

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

The Apostle John (aka “the elder”) is likely writing to a Christian community in or near Ephesus. He sought to bring encouragement and correction to some heresies (false teachings) that either denied the Incarnation of God or polluted its purpose with confusion. In these pages, John fights for a clearer Christology – helping the Church know exactly who Jesus is and what he taught regarding *love*.

STUDY IT

- Background: What was John’s personal experience with Jesus? Read John 1:1-18 to review some particular language that John uses when reflecting on the Incarnation of Christ.
- Specifically, what does John mean when he refers to the “Word”? (v.1 & John 1:1+14)
- How does John use *seeing* and *hearing* to convey his testimony and authority? (vs.1+3)
- What is offered through the “Word of Life”? (v.2)
- What is eternal life? (v.2)
- What was John (and the Apostles’) mission in proclaiming the manifestation of God (in Jesus)? (v.3)
- If we embrace this teaching, what is the promised reward? (v.3)

- How might writing and retelling John’s story make his joy complete – or “full” in some translations? (v.4)

APPLY IT

- Do you believe the full teaching about the Person of Christ? If not, what are some teachings that are difficult to accept? Why do you think that is?
- How do you know *who* you can trust – as teachers of God’s Word?
- John reminds his readers that the reality of the Incarnation is worth retelling. What does the Incarnation mean to you?
- Does the retelling Jesus’ story bring you joy? How so / why not?

WORD LIST

Manifested – A demonstration of God or his power. John is implicitly referring to *Incarnation*. This doctrine states that Jesus – being one with God – became human to dwell with humankind as a demonstration of God’s commitment to his mission. And in being human, he does *not* forsake his divine attributes. John connects with the language of “Word made flesh” in his gospel (John, ch. 1) because the very word of God is the extension of his *presence* among people (even before Jesus was born of a woman). This will become more relevant as he addresses the false teachings that were emerging.

Seeing / Touching / Hearing – The relevance of John’s eyewitness testimony continues to invite our faith in his Apostolic authority. Not only did they walk with and interact with Jesus as a man with complete human qualities, those very human interactions helped them receive his mission. In his *risen* presence, they learned how to continue his Kingdom work and proclaim the rescue story. To John and his readers, this story only makes sense *in light of the Incarnation*. (See also John 1:14)