

# Do I Have a Witness?

## 1 John 1:1-4

Well, and so we have arrived. We've taken two weeks on the introduction, so it is high time we get into the book of 1 John and see what John is saying to the Churches. Remember, he is advanced in age at this time and writes to the Church in general. Perhaps it is to the Church at Ephesus, but they are nowhere mentioned within the five chapters of the book, so we will consider it a general letter to the Churches of the day and as we believe it to be Divinely written, the Word still speaks to us today.

I've had the chance to serve on a Grand Jury and as such I have had to opportunity to hear a tremendous amount of criminal charges against individuals being set before us. Sometimes as the charges are being presented the County Prosecutors Office will have the arresting officer or one of the Law Enforcement personnel who were directly involved in the situation sworn in and present the facts of the incident to us. At other times, if the arresting officer isn't available, the Prosecutor will have some other Law Enforcement personnel, who has read the original report and familiarized themselves with the case present the facts.

During the process of the hearing, whenever there is something unclear about the facts being presented, the Grand Jury can ask a question about the incident from the Officer or Deputy. If the one presenting the case is the actual arresting officer, or was directly involved in the incident, they can explain the facts of the case more clearly or even elaborate on particular details to assist us in getting the full and complete picture - since they were the ones who were most directly involved. If the witness is simply someone who had merely reviewed the report written by another officer, most often, they cannot give any further details or particulars to the case, solely because they weren't there and they aren't privy to the information requested.

As a Juror, I am much more impressed by the words of the actual arresting officer than someone who had simply read a report. And, basically I'm more inclined to believe and respond to an actual eyewitness than a secondhand report. I think that would probably go for all of us, simply due to human nature.

As the Apostle John writes in 1 John, in the very opening paragraph we find him declaring, in essence: *“I’ve heard with my own ears, I’ve seen it with my own eyes, I’ve touched it and felt it; I know it is true. There is no doubt.”*

Listen to his opening statement as he takes the Witness Stand:

1 John 1

*<sup>1</sup> 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-- <sup>2</sup> 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-- <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.*

What is it that John has experienced? What is it he has heard with his own ears and seen with his own eyes, being able to handle it with his own hands?

### **The manifested life of the Word of Life**

Just as in his Gospel account, John takes us all the way back... all the way back to Genesis 1:1, *“In the beginning... ”*. This is the same beginning point of his Gospel, *“In the beginning... ”*.

John doesn’t want to begin his message somewhere in the middle. He wants us to know that the message he is proclaiming is the same message God had from the beginning. Here in 1 John he informs us clearly that

*That which was from the beginning..., concerning the Word of life... was manifested..., was with the Father and was manifested to us...*

To *manifest* something is to *declare it openly, to reveal, to appear, to shine, to light up, to become visible.*

What John wanted his readers to know was that reality of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. And, he wanted his readers to know that in and through fellowship with Christ, we have the fullness of *Joy, Inexpressible and Full of Glory.*

John had personal experience as he had walked with Jesus for those three and a half years. John was the one with Peter and James (as we shared last week) that had very close and special times with the Savior.

John knew that Jesus was the incarnation of the very *logos* or Word of God. He was the one who wrote of that in his Gospel account, *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God (John 1:1).”* You could not have had a greater or more reliable witness to take the stand than the Apostle John.

Through it all, there was something about the closeness John had in his walk with Jesus:

- Yes, it was John who described himself as, *“the Disciple whom Jesus loved...”* but there was no argument found among the Disciples on that account.
- It was John who had been the closest to Jesus during the final Supper, there in the Upper Room, literally leaning on His chest during a portion of the narration (John 13:23).
- It was John whom Jesus entrusted to care for His mother Mary, even as He hung on the cross (John 19:26).
- John lived longer than any of the other Disciples, remaining His faithful witness to his death.

He now writes as the first hand witness, declaring,

*“I’ve heard His voice and the depth and warmth of His teachings; I’ve seen Him walk among the crowds of people and minister to the multitudes with miracles, healings and deliverance; I’ve had the opportunity to touch and be touched by the very incarnation of God, Himself. I’ve experienced Jesus first hand as He was openly revealed, made flesh to dwell among us, even as God Himself became visible for all to see; I was there and experienced it all.*

*And now, I want to tell you about it.”*

As he declares these things, it's much more than a nostalgic visit to days gone by, John is setting himself up as an authority to come against the Gnostic heresies of the day. These that came with new ideas, yet Jesus was from the beginning... the very *logos* of life.

Don't forget, that word *logos*, which is translated for us in the English as *word*, is much more than a simply means to translate ideas. In the prevalent Greek mindset of the day, *logos* held a much wider and deeper meaning.

It was the *logos* which connected humanity with the cosmos and thus with deity, it was the law and principle order of all things. Even transcending the ability of humans to fully grasp the scope of understanding it completely. The *logos* was reason and power. For men like Socrates, *logos* is "*what makes philosophy possible*", *it is the harmony existing between reason and reality.*

Aristotle believed that *logos* was "*the source of human virtue and piety*" – he had no idea how close he was to the truth with that thought.

Philo of Alexandria (20BC - AD50) was a Hellenistic Jew (a Jew influenced by and immersed in the Greek culture). He was also a major philosopher of his day. His ideas had an even closer reality of the fullness of *logos*. *For Philo... lógos is a mediating figure which comes from God, forms a link between the transcendent God and the world, and represents humanity as a high priest and advocate before God. It is the sum and focus of God's creative power, and as such it orders and governs the visible world.*<sup>1</sup>

Philo was so close to recognizing the incarnation of the *logos*.

John writes here declaring that the *logos* of life was made manifest among us and this is who we declare to you...

*"<sup>2</sup> 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"*

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<sup>1</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, [\*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 507.

He isn't asking his audience to believe on blind faith, but to believe because there are actual, reputable witnesses of truth.

In a courtroom situation, the witness is asked several times about the incident. He or she is asked to repeat their story over and over again as the opposing attorney tries to catch them in a variation of their story which could mean that they were lying. Here, as John sits in the witness chair, he repeats his connection with the *logos* over and over. Truly, his connection is experiential and not simply theoretical. He was at the scene and experienced it firsthand. He wasn't just reading someone else's report.

Look at the first three verses again with me –

*<sup>1</sup> That which was from the beginning..., we have heard..., we have seen with our eyes..., we have looked upon..., our hands have handled..., concerning the Word of life--*

*<sup>2</sup> ...we have seen ...bear witness ...declare to you ...(it) was manifested to us--*

*<sup>3</sup> ...we have seen ...heard ...and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

All too often today, the witness of Christians to a lost world isn't a testimony of what Jesus has done in their lives. All too often, we don't offer first hand evidence. All too often, Christians today simply wasn't to parrot the information they've been given – *read this pamphlet, share these thoughts, or ask these proven questions*. Yet, **the power of a personal testimony isn't in the width of scriptural knowledge (as good as that is and as needful as that is for our personal lives); the power of our personal testimony is in the depth of the impact in our own personal collision with Jesus Christ.**

John wants his readers to fully recognize how the life of Jesus wasn't as the Gnostic's declared. His life was flesh and blood, able to be connected with and have fellowship with those who would follow after him. He wasn't just some fake bodied spirit moving along the face of the earth. No, He was someone who could and did interact with His

creation. He laughed with them, He cried with them, He served the Father in heaven with them; He taught them what it means to be gracious to those who were down and out, suffering in their journey here on the earth. And always... always He pointed them to the Father.

John writes these things so that through true faith in the true *logos* of God, there is true and real *koinonia* or Fellowship with God. John wrote –

*<sup>3</sup> 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.*

Fellowship with them and their Fellowship is with the Father and the Son.

Once again, the words translated can give us the wrong or a very limited understanding of what John is trying to reveal to us. In the Greek language, the word *Fellowship* is *koinonia*. This is another great, powerful and multi-leveled word within our Bibles.

*Koinonia* carries with it the understanding of community. Community was important to both the Greek and the Jew. *Koinonia* was the idea of “*sharing in*”, “*in participation with*”. For the Greeks, *Koinonia* was the supreme expression of friendship. Thus also the idea of being in common-union through joint citizenry. If you were a Roman citizen, there was a powerful bond between you and any other citizen of Rome.

Throughout the culture, *koinonia* showed a common-union in life, partnership in work and brotherhood in religious life. This was true more so for the Greek than for the Jew. Seldom do we read of the Jew using the idea of *koinonia* whenever referring to their relationship with God.<sup>2</sup>

For the Jew, *koinonia* was primarily left on the human level. But John’s writings, both here and in the Gospel account is with a Greek cultural mindset more so than that of a Jew. Yet here in 1 John he invites his readers to embrace **both** –

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<sup>2</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Gerhard Friedrich, and Geoffrey William Bromiley, [\*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament\*](#) (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985), 448.

- **A Jewish concept** (*Koinonia* or fellowship with one another: “*may have fellowship with us...*”) and
- **A Greek thought** (*Koinonia* or fellowship with God: “*fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ*”)

And as we will read later in this chapter and throughout this epistle, when this happens, when we come to faith and begin to walk in truth, in obedience, and in faith, that is when we will begin to experience the fullness of joy.

John tells us very clearly as one of his reasons for writing this letter to us –

1 John 1

<sup>4</sup> *And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.*

Joy in the Lord is something which every believer desires, but unfortunately few truly experience. Notice, John doesn't say, *we write to you that you can obtain joy*. No, he says, *we write to you that your joy may be full*. There is an inferred understanding that you and I, as believers would have joy. He is writing so that our *joy may be full* or complete or accomplished.

**The fact is joy for the Believers is both a feeling and an action.** Let's look at the action side first –

First of all, we are commanded to have joy... sometimes regardless of how we might feel. When the Psalmist declared in 5:18, “rejoice in the wife of your youth,” he didn't list and caveats or stipulations. He didn't ask what kind of wife do you have, how has she been treating you, etc. He simply said we are to “rejoice in the wife of our youth...” (*I do feel that the standard goes for the women also, “rejoice in the husband of your youth”*).

How about the words of Jesus when He told us to rejoice when we are *persecuted*? Persecution doesn't come with a big **helping of joy on the side**. No, you need to B.Y.O.J. – Bring Your Own Joy.

Even the Apostle Paul reminded us, “Rejoice in the Lord when things are going your way...” No, that’s not quiet it is it. We are told to “Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say Rejoice!!” (Phil.4:4) **He even had to remind us!**

Even James tells us simply, “*My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.*” (James 1:2)

How can we do that? Don’t you remember, joy is a part of the Fruit of the Spirit...

Galatians 5

*<sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

You see, as a Believer, we will have joy as we walk in the Spirit and not in the Flesh. We need to move in joy as we move and live in obedience to the Spirit. John tells us here in 1 John, the things I’m writing to you here is so *that your joy may be full.*

But as I said earlier, **Joy is also an inner feeling.** It comes to us as the world turns in our favor, when life is going well. Still more than mere happiness, joy is deep within the soul, yet comes to the surface quickly when external events loose it and allow it to rise in our lives.

Jesus told us the shepherd experienced joy when he found the lost sheep (Matt 18:13). Whenever the multitude saw that the woman who had been bound for 18 years was loosed by the power of Jesus, they rejoiced (Lk 13:17). After Jesus rose from the dead and ascended to the father, they experienced great joy (Luke 24:52). On and on we could go, but I feel you get the idea.

But one last thing about the feeling of Joy. The emotion of true joy cannot be manufactured or forced. When the Jewish Exiles were in Babylon, their captors came and ask them to sing the songs of Zion to them

Psalm 137:

*<sup>1</sup> By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept when we remembered Zion.*

*<sup>2</sup> We hung our harps upon the willows in the midst of it.*

*<sup>3</sup> For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, and*

*those who plundered us requested mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"*

*<sup>4</sup> How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a foreign land?*

*<sup>5</sup> If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill!*

*<sup>6</sup> If I do not remember you, let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth-if I do not exalt Jerusalem above my chief joy.*

Another quick lesson even from this Psalm. Look at verse 4 - *How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a foreign land?* I really think this is the heart, even of what John is telling us here in 1 John 1:4. What do I mean by that?

Sometimes we are taken captive by the trickery and deceit of the enemy. When we are held in his control, our JOY will not be felt in that condition. If we determine to walk into the land of the enemy and partake of the delicacies of the enemy's plate, the JOY of the Lord will not be present with us and our JOY will be squandered away in the emptiness of the enemy's lies. *How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a foreign land?*

No, I don't think we can *sing the LORD'S song in a foreign land?* We need to be walking in the presence of the LORD and in His good pleasure. This is where we can truly and fully, *rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory* (1 Peter 1:8).

One last thing: Happiness is not a sufficient substitute for joy. Many within the world try to fill the void of joy in their life by stuffing themselves with times of happiness. But happiness runs out. Happiness is sporadic and temporary. The Prodigal Son walked away from the joy that was available to him by living in obedience and in the presence of the Father. He thought he would have completeness in the temporary. Yet, he found out that true joy was in the presence of the Father.

Here John will remind us, that as we walk in obedience, Joy will be present within our lives – it is a fruit of the Spirit within the life of the Believer. Joy happens in our lives whenever certain events delight our soul. But here in 1 John, John tells us that the things he is writing to us, the instructions he gives to the Church are things which will bring about the **fullness of joy in our lives**.