
CHRISTIANITY IN CRISIS

(1 John 1:1-4)

1 John 1:1-4 (NASB) ¹What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life— ²and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us— ³what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. ⁴These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

INTRODUCTION

John is writing to stem the tide of Gnosticism that had infiltrated the church. The **Docetic** Gnostics argued that Jesus did not have an actual human body. They argued that Jesus merely appeared in the form of a man. The **Cerinthian** Gnostics distinguished between the man Jesus and the eternal Christ that came on Him at His baptism and departed from Him on the Cross. Both streams of Gnosticism denied the humanity of Jesus. John writes to assure his readers that Jesus was both God and man.

OUTLINE

I. THE LIFE PRE-EXISTED

A. What was from the beginning

1. **John 1:1-3** – "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 nothing was made that was made."
2. **Luke 10:18 (KJV)** And he said unto them, **I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.**
3. **Revelation 1:8** – "**I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End,**" says the Lord, "**who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.**"
4. **John 1:15** – "John bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, 'This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks higher than I, for He was before me.'"

B. The life which was with the Father

1. **John 17:5 (NASB)** ⁵"**Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.**"

II. THE LIFE PRESENTED

A. The life was manifested

1. **John 1:14** – "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth."

B. The life which was with the Father was manifested to us

III. THE LIFE PERCEIVED

- A. What we have heard** – In Acts 4:20, Peter declared, "we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard." This is the language of apostolic witness.
- B. What we have seen** – This was no spiritual vision, but an actual seeing.
- C. What we have looked at** – John's was no passing glance, but a fastened gaze. It is the look of contemplation.
- D. What we have touched with our hands** – John and the other disciples had touched him again and again.

IV. THE LIFE PROCLAIMED

- A. So that you may have fellowship with us**
- B. So that you may have fellowship with the Father**
- C. So that you may have fellowship with His Son Jesus Christ**

D. So that our joy may be made complete

APPLICATION

1. **FELLOWSHIP** – This not a reference to church socials, but to joint participation in the Life. Those who have fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ will have fellowship with one another. The "scandal of the incarnation" is essential to Christianity and to our fellowship. We are a community of believers who have a common faith in the Word of life that was manifested.
2. **EXPERIENCE** – Did the ascension of Christ terminate our ability to hear, see, look at and touch Christ? John says, "And this is how we know that He lives in us: We know by the Spirit He gave us" (Jn. 3:24). Later John declared, "We know that we live in Him and He is us, because He has given us of His Spirit" (4:13). Christianity is more than doing Christian things. It is more than intellectual agreement with Christian doctrine. According to John, Christianity is experiential. It involves doing Christian things and believing Christian doctrine, but it also means that we are partakers of His life and that we have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Jesus is someone we know personally and experientially, not just someone we know about.
3. **WITNESS VS. REPORTER** – A reporter is someone who seeks to accurately share someone else's experience. In most cases the reporter who wrote the story did not experience what he wrote. He merely collected information and conveyed the experience someone else had. Luke, in his gospel, tells us that he is passing along to his readers that which credible eyewitnesses told him. This is not the case with John. John was an eyewitness to the things he writes. He heard Jesus. He saw Jesus. He touched Jesus. There is a sense in which we are reporting what others have passed along to us, but there is also a real sense in which we are telling the world about our personal experience with Jesus. There is a current need for witnesses; those who have a first hand experience with the Word of life.
4. **SOMETHING THAT LASTS** – This epistle was written around 90 to 100 A.D., more than 60 years after the ascension of Jesus. John's encounter with the Incarnate Word was so dynamic that it was still impacting his life. The grammar of verse one declares that what John heard was still ringing in his ears. What John saw was still being seen. What John had looked upon was still inspiring awe. What John had touched was still touching him. I'm confident that John's experience with God was current, but he was still being impacted by his physical encounter with the Word. It kept him coming back for more.
5. **UNTIL ALL ARE WON**