen/experienced on earth by Adam.

B. Which we have heard (aural senses) – Jesus taught, etc.

- MacArthur: “...a spirit cannot be heard.” Is this true?

C. Which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon (visual senses)

- *What strikes you about these phrases?* Calvin: “...it is no redundancy, but a fuller expression for the sake of amplifying.”
- Take note that John always uses plural pronouns regarding the witnesses to Christ.

D. And our hands have handled (sense of touch)

- *Is this any more significant than the other senses? Why?* (Docetism)
- *Name some instances in the Bible when Jesus was handled?*
(Luke 7:38 – feet washed, Jesus face slapped before Caiaphas, the crucifixion)
- *Is there any significance as to the order in which these senses are listed?*

E. Concerning the Word of life (The object of this first verse!)

- Calvin sees the Word of life manifested in 2 ways:
 1. He infused life into all creation.
 2. He restores life to us (dead in Adam).

Where else in John’s writings do we see the language of verse 1? Read John 1:1-5

Verse 2

A. The life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life.

- The life (Calvin: Christ is the fountain of life as well as offering life to us.)
- Manifest. *What does the word mean?* (ship’s manifest)
- Again: manifest, seen (emphasis)
- Testify (bear witness to, from the Greek word martyreō): *What does it mean to testify? Do we testify to it?*
- Proclaim (preach, publish): *Do we proclaim it?*
- Christ, the eternal life! (What we are testifying and proclaiming to you.)

B. Which was with the Father and was made manifest to us.

- He was with the Father from all eternity.
- Again, He was made manifest to us. (*Is John trying to tell us something here?!*)

Verse 3

- A. **That which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you,**
- Again, proclaiming what he has seen and heard
- B. **So that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.**
- *Why are they (John in this epistle) proclaiming this to the recipients of this letter?*
 - Fellowship (communion, association, community, bond for a united purpose)
 - *What is the scope of this fellowship?*
 - This is not a faith just for me.
 - We are called to be one body.
 - Not just social relationships, but co-heirs of eternal life!
 - Fellowship with the Father means fellowship with the Son.

Verse 4

And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

- In the gospel we find complete and perfect happiness (Calvin).
- That completeness is also found in the oneness of the body (Calvin).
- This fellowship produces joy.

Application

1. What comfort do we have in knowing that Jesus had a physical body?
2. How should John's desire for fellowship with his readers apply to the church today?
3. How is that fellowship shared with the Father and Jesus? (We bond for a united purpose, namely, that He is glorified through us and His will is done amongst us.)
4. How does this complete our joy?

Misc. Notes

1. MacArthur likens Paul's language in his epistles (i.e. Romans) to that of a lawyer's, whereas John's language was more akin to that of a loving father.
2. In verse 1 we see a progression in the sensory proofs of Jesus' physicality.
3. In verse 3 we see another progression. This time in the scope of fellowship in the kingdom.
4. MacArthur sees the key theme in the book of 1 John as:
 - a. Joy
 - b. Holiness
 - c. Assurance
5. Sermons on John's epistles can be found at gty.org (apps are also available).

Next week: 1 John 1:5-10

- Watch for if/then (conditional statements)