

# 1 John 1:1-4 That your joy may be complete

November 23, 2008

*Unless otherwise stated, all scripture references are from the English Standard Version (ESV)*

This morning we are going to begin working our way through the letter of 1John.

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It is widely accepted that this letter was written by the apostle John. John is also credited with writing the gospel of John, 2&3 John and Revelation.

If you have read John's gospel you will immediately get a sense from the writing style and content that John is the author.

The beginning of this letter has a similar ring to the beginning of his gospel.

Let's read both.

1 John 1:1-3

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life. The life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us

John 1:1-4

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

## Why was John writing this letter?

He states four reasons:

1 John 1:4

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

1 John 2:1

I am writing these things to you so that **you may not sin.**

1 John 2:26

I write these things to you about **those who are trying to deceive you.**

1 John 5:13

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life.

In summary of these four points. John is wanting God's people whom he was pastoring to be:

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**Strong** (Neh 8:10 for the joy of the Lord is your strength and he is wanting our joy to be complete)

**Holy** (still having the ability to sin, but having the God given grace & power to resist sin and to live holy)

**Discerning** (that we will be able to tell the difference between the true and the false and stick with the true).

**Assured** that we have eternal life (that is it is both something we look forward to in the future, but also possess right now in the present).

John was writing for the churches that he was pastoring to combat a dangerous false teaching that was beginning to spread toward the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> century known as Gnosticism.

Gnosticism basically denied the humanity of Christ i.e. that Jesus was not fully human but rather believed that "the Christ" entered Jesus just after birth and departed just before His death.

As a result they denied His literal, physical death and bodily resurrection from the dead.

Now let's take a closer look at the first four verses.

1 John 1:1

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life

This verse is speaking of Jesus who was from the beginning although in John's style of writing he doesn't state this explicitly. But from his Gospel and the other New Testament letters we know clearly that it is Jesus he is speaking of. The one who was in the beginning with God and was God and that God made everything through and

made everything for, so that in everything Jesus might have the premier place in our lives, affections and devotions.

Jesus was NO mere man. Please get this.

All other faiths have been founded by mere men, imperfect, fallible.

Jesus founded a faith that was to be placed squarely in Him as God in the flesh, perfect, infallible. Not in any dogmas or belief systems, or moral principles, but ONLY in Him.

We follow, live for and worship Jesus and anything that comes before Him in our lives is an idol - no matter how good that idol is.

Our devotion and worship of Jesus should be a growing thing, getting closer and closer to Him every day until we see Him face to face. Just as it was for John who first heard of Him and then saw Him and then touched Him with his hands.

Is this your experience of Jesus?

Is He just a story that you have heard, or are you seeing Him?

Is your faith growing in Him so that you are now also touching Him?

1 John 1:2

the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us

1 John 1:3

that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Jesus here is called THE ETERNAL LIFE - life without beginning and life without end. Eternal life is more about being with Jesus than it is about just being in heaven.

John is testifying to this life so that we may have fellowship or partnership with:

- a) The Father
- b) The Son and
- c) With each other

What does this fellowship look like in practical terms? This is how John Piper describes it.

*“Fellowship (koinonia) is a personal experience of sharing something significant in common with others. It's the pleasure of being in a group when you see eye to eye on what really matters. It's having similar values and responding with the same kind of affections to what really counts. It's what gives root and fiber and fruit to a Christian marriage.*

*So to say you have fellowship with the Father and his Son means that you have come to share their values. You believe what they believe and love what they love. And so you delight to spend time together. You love to include them in all that you do. You cherish the thought of spending an eternity getting to know them better”.*

I want to draw your attention to how this fellowship occurs.

It begins with the Father and it **must** include the son before we can ever have fellowship with each other.

You cannot automatically have fellowship with someone just because they say they believe in God - even the demons believe in God and shudder James 2:19.

Do the people you speak to and wish to have fellowship also believe that:

- Jesus is God in the flesh
- who died in our place
- to pay the debt for our sins
- and rose again 3 days later
- to show that sin and death had no hold over Him
- and that He alone can grant eternal life to those who would believe in His name?

What about you - do you believe these things?

Can I encourage you to speak about Jesus in conversations with those who don't believe, but be aware that you will face some opposition.

Most people don't have a problem with just talking about God because God can be anything to them. Even the Moslems speak about God but they deny that Jesus was God in the flesh. They respect Him greatly and say that He was one of the great prophets, but not that He was God incarnate or God in the flesh.

The reason that we should speak of Jesus is to determine what people believe, but also that He himself said that when He is lifted up He will draw all men to himself (John 12:32)

1 John 1:4

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

Finally John says that he is writing these things that we have read so far so that our joy may be complete - a joy with nothing lacking.

Do you want to have this complete joy in your life? Then the way to it, is to **get** and **keep** your priorities right.

God in Jesus must come first if we are ever to experience this full, complete, continual joy.

As soon as He becomes a poor second to our:

- career
- our hobbies
- our money
- our spouses
- our kids
- our fame
- our reputation
- our fulfillment

Then we are setting ourselves up for disappointment and an absence of a complete ongoing life of joy.

As I said at the beginning we are going to make our way through this letter of 1 John, so I want to encourage you to please spend some time reading and meditating on what the Holy Spirit has to say to you through these words.