

“Proclaiming the Word of Life”

July 10, 2011

Text: I John 1:1-3

In January, 1967, 3 American astronauts died during a pre-launch test of their Apollo 1 spacecraft, when it caught fire.

This accident was investigated in subsequent hearings, where it was said that the ultimate cause of this disaster was a lack of imagination;

The spacecraft’s designers simply couldn’t imagine so many bad things happening all at once.

We Xns often lack imagination too, regarding how wonderful heaven will be for us; but also how delightful our fellowship w/ God can be here/now on earth, during our own pre-launch days before the Rapture.

Fellowship with the Lord was one of the greatest privileges Adam forfeited, when he fell into sin.

He had walked with God in the Garden of Eden, talking with Him as one talks with a friend.

But sin banished Adam from God, corrupted his nature, and turned him into an enemy of God.

X came to earth to reconcile this broken relationship.

By His death He restored man’s fellowship with God.

Those who believe in Jesus, being cleansed of their sins through faith in His death on the cross, have found peace with God.

They are no longer strangers, alienated from God, but have become His adopted children, enjoying bold/confident access to Him, as their Heavenly Father.

Divine fellowship lost through Adam has been restored.

The Apostle John, because of his relationship w/ X on earth, sensed this renewed fellowship as few others ever have.

He had been 1 of 3 Apostles who enjoyed the privilege of closest friendship with the Son of God;

* They alone had witnessed the transfiguration, & the raising of the synagogue official’s daughter back to life.

* In the Garden of Gethsemane, they had been stationed closer to X than the rest of the Apostles, as He prayed, sweating great drops of blood from His brow.

* At the Last Supper, John even sat next to Jesus, leaning against his Master’s breast.

But X had ascended into Heaven, & 60 years had passed, so John could no longer watch Him do miracles, or hear His voice.

Yet he still enjoyed his fellowship with the Son of God, which was very real/comforting to him.

In I Jn 1:3, John actually wrote=> *“Our fellowship is [not “was”] with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”*

As we will see in today’s text, John’s purpose in writing his first epistle was to assure his readers (including us) that we too can enjoy full/intimate fellowship with God here/now.

That fellowship is the basis for our fellowship with others who also have a relationship with Him through X.

It is also the basis for our greatest joys as believers.

This morning we are going to begin a new study, in the Apostle John’s First Epistle.

So before we get into our text, there are 3 overall concepts you need to understand about this book, as we start to delve into it.

1) The author isn't specifically identified, but the early church consistently testified that John wrote it.

Since he seems to have been the only Apostle still alive, at the time, and since this letter makes it clear he had a loving, fatherly relationship with its recipients, they knew he was the author, w/ or w/o his name being included in the letter.

According to early Church fathers, he was living in Ephesus when he wrote this epistle.

2) One of John's goals in this letter was to combat the heresy of Gnosticism, which was just beginning to develop at that time.

Gnostics believed that all physical matter is evil, but spirit is good.

Starting from this false premise, they then decided that Jesus couldn't have had a physical (evil) body, so He must have been a phantom spirit, whose body was an apparition, only appearing to be physical.

John will forcefully debunk this heresy and insist that the body against which he leaned at the Last Supper was a normal human body.

I.e., Jesus X was fully human, a/w/a fully divine, which is why He could die in our place—He really was one of us; and could therefore substitute for us.

3) John writes about basic certainties of the Christian faith, communicating them in absolute/dogmatic statements that leave no room for doubt.

His goal is to enable his readers to rejoice in the assurance of the unchanging truth in God's Word.

E.g. 1 John 5:18=> *"We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him."*

Not that is a certainty that is communicated in uncompromisingly dogmatic/absolute terms!

John leaves the interpretation/application of such certainties to us, as we submit to the leading of the H.S., and the "analogy of Scripture" (God's authoritative Word).

Our text today is I Jn 1:1-3, and the subject of this text is "The Word of Life."

This is the same as the "Word" (*logos*) that John wrote about in his Gospel (Jn 1:1)=> *"In the beginning was the **Word**, and the **Word** was with God, and the **Word** was God."*

Both the-Word/the-Word-of-Life are Jesus, the Son of God.

But in 1-John, the Apostle is going to approach this subject of the Word of Life differently from John 1:1.

It's a little more esoteric—looking more deeply into the nature of X's Incarnation & His life's significance.

[Read text]

In Mt 16:15, Jesus' disciples had followed Him for some time when He confronted them with this question=> *"Who do you say that I am?"*

When Peter had answered, *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God,"* Jesus responded=> *"Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh & blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven"* (16-17).

The whole point of their following Jesus around up to that time, had been for them to be able to answer this question=> who Jesus was.

Peter, with the Father's help, had given a good answer.

But now, 60 years later, John has reached an even deeper answer.

And he has formulated an even deeper question=> Not “Who is Jesus” but “What is Jesus.”

The answer John has reached after 60 years of mulling over the nature/significance of Jesus’ life, is a paradox=> This Man Jesus is the “*logos* [the Word] of life.”

That’s an amazing thought!

In this text, John will describe that paradox, his proclamation of the paradox, and his purpose in proclaiming it...

*** John’s Paradox**

John says, “It comes down to this=> The eternal life of God has entered the time/space of earth, & we Apostles have witnessed it.”

[I John 1:1]=> “*What was from the beginning* [of all creation], *what we* [John and his fellow Apostles] *have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of [the] Life—*”

Right away we sense something strange when John writes, “What was from the beginning” instead of “Who was...” or “He who was from the beginning.”

He’s going to talk about Jesus as a “what” rather than a “who.”

It’s not that John is denying Jesus was a real true man, like us.

The Gnostics would deny that, but John is going to prove they’re wrong=> Jesus really was a man.

When John leaned against Jesus, he felt body heat, 98.6 degrees—just like you/me/John.

John had seen Jesus eat/sleep/weep as a man.

He must have seen Jesus dismiss Himself to go to the bathroom, just as any man/woman would.

Jesus was fully man.

John is saying X was a man alright, but that He was also a lot more than that as well.

He was God incarnate “*who was from the beginning.*”

He was the Word of Life—the message of life from God that conveys life to man—eternal life, God’s kind of life.

That’s why X was the “***What... from the beginning.***”

Jesus is the “Word” of God in that He speaks God’s words, reveals God’s will, and testifies to what He has seen/heard in God’s presence in heaven.

Jn 3:31=> “*He who comes from heaven is above all. / What He has seen and heard, of that **He bears witness.***”

Jesus, the *Logos*, is God’s communicator to man, but also God’s communication (Heb 1:1-3).

But Jesus’ specific message to man, about which John is concerned in our text, is the message (the word) of Life.

And there’s the paradox—John and the other Apostles witnessed this message in the form of a Man, who had existed from the very beginning of creation itself.

He had existed before the creation (Jn 1:1), but in I Jn 1:1, the Apostle will focus on His nature/activities from the time of creation on.

It’s a paradox in the sense that no other man has ever been a living message from God, and also in the sense that no other man has been around ever since the creation.

So that’s a real paradox: a statement that seems contradictory and opposed to common sense, but which is totally true.

You might even call it an enigma—an inscrutable mystery.
But there it is, and John says, “We Apostles heard, saw, beheld and handled Jesus, so we’re absolutely sure He is a genuine man.

“And yet (John adds) as I’ve contemplated the question He asked, ‘Who do you say that I am?’ I’ve become equally convinced He was God’s message of life to man.”

“The ‘What’ of Jn 1:1, who was in the beginning with God, and was God Himself, is the same ‘What’ that we Apostles experienced with our own 5 senses as a Man.”

There’s a subtle shift in tenses here in verse 1, which might help us better understand what John is saying.

“*What was*” is in the imperfect tense, which refers to things that continually happened in the past.

In the past, the 2nd Person of the Godhead continually always was the Word of Life, communicating to man about life, from the time of the creation.

He created a world full of life, to teach us that He—our Creator—is the Source of all life.

“*Have heard*” and “*have seen*” is in the perfect tense—which refers to something particular that happened/was-completed in the past, but which continues to have ongoing effects in the present.

The Apostles heard/saw Jesus in action for 3½ years, and then it all stopped when He ascended, but He told them to be witnesses to the whole world of what they’d heard/seen in Him, so the effects of His life would continue.

On the night before He died, X told them (Jn 14:26)=>

*“The Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and **bring to your remembrance** all that I said to you.”*

Jesus’ words/works would continue to have effect/impact through the memories/testimony/writings of His Apostles.

“*Beheld*” and “*handled*” are aorist tense verbs which describe one-time events in the past.

These are the Apostles’ specific memories of what they’d seen/heard X do/say, that drove them to the conclusions about who/what He was—the life-Messenger from God.

E.g. John beheld X’s transfiguration, & after His resurrection, Jesus met with the Apostles in the Upper Room & said (Lk 24:39), “*See My hands & My feet, that it is I Myself; **touch** [handle] Me & see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.*”

John could tell any Gnostic who claimed Jesus was an apparition, “Apparitions don’t have flesh/bones, but Jesus did/still-does.

What John wants us to understand about Jesus, is that He is God’s living, life-giving message.

He is the embodiment of the gospel message, which is really all about Him.

In I Cor 15:1-4 the gospel is that X died and was raised that we might live.

Man needs and longs-for life—eternal life—because he is born spiritually dead.

Those who believe in Jesus and form a life-giving relationship with Him receive a spiritual experience analogous to birth—thus they obtain spiritual/eternal life.

That’s what Jn 3:16 means: “*God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever **believes** in Him should not perish, but have **eternal life.**”*

“Life” is the spiritual treasure that activates all man’s religious longings, and drives all his religious activities, aspirations, and quests.

It is a spiritual hunger which God has placed in man's heart, and which only He can fulfill.

Natural man often experiences it as a vague desire for something transcendent, that will bring him security/joy, but he never fully understands that what he is lacking is life.

In Jn 17:2-3, Jesus revealed the true Source/nature of this life, when He prayed to the Father=> *"Thou gavest Him [X Himself] authority over all mankind, that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life. / And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."*

** Eternal life is knowing God, and the only way to know God is know Jesus.

Jesus is the message about eternal life, that God sent to man, so he can come to know God, & have life, like God's life.

That's why Jesus said (Jn 14:6)=> *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."*

That's why He told Martha (Jn 11:25)=> *"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies."*

And that's why Jn 1:4 says=> *"In Him was life, and the life was the light of men."*

The paradox of Jesus is that outwardly He seemed like a mere man; inwardly He was/is God's message of life to man.

This brings us to John's 2nd point=> what he & the other Apostles proclaim, is this paradox of who/what X is.

*** John's Proclamation**

[1 Jn 1:2]=> *"and the life was manifested [made known], and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life [ten zoen ten aiomion—the life that is eternal], which was with the Father and was manifested to us—"*

This 2nd verse is actually a parenthesis between verses 1 & 3.

If you remove this parenthesis, you get the gist of John's main statement=> "(Vs 1) What was from the beginning... concerning the Word of life, (vs 3) that is what we proclaim to you."

The purpose of the parenthesis in verse 2 is to explain and elaborate-on the last word in verse 1=> "the Life."

John wants us to understand 2 things about "the Life," the nature of this life=>

- 1) It is eternal life (not just everlasting, but a different quality of life—spiritual life).
- 2) This life came to us as a "Word" (a message) from God, the same "Word" John described as a Man in Jn 1:14=> *"The Word became flesh, & dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory."*

The message (the "word") is a Man!

The eternal life that was manifested to man, was a Man Himself.

But He was also a living message from God the Father— if you can imagine a "living message").

He had been w/ the Father from before the beginning of creation.

This Man/message who is eternal life to us, is X (the *Logos* [word]).

That's what John was proclaiming, & it is the Xn message.

"Eternal life" is not simply "life", it is "the life"—the fullness and abundance of life for which God created mankind.

And it is only available to us through Jesus, who is God's message of life.

It's the life about which X spoke in Jn 10:10—*"I came that they might have **life**, & might have it **abundantly**."*

Jesus Himself is the-personification/the-embodiment of the eternal life He brings to man, and as people enter into a relationship with Him through faith, they too receive eternal life.

1 Jn 5:11-12=> *"God has given us eternal life, & this life is in His Son. / He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life."*

** As we learn about Jesus in God's Word, and then translate that knowledge into a personal relationship w/ Him, that relationship itself becomes eternal life to us (1 Jn 5:20)=> *"We know that the Son of God has come, & has given us understanding, in order that we might **know** Him who is true, & we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. **This is the true God & eternal life**"* (this knowing Jesus).

So not only do we receive eternal life from Jesus, He becomes eternal life to us Himself, as we form a personal relationship with Him.

Col 3:4 says that X *"is our life."*

If we are "in X", having believed in/into Him, Rom 3:23 says=> *"the free gift of God is **eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord**."*

** Jesus has come to us, bringing God's message of eternal life, and as we believe in Him, His eternal life becomes eternal life to us, and in us.

That is the message John and the other Apostles proclaimed=>

That through Jesus man can attain the ideal life, which is personal/ongoing fellowship with God, through an ongoing relationship with X.

* **John's Purpose** (in proclaiming Jesus as God's message of eternal life)

[1 Jn 1:3]=> *"what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, **that** [in order that—here's the purpose] you also may have **fellowship** with us; and indeed our **fellowship** is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."*

I.e., that you might have fellowship with us, so that you might enjoy fellowship with the Father and the Son.

The purpose of John's proclamation was to enable others to fellowship w/ the Apostles, & ultimately w/ the Godhead.

John's readers didn't have the privilege of spending 3 years w/ X as John had.

So he's telling them what they'd missed—what he and the other Apostles saw & heard during their time with Jesus, so they can draw the same conclusions about Him that the Apostles drew.

He wants them to respond to this information by forming a personal/saving relationship with X, just as they had.

He wants them to have fellowship with believers like John by seeking eternal life.

But beyond that, to have fellowship with God Himself.

The word "*Indeed*" is an intensifier=> "You have fellowship w/ us, but even better, you can actually fellowship w/ God, along with us."

True/abundant/eternal life is fellowship with God the Father through a personal union with God the Son—Jesus X.

As we saw before in Jn 17:3=> *"This is **eternal life**, that they may know Thee, the only true God, & Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent."*

John builds on vss 1 & 2 of our text to show that God revealed eternal life thru X, in order to bring men into fellowship with Himself.

The Apostles had come to realize that eternal life was to be found in knowing the true human personality of Jesus, a personality w/ which they could have fellowship. And that in their fellowship with Him, He had become to them the Source of eternal life.

“Fellowship” is more than friendship.

It is a participation in something together with another person.

It’s a unity that is based on sharing things in common, with that other person.

Jesus has perfect fellowship with God the Father, because He perfectly shares with the Father the same divine essence/nature/life.

We too can have fellowship w/ God through X, because II Pet 1:4 says we too have “*become partakers of the divine nature.*”

Because of our sin, it’s not perfect, but it’s real fellowship nonetheless.

Through Jesus (who is a Man like us) God shares w/ us His own eternal life, thus creating a fellowship between Him/us.

Our fellowship with God the Father involves our mutual agreement with His purposes/priorities.

All fellowship requires such agreement (a sharing of goals).

E.g. * The things that give God pleasure make us happy too=> whatever’s true/honorable/right/pure/lovely/of-good-repute.

* God has chosen the foolish/weak to shame the wise/strong, that no man should boast before Him.

We fully agree, saying, “Amen, Lord!” (I Cor 1:27, 29), and our fellowship with God is reinforced.

* God does all things for His glory, so the whole world will know that He alone is Lord.

And we aspire to glorify Him w/ our lives & our lips, singing wholeheartedly “How Great Thou Art!”

In that agreement with God, we fellowship with Him.

* God desires to glorify Jesus His Son, and so do we.

We love Jesus as the Father loves Him, and so we sing with sincerity/love “Worthy Is the Lamb That Was Slain.”

Again, we and the Father are in full agreement about our desire to glorify X, further solidifying/reinforcing our fellowship with the Father.

* The Father loves the saints, and so do we.

I Jn 3:14 says that’s how we know we have passed from death to life, so in this too we have fellowship w/ God.

One of the keys to any fellowship is communication/communion.

We commune with God as our Father, calling out to Him, “Abba, Father” as beloved children whom He loves and who love Him.

We also have fellowship w/ Jesus X—the Son of God.

* We love Him as our Savior, and like Peter we can say to Him=> “*Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You*” (Jn 21:17).

* We have also known the fellowship of X’s sufferings, having suffered reproach for His name (Phil 3:10).

* We fellowship with Jesus in that (like Him) we have set our minds on the things above, not those of the earth (Col 3:2).

* We fellowship w/ X by sharing His aspirations/desires.

He said to His parents, “*Did you not know that I had to be in My Father's house?*” (Lk 2:49).

We say, “I too want to be busy in my Heavenly Father’s house/Kingdom.”

At the end of our lives, we (like Jesus) want to be able to commend our spirits into God’s hand, knowing that we too have finished well, to the glory of God.

* And finally, we fellowship with our Lord in the communion of prayer, finding incomparable comfort in His love for us during times of difficulty/trouble/stress.

“What a friend we have in Jesus,
All our sins and griefs to bear
What a privilege to carry,
Everything to Him in prayer.”

“Proclaiming the Word of Life”

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Text: I John 1:1-3

1. Divine fellowship lost through Adam has been restored; the Apostle John, because of his relationship with [14 Christ] on earth, sensed this renewed fellowship as few others ever have.

1Jn 1:3

2. John’s purpose in writing his first epistle was to assure his readers that we too can enjoy full, intimate fellowship with God [10 here] and now.

In the Apostle John’s First Epistle...

*3. The author isn’t specifically identified, but the early church consistently testified that [10 John] wrote it.

*4. One of John’s goals in this letter was to combat the heresy of [24 Gnosticism].

*5. John writes about basic certainties of the Christian faith, using absolute, [18 dogmatic] statements.

1 Jn 5:18

6. Our text today is I John 1:1-3, and the subject of this text is “The [10 Word] of Life.”

Jn 1:1; Mt 16:15-17

In this text John will describe a paradox, his proclamation of the paradox, and his purpose in proclaiming it...

*** John’s Paradox**

7. It comes down to this: The eternal life of God has entered the time and space of earth, and we Apostles have [22 witnessed] it.

[1 John 1:1]

Jn 3:31

8. Jesus’ specific message to man about which John is concerned in our text is the [16 message] (the Word) of Life.

Jn 14:26; Lk 24:39

9. What John wants us to understand about Jesus is that He is God’s living, [10 life]-giving message.

I Cor 15:1-4; Jn 3:16; 17:2-3; 14:6; 11:25; 1:4

10. The paradox of Jesus is that outwardly He seemed like a mere man; inwardly He was (and is) God’s message of [10 life] to man.

*** John’s Proclamation**

[1 John 1:2]

11. “*Eternal life*” is not simply “life”, it is “*the life*”—the fullness and [22 abundance] of life for which God created mankind.

Jn 10:10; I Jn 5:11-12, 20; Col 3:4; Rom 3:23

12. The message John and the other Apostles proclaimed was that through Jesus man can attain the ideal of [10 life], which is personal, ongoing fellowship with God.

* **John’s Purpose**

[1 Jn 1:3]

13. True, abundant, eternal life is fellowship with God the Father through a [20 personal] union with God the Son—Jesus Christ.

Jn 17:3; II Pet 1:4

14. Our fellowship with God the Father involves our mutual [22 agreement] with His purposes and priorities.

I Cor 1:27, 29; I Jn3:14

15. We also have fellowship with Jesus Christ—the [8 Son] of God.

Jn 21:17; Phil 3:10; Col 3:2; Lk 2:49

16. We fellowship with our Lord in prayer, finding incomparable [16 comfort] in His love for us.