

Thursday, March 7, 2024 • Read 1John 1:1–4

*Questions from the Scripture text: How does this letter begin (v1, cf. Jn 1:1, Gen 1:1)? What four things have the apostles been able to do with this? Concerning what (Whom!, cf. Jn 1:1–2)? What has been done with this life (v2)? Who saw it manifested? What have they done with what they have seen? What, specifically, have they witnessed and declared about? Where was this eternal life? To whom was He revealed? What does he emphasize, again, about the means of their knowing this (v3)? What does the apostle want his readers to have with the apostles? With Whom, really and ultimately, is this fellowship? What is the apostle doing now (v4)? What is the end result of their fellowship with the Father and the Son?*

**Why must we have a proper Christology?** 1John 1:1–4 prepares us for the second serial reading in public worship on the Lord’s Day. In these four verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that **we must believe the right things about Jesus, because we cannot have life, fellowship, and joy in a figment of our imagination.**

**True God.** The letter jumps immediately into the most important truth about Jesus. He is true God. “That which was from the beginning” (v1, cf. Gen 1:1, Jn 1:1) is God Himself. The Word of life (v1) is that eternal life which was with the Father (v2, cf. Jn 1:1). He has life in Himself (cf. Jn 1:4). Only God has life inherent to Himself. Anything and everything else only has life in dependence upon God. Jesus is God, not a creature or even the most glorified of creatures. A Jesus Who is not God is a figment of the imagination, not the true Christ.

**True Man.** Now the apostle emphasizes the genuineness of Christ’s incarnation. They heard Him, saw Him, beheld Him, and even touched Him with their own hands (v2). Apparently, already by the time this was written, heresies had begun to arise, teaching that Jesus had only appeared to be human. Certainly, such heresies continued for centuries. The historical reality of the incarnation (and life and death and resurrection) of Christ is absolutely essential. If you are to believe in Jesus, you must believe in this Jesus.

**True Life.** Jesus is the Word of life (v1). Here, the Word is especially a Name for Him as the divine Son, the second person of the Godhead (cf. Jn 1:1). He is the eternal life that was with (literally “facing”) the Father (v2). He was manifested (revealed), but this is stated twice in v2, with the second having not just the implication of “to” us but “for” us (which is also an appropriate translation). From Him alone does anything have life. And in Him alone can we have that eternal life from Him, which He has with the Father and the Spirit as everlasting God. He became a man so that by faith we might be united to Him in His righteousness and life. In Jesus we have God Himself, the righteousness of God, and the life of God.

**True Fellowship.** The apostle has preached and written that his readers might reject the cults that have any other view of Jesus than this true one. He wants his readers to have fellowship “with us,” with the apostles, with the church. But this was not some ploy to expand church numbers or make much of himself. The fact of the matter is that there is just the one true Christ and just the one true God. Anyone who is part of one of those sects, anyone who has another view of Christ, has no fellowship with the real God and the real Christ. Sweet fellowship with the church! It is not just fellowship with the church, but with the church’s God and Savior.

**True Joy.** And it is this fellowship that can give “full joy.” There are many pleasant things in God’s creation. But there is only one that can entirely fill up the joy of man: God Himself. We were created to enjoy Him, and if we are not enjoying Him, then whatever else we enjoy will ultimately leave us longing. But the only way that we may have Him as our joy is by fellowship with Him in His Son, the God-man, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what the apostle desires for his readers. This is what we ought to desire for ourselves, those we love, and all humanity: fullness of joy through faith in and fellowship with the true Christ. Is He (not some idea of Him, but the eternal Word, Who became true man) your joy? Then you will surely have full joy.

Who is Jesus from all eternity? What did He become? Why? Who saw Him and touched Him? Why did he write this letter? What should you be seeking, then, as you meditate upon this letter?

*Sample prayer: Lord, forgive us for how lightly we take the importance of true theology about Jesus. Too often, we are forgetful of His eternal, divine glory and life. Too often, we are not mindful of the genuineness of His humanity, His earthly life, and His heavenly intercession. Forgive us for not insisting more strongly upon this for those we love. We forget the greatness of the fellowship with you, and the joy in you, that belongs only to those who believe in the true Christ. Forgive us and help us, we ask, through that very Christ; AMEN!*

Suggested songs: ARP110B “The Lord Has Spoken to My Lord” or TPH268 “Of the Father’s Love Begotten”

(The following is a machine-generated transcription. PLEASE BE AWARE of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording via [hopewellarp.org](http://hopewellarp.org))

First John 1 verses one through four. These are God's words. 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. Concerning the word of life. The life was manifested and we have seen and bear witness and declare to you that eternal life.

Which was with the father. And was manifested to us. That which we have seen and heard. We declare to you that you also May have fellowship with us. And truly, our fellowship is with the father. And with his son, Jesus Christ. And these things we write to you. That your joy.

Maybe.

So far. The reading of gods inspired and inerrant word. So we see that Jesus. Truly man.

Wants to be as plain and Insistent, as possible. That Jesus didn't just appear to be a man. He was not. Um, a ghost. They heard him. They saw him. They touched. God, the son really did. Become a true man. He took to himself a true body and a reasonable soul.

As we heard last week as we were thinking last week in the catechism, Then he was made of the substance of Mary. By the holy Spirit as we Um, Thinking about in this week's, A question and answer from the shorter. Catechism. And so, the true God, That, which was from the beginning and that, which is The word of life.

And that eternal life, which was with the Father, the true God. Has become also true man. So that's the first thing. Uh, he enhances. Why is it so important that he insists? That the true God has been true, man. It is because in him his true life for us, In John's gospel.

Uh, towards the beginning of the Gospel, which shares, many of the themes and the opening verses of that gospel in the opening verses of this letter. Uh, he makes the point that in him was life. It's not true of anyone, but God. Life is only inherent to God. Everything else that as life is dependent, Upon God does not have life in and of itself.

But Jesus is the Eternal life. The word of. So you have the father of life, the word of life, or the son of life, and the spirit of God has life in himself. Father, Son and Holy. And this true life became true man. In order to be manifested to us to be revealed to us and especially Uh, was manifested to the apostles.

Who not only saw him by faith, but also Uh, or eyewitnesses. Of his genuine. Humanity, the word became flesh and those who saw him in both ways bailed. True

man. True flesh. But also true God, they beheld. His glory. And so, Jesus is. True man. And true God. And true life for us.

And then also true Fellowship. Verse 3 that which we have seen and heard. We declare to you that you also may have fellowship with us. And truly, our fellowship is with the father. And with his son, Jesus Christ. And we might even say, The spirit whom he has given.

But it is, especially The Fellowship of the father and the son. That the felt that the spirit ministers to us in our fellowship with him, So at the end of second Corinthians, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and The Fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you.

And when Jesus is promising, that the spirit would come And be not just with us, but in He promises that those to whom the spirit. Does this? The father and the son will come and make their home with us and dwell with us. By the ministry of the spirit.

And so you say, where is the spirit in verse 3? Well, the spirit is, the one who is giving this true fellowship with the father And true fellowship with the sun. Do you think that that comes in any other way than by the active Almighty, working of God? And it absolutely does the third person of the godhead in particular The spirit, ministering to us the fellowship of the father and the son.

Now, what are you saying here is, if they, you don't have fellowship with the apostles If your faith in Jesus Christ is not given to you by the Holy Spirit. Especially By use of the apostolic testimony and the scriptures, which the spirit is carrying John long to write as he writes this letter.

And especially if the spirit has not. Uh blessed to you that which the apostles saw and heard and handled that is that the true God has become true, man. If you belonged, for instance, To one of the many Cults, that either held that Jesus was not true. God. That he was some kind of creature.

That came into existence. When he appeared as a man, or That he was true God but somehow wasn't true, man? That he only appeared to be human. Or that he was. Uh, human that ended up getting divinely adopted. So that Isn't true. God who became true, man? Added a true Humanity.

True nature. True. Human nature to himself. There were, there were Cults already at the time that believed other things about Jesus, and there would be more of them in the first few centuries. And there are more of them in every century. But the Apostle is saying, That which we have seen and heard we declare to you.

That you also may have fellowship with us. He's not saying just so that you'll be on our side or you'll be in our church. But because the app the apostles and their Apostolic witness and the scriptures that the Holy Spirit gave by means of the Apostles and the doctrine that the Holy Spirit gave in those scriptures.

Those are the means by which the Triune God, gives men fellowship with himself and Jesus Christ. Those are the means by which the triune God gives men life from himself in Jesus Christ, And so, it's vitally important for you, that you actually have fellowship with the apostles that you have a shared.

Doctrine of God, the Triune God, that you have a shared doctrine of Christ, fully God, and fully man. That you have these in sharing in common in Fellowship with the apostles. Because these are the means by which God gives you fellowship with himself, Faith in Jesus Christ by the life of the Holy Spirit.

And if you have this true Fellowship in the true, God who became true man? To give you true life, Then you will have true Joy. There are many other things that give Momentary pleasure, or light pleasure. But what God gives when he gives himself to someone is, Infinite and eternal pleasure or As the or to use the language of verse 4, full.

Joy, these things we write to you that your joy may be full That your joy may not be in any temporary light creaturely thing. But that above all of the other Pleasures above, all of the other happiness that you have. You have God himself as your joy. Now, if you Infinite Joy capacity and an increasing Joy capacity.

The only thing that can, Uh, that can cause your joy meter as it were. To go all the way up to full. Is the Living God is fellowship with himself. And so, John says, These things we write to you. So that you may have the God who became man to give you his life and fellowship with himself.

That you may have him as your joy and your joy may be full.

And so, Uh, his Joy is full and our joy is full. This is one of those few places where The so-called received text. Diverges from the majority text. The, the scripture. I handed down Through the Ages in the church says that our joy may be full ours and the apostles together.

May the Lord give you to have this Doctrine and not depart from it. Because if you don't have this Doctrine then, You don't have the true God and you don't have the true Christ. You just have ideas. And our ideas are no better than the work of our hands.

We have to carry them. They cannot carry us. And so, the Lord give you, Keep having this Doctrine. About the true Jesus. That your joy may be full as well. And then, let's pray. We thank you, Our Father for giving your son. And we thank you. Father and our Lord Jesus Christ for giving your spirit.

That we may have life through faith in Christ. We praise You. Lord Jesus. Who are God from all eternity and added. Humanity, to yourself that the life, which was in you. Might become our light. We pray that you would give us that fellowship with your true church that is throughout the ages.

That believes these truths about you. Well, we pray, most of all that we would have fellowship with you, our God. Father, Son and Holy. That we would have life in Christ and joy to the full. Because you, oh, God are our joy grant that it would be. So, We pray that you would not allow us to be slaves to lesser pleasures.

But that every true and proper Delight, we would enjoy, As a subsidiary. Of our enjoying you. So we ask it all in Christ's name. Amen.