

## 1 John 1:1-4 – Heard, Seen, Touched, Proclaimed

The Gospel of John gave us a great first hand account of Jesus' life on earth. 1 John gives us a great assurance and a firm knowledge of the eternal life which is in Jesus Christ. 1 John is different from the usual New Testament letters which have the author's name and the name of the recipients at the beginning of the letter. From early on, the author of the letter was understood to be John, the son of Zebedee, one of the 12 disciples of Christ. The vocabulary and style of the letter are similar to the Gospel of John. Since no recipients were designated, the letter was understood to be a letter meant for circulation and not for one particular church. The opening of 1 John reminds us of the opening of the Gospel of John except that the opening of 1 John is in a condensed form. "What was from the beginning..." It is an interesting way to start a letter.

### Read 1 John 1:1-4.

A relative pronoun ("who", "which", "that") points back to a previously mentioned noun. John taxes our brains by beginning the letter with a relative pronoun. ESV, KJV and others have "That which" for the beginning of the letter. NASB and others, preserving the grammar of the original language, have "What". What, or who, is the "What" of 1 John 1:1? In other words, what noun is the relative pronoun referring to? Some answers include the incarnation, the incarnate Christ, the beginning of Jesus' ministry, the Gospel message, and Jesus the eternal Son of God. What is meant by "from the beginning"? The answer depends on how the first question is answered. Note that John 1:1 has "in the beginning" and 1 John 1:1 has "from the beginning". Do you think the same author would start two books in a similar fashion and mean two entirely different things? (1:1)

Notice that John included more than just himself in the first verse by using "we". Who is the "we"? What or who did John hear, see, look upon and touch? Is it the Gospel, the incarnation, Jesus' ministry, Jesus himself or something else?

John mentioned "what our hands touched". Some people stress the idea of "a blind man groping". But this word is also used in Luke 24:39 when the resurrected Jesus tells his disciples to touch him to verify that he was not a spirit but that he had flesh and bones. How would John's declaration that he touched Jesus contradict the false teaching that Jesus did not take on flesh ("come in the flesh")? (1:1)

What or who is "the Word of Life"? Is it the Gospel or Jesus himself. Jesus said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). Jesus said "I am the resurrection and the life" (John 11:25). "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:6). John 1:1 says "In the beginning was the word". John 1:4 says "in him was life". John 1:14 says "And the word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory." (1:1)

How did the life become manifest? John and the other disciples saw and heard Jesus. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, John and his fellow disciples were first-hand witnesses of Jesus' life and resurrection. John proclaimed eternal life in Jesus Christ. "Eternal life" is mentioned numerous times in the Gospel of John. What did John mean by the phrase "the eternal life, which was with the Father"? "With the Father" is similar to John 1:1, "And the Word was with God". The word "with", in the original, is not the usual word for "with". This word for "with" has the idea of personal knowledge and familiarity. (1:2)

Why did John proclaim what he saw and heard to the believers who received the letter? Who did John have fellowship with? (1:3)

According to verse 4, why was John writing this letter? ESV, among others, has "we are writing these things so that **our joy** may be complete." Some versions like NKJV have "these things we write to you that **your joy** may be full". What would it mean for John's joy to be made complete? What would it mean for the recipients to have their joy made full? (1:4)

Next time, in 1 John 1:5-10, we will run into some false teachers who were saying that they did not sin and that they had not sinned. John proclaimed them to be liars.

This is my two cents, but I will throw it in here. I don't view John as a complicated, nuanced person. He doesn't see things in shades of gray. He is very black and white. You either are a child of God or you are a child of the devil. You either have eternal life in Christ, or you don't have Christ and therefore don't have eternal life. You are either of the truth or you are a liar. You either love or you hate. I personally think that interpreters of John who find him to be nuanced and complicated are making things way to difficult and are in danger of missing the true meaning of the text. John may have been simplistic but he was not simple. With simple words he proclaimed some of the most profound truths in the Bible in a most beautiful way.