

1 John 1:1-4

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Date: 27 April 2025

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[0 : 00] Lord Jesus, how amazing it is after the week of focusing on your death and resurrection to return again to your incarnation and your presence here on earth.

And encourage us this morning. Amen. I'll grab a seat. Well, so exciting, isn't it, to crack into a new sermon series this morning on the book of 1 John.

And then I believe we'll be doing 2 John and 3 John, which are quite a bit shorter, but it's going to be a good series. And this book is written by John the Apostle. So the one that's the beloved of Jesus, or that's what he calls himself, the author of the Gospel of John.

And the book of Revelation. And I think 1 John in particular feels a bit like a tuning fork. So it's like if you struck the Gospel of John, 1 John would resonate at the same pitch.

You can feel it right from the beginning of the book, can't you? In the beginning, that which was from the beginning. It reminds us of the Gospel of John and, of course, Genesis. This was my favorite book as a new Christian, 1 John.

[1 : 25] And I think it's great as a new Christian because it's refreshingly direct. John doesn't hold back on warning or assurance. He's a good pastor here.

He's guarding and he's guiding. He's addressing false teaching in the church. He's saying, do this, not this. This is true. This is false. Light, dark, love, hate. It's simple. It's great.

But at the same time, as in all of the writings of John, it's astonishing in its depth. So it takes us right into the fellowship and life and joy of God himself.

And so the deepest truths of the Christian life are easily grasped, right? We can use these metaphors of light and dark. Anyone can understand that. But they're never mastered. They continually, all of our lives, call us deeper into the eternal heart and mind of God.

And that's what happens in 1 John. Every time you come back to it, it takes you a cut deeper into what the Lord is doing. And it's right into the most precious hope of eternal life, which starts now.

[2 : 29] That's what 1 John does. So we have the introduction to the book this morning, the first four verses. And they aren't the kind of formal introduction that we might be used to in a letter.

You know, there's no audience that's really identified. There's no author. There's no place that he's, you know, the saints and blah, blah, blah. He's not identifying it that way. But they are very carefully constructed verses.

They're carefully, beautifully, and purposefully written to give us confidence in the message of the gospel. And here's what I think these first four verses are doing in particular.

They're assuring us that God has indeed come to us in Jesus. The very life of God, the essence of God in eternity and divinity, everything that is God, has come and been tangibly manifested in Jesus, which assures us that that intangible reality of fellowship with God and the promise of joy that we have in it is ours.

So the intangible has become tangible in order that we can latch onto it and have trust in what God is doing and where he's taking us. So that's what's happening in these first four verses as we get going.

[3 : 43] And I've got two points. The first is real life. And the second is real fellowship. So real life. It gets real. It gets real in two ways. It's the real life of God here.

So if you can imagine God in eternity, his life, it's his life here. It's really here. And it's also God in real life. So two different angles on the same truth.

And it'll make more sense, I think, as I go. So verse one starts with these words. That which was from the beginning. Well, what's from the beginning?

And if you go on, you come to see that it's concerning the word of life. And if you go on, you find out that the life was made manifest. So it was made real.

It was unveiled here. And then if you go on, you find out the eternal life, which was with the Father, was made manifest to us.

[4 : 42] And so as you go, you begin to see this life is a divine person. This life is the Son of God, Jesus, the one that was with the Father from the beginning and has been made manifest to us.

In the Gospel of John, Jesus calls himself the way, the truth, and the life. And his disciples recognize that he alone has the words of life.

When everyone else flees from him. And Jesus says, I've come that you may have life and have it abundantly. So there's this very simple and beautiful truth here, isn't there?

That Jesus, in his nature, is the very life of God. He gives us the very life of God. He is the one who has always been with God because he fully is God.

And in his incarnation, he's manifested the very life of God here when the word became flesh and dwelt among us. And probably, as I'm saying, the word life over and over and over, you're understanding that the way that he uses the word life is a little bit different than we might use it.

[5 : 45] The Greek word is zoe. And John has a way that he likes to use this word. And it's not about having a pulse. It's more like when we say, this is the life.

Or get a life, I guess negatively. Or golf is life. Or things like that, right? We're talking about a different quality of living. Not quantity of living.

Eternal life isn't about the quantifiable, right? It's not about endless breathing in and out forever. It's a new way of living. It's a new quality of existence. It's sharing in God's very own life.

And I was thinking about, you know, Mount Olympus and the pagans and how they imagined the life of God. And it's, you know, eating ambrosia.

It's having a soap opera kind of set of family relationships. In short, it's this kind of more extreme version of human life that the gods are playing out on a stage on this mountain. But Jesus shows us that God's life is not like that.

[6 : 43] It's much more than that. It's all things rightly ordered and restored. It's peace and hope and joy. It's right relationship in eternity. It's sharing somehow this vital existence of the eternal God himself.

It existed from the beginning, from before the beginning, and has now physically come into the world in Jesus. And this life, this very nature of God that makes God God, is accessible to us through Jesus.

If you flip over to chapter 5, verse 11, towards the end of the book, it says this. This is the testimony.

That God gave us eternal life, and this life is his son. God gave us eternal life, and this life is his son.

Eternal life is his son. Whoever has the son has life. So consciously or unconsciously, all the time we think about this idea of the good life, and we wonder, how do we get it?

[7 : 53] And we chase it in comfort and control, and we look for it in pleasure and in self-denial. But here we learn that we'll never discover or find eternal life apart from Jesus.

He is eternal life. When we have him, we have eternal life. It comes to us in Jesus. We only have it as we have him.

It's God's real life here, but it's also God here in real life. And this is trying to get after all the language about the senses, the tangibility that's in these four verses.

So the intangible reality of real life that is in God, that is something we long for but struggle to imagine, has become tangible. This is something we know. It's eternal life that was made manifest in Jesus.

So just look over all the sensory words here. It's incredible. It's like half the words. We heard it. We have seen it with our eyes. We looked upon it. We touched it with our hands.

[8 : 53] We have seen it. We testify to it. Testify is an eyewitness word. Verse three, we've seen it. We've heard it over and over and over. All this to assure us that Jesus really has, in real life, brought life.

That he really came. That John really saw him. And if this is so, then we can really share the life with him.

I don't know if you noticed all the we language there. That's interesting, isn't it? So it's not just John. It's John and all the apostles. They had it together. They heard it. They saw it. They touched it.

God's divine life. Because they had him. They had Jesus. They heard him. They saw him. They touched him. They ate with him. And therefore, even though they didn't realize it for the first few years, they had eternal life that whole time in having Jesus.

Jesus gave him his life through his word and gave them a message that could then be passed on to other people. So Jesus brought the life of God to John and his apostles who saw it and felt it and heard it and finding it to be real and trustworthy and true, proclaimed it to others.

[10:10] And so when we have 1 John, when we're holding the Bible, we have 1 John and we have a particular, one particular indelible record of that proclamation. It's right there in our hands.

It's the word of God's life itself for us. And so when we receive it, we receive this same Jesus and we receive the same life that was with the Father from the beginning.

And it's honestly too much to comprehend. But it's very good news. It's a very particular promise to us that we can trust in this word and as we trust it, we have Jesus. And as we have Jesus, we have eternal life.

And this leads to the second point which gets after kind of, well, what's the purpose of all this? And it's real fellowship. And so this is what it says in verse 3. That which we have seen and heard, we proclaim, that's the word, right?

We proclaim it 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.

[11:19] And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. so that, so that is a purpose statement. So that, so the first two verses set things up for us and here's why it matters.

So that, you need to know that the message about the life of God really came into the world so that you can share fellowship with the apostles and with God.

So Jesus came into the world, he entrusted his apostles with this testimony and proclamation and now it bears directly on us because we can hear the proclamation and we can trust the testimony and we can receive the same Jesus and we can be drawn into the eternal life of God.

And the shorthand word for that entire concept is just fellowship. We can share the very life of God with God. God's quality of life becomes ours. Now this word in the Bible, fellowship, is interesting. It's the bond that's generated by sharing a thing that's outside of ourselves. So when, it's like a partnership. So we could be business partners and, you know, we could have our business and the business would be the thing that gave us koinonia.

[12:31] We have a share in that and that's what binds us together. I think of the fellowship of the ring, right? This disparate band of hobbits and dwarves and men and they're bound together under the common purpose of the ring's destruction.

And so this is the, this is the way John is using this word, right? He says, when we proclaim this word that you have fellowship, you have fellowship with us. So as we come to trust in the same word and the same Jesus, we have fellowship with John.

And he's telling the truth about how we come into life with God. We receive the true testimony. And as we do, we come to share this treasure of knowing Jesus. We share this treasure with the apostles that walked with him and with other believers that have the same confidence.

And our fellowship is generated by our belonging together to God. So when we hear and trust the testimony about Jesus together with other believers, we're drawn into this partnership relationship with the creator of the universe.

We are coming to share his life and this qualitatively different existence that he offers us, which has begun to transform us now and will one day make our joy complete or full.

[13:49] So, as we go into 1 John in the weeks to come, we'll hear this same idea in a bunch of different ways. We'll hear about light and love and forgiveness. We'll hear that it's never an imaginary hope.

We have to live it out in our lives with our neighbors. And these things come from the fellowship that we have with each other and with God and they give us joy. So we have a lot to look forward to. But as we go out this morning, remember Jesus. The one who is with the Father from the beginning, who became a person, brought God's very life into the world, who was seen by real people and shared real fellowship with them.

And as we trust this testimony, as we listen to the words of 1 John and we stick to the truth in this book, we put our trust in Jesus, we're being drawn into the very life of God.

Amen.