



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

## Examining the text & our hearts:

### Overview:

- '1 Jn. 1:1, John reveals the incarnate Son, who became a man in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. John wants us to know, & know rightly, this 'Word of life' who invaded space & time & who makes it possible for us to have fellowship & eternal intimacy with the one true God (v. 3). He draws attention to two important truths concerning this life,...[He is divine & he is human].' (Daniel Akin, *Exalting Jesus in 1, 2, & 3 John*, p. 14)
- 'The primary doctrinal issue that John appears to have been addressing is the identity & nature of Christ. One aspect of the false teaching seems to deny Jesus' unique relationship to the Father; John countered that to deny that the Son was true Deity who came as the Messiah was to deny the Father (1 John 2:22; 4:3; 5:10, 20). Another false teaching John addressed was a challenge to Jesus' unique nature as God in flesh; John was deeply concerned that his spiritual children appreciate the significance of Jesus' incarnation, His coming in the flesh (1 John 4:2; 2 John 1:7). The apostle taught that Jesus was fully human & fully God. To minimize either aspect of Jesus' nature is to distort who Jesus is & to fail to recognize an essential part of God's redemptive act on our behalf.' (Jim Shaddix, *Explore the Bible: 1, 2, 3 John & Revelation*, p. 11)
- 'The first two verses teach [Jesus'] eternity & the reality of his incarnation. The same one who existed from all eternity with God the Father came down into this world as a real man. The reality of his incarnation is indicated by the fact that the [eye-witnesses] heard him, saw him with their eyes, gazed upon him with deep meditation, & actually handled him. The word of life was not a mere passing illusion, but was a real person in a body of flesh.' (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, p. 2309)
- '[The] author's purpose in [the prologue (1:1'4)] was to remind his readers of the origins of the gospel, that it was a message concerning 'the Word of life', & that this is what constitutes the basis of the fellowship they share & in which he wants them to continue.' (Colin G. Kruse, *Pillar Commentary: Letters of John*, p. 54)

- 'Similar to how the Gospel of John was written that we might have eternal life (Jn. 20:31), 1 John was written that we might know we have eternal life (1 Jn. 5:13).' (Daniel Akin, Op Cit, p. 13)

### An Unusual Opening:

- 'The opening of 1 John is perhaps the most unusual in the biblical corpus, for no other book begins with a relative pronoun, 'what' (?), as its first word. In fact, there are four neuter singular relative pronouns in the opening verse, & the main verb doesn't appear until verse 3 ('we proclaim,'). The unusual word order that fronts this string of pronouns with respect to their verbs highlights the message of the testimony & adds rhetorical impact by emphasizing the object of proclamation, the gospel of Jesus Christ.' (Karen Jobes, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1, 2, & 3 John, pp. 55-56)
- 'His message begins in a lofty but difficult manner...[In] a normal sentence we have the basic word order 'subject-verb-object.' [e.g. He won the race] Here the writer has placed the object first for emphasis & keeps us waiting for the subject & verb. To make matters even worse, the object consists of a string of parallel relative clauses – & it is expanded by a parenthesis (v. 2) which describes one of the elements in the object more fully. As a result of this set of complications the writer repeats the substance of verse 1 in verse 3 before he finally reaches the main verb 'we proclaim.'"' (I. Howard Marshall, NICNT: The Epistles of John, p. 108)
- 'Our writer here wants to emphasize that the Christian message is identical with Jesus; it took personal form in a person who could be heard, seen, & even touched.' (I. Howard Marshall, Op Cit, p. 110)

### 1. Overall Observations

#### a. Pauline Church Structure vs Johannine Church Structure

##### a. Paul's church structure

- a. 'Since Paul himself is not present, **the true Jesus-tradition** entrusted to him – & in turn to Timothy – **should be guarded & passed on carefully**. In order to safeguard this tradition, [Paul] argues for structures of authority & leadership that rest on personal relationships & confidence: **Jesus -> Paul -> (many witnesses) -> Timothy -> faithful people -> the community of believers**: 'What you [Timothy] have heard from me [Paul] in the presence of many witnesses, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.' (2 Tim. 2:2)&#-46270;Emphasis is given to&#-46270;properly transmitting the authoritative Jesus-tradition, the 'sound teaching,' &#-46270;that is linked to the authority of carefully selected & authoritative local teachers: 'The author sees a strong & respected leadership structure as the crucial way of maintaining the integrity of the [Christian] community.' (Mikael Tellbe, *Christ-Believers in Ephesus*, p. 188)

##### b. John's church structure

- a. In 1 John, there's **'no hint&#-46270;of a community structure that speaks of specific leaders or offices in a superior position, who are appointed to guard the tradition & the community of believers against deviant teaching. According to 1 Jn. 1:1-4, the author is a witness (not an 'apostle') who belongs to a group of collective witnesses ('we'). The purpose of 1 Jn. is not to distinguish this group from other Christ-believers, but rather to include the readers ('you') in the group of witnesses & hence together with the Father & the Son: that you may have fellowship with us ' & our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ' (1:3). The author does not seek authority as an individual, but together with his readers&#-46270;Together they will form a community that bears witness to the tradition of Jesus Christ. The author appeals to no other forms of external authority&#-46270;Authority is rooted, not in appointed of ices, not in inherited roles, but in a group of witnesses&#-46270;potentially available to every member of the community. It is&#-46270;this community itself, not the author himself, nor any specific persons or of ices, which is the primary locus of authority.'** (Mikael Tellbe, *Op Cit*, p. 198)

##### b. 'We'/'Us' & 'You'

- a. **'The 'we' in [the phrase] 'which we heard&#-46270;& announce' in 1:5 is exclusive, but is in a relative clause that picks up the exclusive eyewitness sense from 1:1-4&#-46270;Dodd rightly sees John's use of the inclusive 'we' in 1:5-5:21 as founded on the nature of the church as a fellowship in a common faith & bond of love.'** (Daniel L. Akin, *Op Cit* p. )
- b. In '1:4&#-46270;'we write' is&#-46270;a genuine plural, where the author is counting himself among a group of witnesses&#-46270;in some distinction from the readers, whom he invites to fellowship with that group, with God, & with Jesus Christ (1:3). But in **the body of [1 John] there's a rhetorical assumption&#-46270;that the readers are in fact enjoying the fellowship&#-46270;In these sections 'we' (whether explicit or implied)&#-46270;is primarily inclusive, as the author joins his readers as followers of Jesus Christ.'** (Karen H. Jobes, *Letters to the Church*, p. )

- c. In 1 Jn. 1:1-5 'we get a clear sense of 'we'/us' & 'you'. There's a group of witnesses who have 'seen' & 'heard' & have become tradition-bearers who 'testify'; they pass on what has been seen & heard to 'you', the readers. We get the impression of a group of authoritative bearers of witness & tradition. However, 1 Jn. 4:14, 16 seems to undermine this: 'we have seen & we testify that the Father has sent his Son as the world's Savior; And we have come to know & to believe the love that God has for us' (4:14, 16); **The 'we' here is the whole community rather than any special group of eyewitnesses; Further throughout the letter it is this sense of the joint 'we'/us' of author and readers that predominates** over the sense of a select 'we'/us' as opposed to 'you' readers in 1 Jn. 1:1-5. It's as if, having briefly suggested in 1:1-5 that he can stand over against the community as a member of the select 'we,' the author abandons this [stance] for a strategy which locates himself within the community, as part of the collective, communal 'we.' So while there's a sense of the authority of the author, **the much stronger idea is that of the authority of the whole community; The community [is] the locus of authority, rather than a select few; The author can see the community as fulfilling this role;**' (Paul Trebilco, *Early Christians in Ephesus*, p. 478)
- d. 'Later the Elder includes the recipients of the Letter; 'And we have seen & do testify that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world' (1 Jn. 4:14) **This weakens the distinction between 'we' & 'you' in the Prologue because both the Elder; [ Co.] & the members of the churches; have had this experience.**' (Duane F. Watson, *Letters of John*, p. 20 & #19)

## 2. The Word of Life Came! (1 Jn. 1:1-2)

- a. 'John says **four things concerning this 'Word of life': (1) We heard Him with our ears** (vv. 1, 3). John repeats this in verse 3 for emphasis. **(2) We saw Him with our eyes** (vv. 1, 2, 3). John states this three times for emphasis in the first three verses. Furthermore, **'we have observed'** (v. 1) Him. There was an intentional, intense, & continuous gazing at & contemplation of this man named Jesus. For three years we watched & observed His every move. **(3) We touched Him with our hands** (v. 1). He was **a real flesh-&-blood human being**. He was **no ghost or phantom**. **(4) We testify & declare** (both present tense), **as bona fide eyewitnesses, this 'eternal life that was with the Father & was revealed to us.**' (vv. 2, 3).' (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit*, p. 16)
- b. Was from the beginning
- a. 'Without the Fourth Gospel's more explicit articulation of Johannine Christianity's basic testimony to Jesus, a modern reader might find the First Epistle's roundabout, densely worded introduction nearly impenetrable. Equally perceptible here, however, is a refocusing of that Johannine tradition. For one thing, **'the beginning'** to which the two prologues refer **seems to be different**. Whereas **John transports the listener out of time & space, to the beginning of creation, 1 John obliquely directs the reader to the one in whom the church's message originates: Jesus;**' (C. Clifton Black, *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: 1, 2 & 3 John*, p. 808)
- b. 'John is stressing the message about Jesus, which was 'from the beginning'. This raises the question, **the beginning of what?** The prepositional phrase 'from the beginning' is used eight times in this brief letter (1:1; 2:7, 13, 14, 24 [2x]; 3:8, 11) & twice in 2 John (vv. 5, 6), as well as twice in John's gospel (8:44; 15:27). Interpreters see a number of options for the referent of 'the beginning' in John's writings: (1) the **preexistence** of the Son, echoing John 1:1 &, indirectly, Gen 1:1, (2) the **beginning of a Christian's life** at conversion to faith in Christ, (3) the **beginning of God's redemptive work** in human history, (4) the **beginning of the Christian gospel**, defined as: (a) the conception & birth of Jesus, or (b) the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, or (c) the beginning of the preaching of the gospel after Jesus' resurrection.' (Karen Jobes, *Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: 1, 2, & 3 John*, p. 59)
- c. 'The Johannine corpus is well known for its abundant wordplays & double entendres, & **the use of 'from the beginning' in 1 John 1:1 is probably meant to suggest more than one sense. The Word who was with God & who was God in the beginning at the creation** is, in 1:1'2, the Word who is the Life that was revealed in the man Jesus, whom 'we' have heard, & seen, & touched during his incarnation. Thus, while the temporal focus of 1:1 is on the lifetime of Jesus, it alludes to his preexistence & reminds the readers of what they have believed since the beginning of their faith in Christ.' (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 61)
- d. 'The phrase **'from the beginning' can be understood as referring either to the preincarnate Christ** present with the Father at the creation of the universe **or to the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry. The second explanation fits well with the emphasis on eyewitness testimony** found in the next three phrases. John was relating things he had seen & heard from the beginning of Jesus' ministry; **However, the words 'from the beginning' also echo; John 1:1, which echoes Genesis 1:1; John's point seems to be that the One who existed in the beginning with God is the same One the apostles heard & saw & touched.**' (Jim Shaddix, *Op Cit*, p. 13)
- e. Fully divine
- a. 'The Son, Jesus Christ (v. 3) is 'from the beginning' (v. 1) & is 'the eternal life that was with the Father' (v. 2). **Jesus Christ, who is the Father's Son (v. 3), has always eternally existed with the Father as God. There has never been a time when the Son was not. Never. He was before the beginning, in the beginning, & from the beginning. This is what John believed. This is what Jesus taught (Jn. 8:58; 10:30; 14:9); [and] believed Himself to be; & John confessed the same...**' (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit*, p. 15)
- f. Fully human

- a. 'John now, as an apostle & friend of Jesus, presents a **rigorous defense of the real & genuine humanity of the Son**. John speaks as one who was **an eyewitness of all that Jesus said & did**. This is neither hearsay nor a secondhand account.' (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit*, p. 16)
- b. '**Theologically, it is imperative that we understand the essential nature of the doctrine of the incarnation. The biblical Jesus is no myth, fairy tale, or fable. He is no ghost or illusion. He is indeed the God who took on full humanity.**' *'The Word became flesh' (Jn. 1:14). And Jesus Christ is fully God & fully man. He is not half God & half man, all God & no man, or all man & no God. Nor is He simply a man uniquely in touch with the divine. No, He is the God-man, like no one else who will ever live. He has always been with the Father, & at Bethlehem He came to be with us.*' (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit*, pp. 16-17)
- c. Was heard
- a. '1 John **stresses the empirically verifiable reality of the Son**, 'which we **have heard**, which we **have seen** with our eyes, which we **have looked at** & our hands **have touched**.' (C. Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, p. 808)
- b. 'The verbs of sensory perception ('have heard,' 'have seen,' 'have touched') **make a claim that the message is based on firsthand testimony to the Word of Life**, though not necessarily eyewitness testimony of the earthly Jesus' (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 56)
- d. Was seen with human eyes
- a. '**This expression, found only here in the NT, is used to reinforce the claim that the proclamation of the Word of life comes from one who is an eyewitness.** This is supported by the fact that all but one of the 91 uses of expressions combining forms of the verb 'to see' & the words 'with the eyes' in the LXX imply sense perception, that is, a direct personal acquaintance with the object said to have been seen.' (Colin G. Kruse, *Op Cit*, p. 49)
- b. 'The Greek word rendered 'seen' is John's more common word for sight. The addition of the phrase 'with our eyes' reinforces the emphasis on physical sight.' (Jim Shaddix, *Op Cit*, p. 13)
- c. 'The verb *theaomai* is used 22 times in the NT. The 19 uses outside 1 John all denote unambiguously a physical seeing with the human eye. One of the three uses in 1 John (4:12: 'no one has ever seen God') also relates unambiguously to seeing with the human eye. **There is little reason to think that the other two uses in 1 John, found here in 1:1 & in 4:14, should be understood in any way other than actual physical seeing with the human eye.**' (Colin G. Kruse, *Op Cit*, p. 49)
- e. Was observed
- a. '[There] is a difference between seeing & looking upon; We may be walking along a street & we suddenly become aware of something 'we have 'seen' it. 'Ah,' says John, 'we have not only seen. We have looked upon, we have **investigated**, & not with a mere cursory glance. **We watched & we beheld. We looked at him, we sat in amazement, & we really have examined.**' (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Fellowship With God*, p. 38)
- f. Was touched with human hands – John leaned on Jesus' breast (Jn. 13:25) & touched him post-res (20:17, 25; Lk. 24:39)
- a. 'In the present context **the author is clearly using the verb to mean actual touching with the hands**. By doing so he claims that **his proclamation rests on the experience of not only seeing, but also of having touched with his own hands the Word of life.**' (Colin G. Kruse, *Op Cit*, p. 50)
- b. 'It is clear that when the author says, we 'proclaim concerning the Word of life', he has in mind something much more than a spoken message. **He proclaims the Word of life which he has heard, seen, & touched;** [He] proclaims a message that has been embodied in a person 'the person of Jesus Christ.' (Colin G. Kruse, *Op Cit*, p. 50)
3. The Word of Life is Eternal Life (1 Jn. 1:2)
- a. '[This] reference to **eternal life 'which was with the Father'** is an allusion to the teaching found in the prologue of the Fourth Gospel, where the Logos is described as **the one who 'was with God', which in its context means being in the closest relationship with him** (cf. John 1:1, 18). The expression 'eternal life' here, then, **does not denote an impersonal quality of life that comes from the Father, but to the Word of life, the Son of God, who was with the Father prior to his incarnation, & in whom eternal life is found** (cf. 1 John 5:11'12).' (Colin G. Kruse, *Op Cit*, p. 53)
- b. '**Some take the phrase 'the eternal life' to refer to the eternal life that became available to believers through Christ, but it is more likely primarily a statement that the Life that became incarnate had pre-existed eternally 'with the Father.**' As Yarbrough notes, 'in Jesus Christ what is eternal & transcendent has become palpably immanent.' John here makes one of the clearest statements of the eternal preexistence of Jesus Christ, raising him above any other religious teacher or prophet. **But it is also true that eternal life is offered to fallen human beings through Christ when they come to faith in him & share in his eternal life, & so both ideas are in view.**' (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 70)
- c. 'John used three separate phrases containing the word life in verses 1 & 2: 'the Word of life,' 'life,' & 'eternal life'... John's most frequent use of the word was to identify spiritual life that finds its source in God. Often, though certainly not always, the word eternal was used to modify life.' (Jim Shaddix, *Op Cit*, p. 16)

- a. Was revealed
- 'In this verse the author states clearly** what is implied in the previous verse, that is, **that the life appeared** (it had to have appeared, otherwise he could not have seen it, touched it, etc.).' (Colin G. Kruse, *Op Cit*, p. 53)
  - 'Verse 2 begins & ends with the affirmation that **this life was revealed**. What the community of believers was bearing witness to, what they had seen & heard & touched, was what God had revealed to them.' (Jim Shaddix, *Op Cit*, p. 16)
- B. Was seen & testified about
- 'John states his role as a witness to the Life that entered human history**. To 'see' & 'bear witness' are legal terms of the courtroom deposition, where one not only gave evidence from eyewitness experience but also vouched for the truthfulness of what others said. The issue of what is true is at the heart of testimony, & therefore it is not coincidental that truth is also a major concept within John's writings. In fact, Jesus states that the purpose of his incarnation was to testify to the truth (John 18:37b) of what he revealed about God & eternal life (1:18). Therefore, **the role of a reliable, testifying witness is arguably the major theme in John's gospel & letters, where the Greek verb 'to witness' or 'testify' occurs more than forty times** & God himself testified about Jesus (5:37; 8:18), & in turn Jesus was a witness to what the Father said & did (12:49; 17:18). **This chain of witnesses continued with the apostles** whom Jesus Christ personally chose to bear witness of him (John 15:27), & with the one whose testimony comprises John's gospel (19:35; 21:24). **That theme of an unbroken line of witness is picked up again here in these opening verses of 1 John**. Standing in this direct chain of witnesses, the author of 1 John faithfully executes his role as a witness & John testifies to the Life that 'appeared,' that he has seen the Life, & that his writing is his testimony 'about the Word of Life.' (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 69)
  - 'As in English, the Greek word translated testify means 'to bear witness to' or 'to provide testimony about something'; it is not enough that in the past the disciples had experienced the incarnate Christ; they must make public what they had experienced: the life, death, & resurrection of the Lord.' (Jim Shaddix, *Op Cit*, p. 16)
  - 'Not only has the author seen the Life & not only does he now bear witness to it, but he also proclaims that witness to the readers of this letter, specifically that 'the eternal Life, which was with the Father...has appeared to us' in the person of Jesus Christ. As Smalley observes, these three verbs of seeing, testifying, & proclaiming 'express in order the three ideas of experience, attestation & evangelism which form part of any genuine & lasting response to the gospel.' (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 70)
- b. Was with the Father
- c. Was revealed to us
5. We Declare it to you, so that (1 Jn. 1:3-4)
- 'Interestingly, **the main verb** of the prologue **does not appear until now**. It is the word **'declare'**. It means to **'proclaim' or 'announce'**. John says **we cannot remain silent about this eternal life-giving Word**. What we have heard, seen, looked upon, & touched we must share with others.' (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit*, p. 18)
  - 'The Greek verb translated **declare** means **'to give an account or report of something' or 'to make public or make openly known.'**' (Jim Shaddix, *Op Cit*, p. 18)
  - 'The **'so that'** (????) clause in v. 3d-e **states the purpose of the announcement**, that recipients might have fellowship with 'us,' a fellowship that is with the Father & his Son, Jesus Christ.' (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 56)
- d. You readers may have fellowship with us (eye-witnesses)
- '**Fellowship** (koinonia) is used of **'active Christian participation'**; the Greek term basically denotes **partnership in a venture or joint ownership of a concern.**' (C. Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, pp. 808-9)
  - '**"So that you may have fellowship along with us."** **No one is to be excluded from this invitation**. No one who comes by the way of Jesus 'the Word who gives life, eternal life, a life of both quality and quantity' will be denied entrance. **The moment you enter into a personal relationship with Him, this life is yours**. In addition, **you get a whole bunch of brothers & sisters** thrown in as well 'from every nation, tribe, people, & language' (Rev 7:9).' (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit*, pp. 18-19)
  - 'In the first half of v. 3, **the purpose of John's declaration** is expressed: 'that you also may have fellowship with us.'" (C. Clifton Black, *Op Cit*, p. 808)
  - 'By saying, **we proclaim to you what we have seen & heard**, the author simply reiterates what he has already affirmed in vv. 1'2. **He then goes on to explain his reason for proclaiming** what he has seen & heard: **so that you also may have fellowship with us**. The author's purpose is to ensure that his readers persist in the fellowship they have with him. To have fellowship with him is the alternative to having fellowship with the secessionists. In this context 'fellowship' denotes, not only a personal relationship with the author, but also partnership with him in his work of proclamation.' (Colin G. Kruse, *Op Cit*, p. 53)
  - '**Implied in this invitation is the warning that if John's readers do not continue to embrace the apostolic witness, their fellowship with John & with God & the Son cannot be sustained**. This seems to be the case of those who 'went out from us' (2:19), breaking fellowship with the community that John represents, & the case of those who go beyond the teaching about Christ (2 John 9). **This letter then becomes both an invitation to remain in**

**fellowship by continuing to embrace the apostolic tradition & an exhortation to reject the newer teaching of those who have departed from it.**' (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 71)

- e. And have fellowship with the Father & his Son Jesus Christ
- a. **'Jesus is here described as the Son of God, a term used for him, & him alone, 22 times in 1 John. When the author refers to believers as God's children, he never uses the word 'son', as, for example, Paul does (Rom 8:14, 19; 9:26; 2 Cor 6:18; Gal 3:7, 26; 4:6, 7; 1 Thess 5:5), but consistently uses the word 'child'. This appears to be his way of marking the fundamental distinction between Jesus as the Son of God & believers as God's children. This is the first time in the letter that the term 'Christ' is found. It is used in two ways in the letter. First, here & in 2:1; 3:23; 4:2; 5:6, 20 it is used as part of the expression 'Jesus Christ', which functions as a full name for Jesus. Second, it is used as part of the confessional formula 'Jesus is the Christ', where it points clearly to the fact that Jesus was the (Jewish) Messiah (2:22; 5:1). What the author is saying in this verse is that to have fellowship with him is to have fellowship with God (which also involves fellowship with his Son) & to share in the work of God.'** (Colin G. Kruse, *Op Cit*, pp. 53-4)
  - b. **'The purpose of this proclamation is so that you too may have fellowship with us. Yet the purpose is richer than mere human fellowship, for believers' fellowship is with the Father & with his Son. Such 'fellowship' is personal communion with the Father made possible by the mediation of the Son.'** (ESV Study Bible)
  - c. **'John extends an invitation to his readers to fellowship with him & with God; [The] Greek word translated 'fellowship' means having not only a close relationship but also an association based on common interests & purposes. John invites his readers to enter into a relationship with God the Father & his Son, Jesus Christ, by embracing God's redemptive purposes for the world in general & for individual lives in particular, as Jesus revealed them.'** (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 70)
  - d. **'The title 'Son of God' has become so familiar to Christian ears as to have almost lost its meaning. It has certainly lost the shock value it must have had among the earliest hearers of the gospel. Within the pagan world, 'son of god' could refer to various demigods in Greco-Roman mythology as well as to human heroes. The Roman emperor was referred to as 'a son of god' & often would be divinized, sometimes even before his death. Within the Jewish world, 'son of God' had messianic connotations from the covenant promises of 2 Sam 7:14 & Ps 2:6-7. It was with the resurrection of Jesus that the full extent of the messianic promises was realized (Rom 1:4). God's deliverance brought by the Messiah was not just from foreign occupation but from death itself, showing Yahweh to be Creator & sovereign King in distinction from pagan deities. Furthermore, the resurrection shows Jesus to be the world's true Ruler, who has passed beyond anything the world's power can do to him &, furthermore, to his followers. Finally, Jesus' sonship shows that he & the Father share the same nature & purposes for the world.'** (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, pp. 70-1)
  - e. **'How wonderful that guilty sinners should ever be brought into fellowship with God the Father & with his Son Jesus christ! And yet, that is the very truth which we have here.'** (William MacDonald, *Believer's Bible Commentary*, p. 2309)
- f. Our/Your joy may be complete
- a. **'The author recognises that his own joy in Christ cannot be complete if fellow believers for whom he feels some responsibility are in danger of departing from the truth by becoming involved in another 'fellowship', one which he will soon prove to be bogus because it does not really involve 'fellowship' with the Father & the Son (vv. 5'7). In 2 Jn 4 & 3 Jn 4 a similar sentiment is expressed: The elder's joy comes from knowing that others walk in the truth.'** (Colin G. Kruse, *Op Cit*, p. 54)
  - b. **'[Given] that John is writing to encourage his readers to remain within the bounds of the apostolic teaching about Jesus, their continued embrace of the author's message will complete his joy in knowing that his proclamation has not been in vain.'** (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 74)
  - c. **'John concludes the opening of his letter with a statement of his purpose in writing. This is the first of thirteen occurrences of the verb 'write', but the only one in the first person plural, 'we write'. The demonstrative pronoun 'these things' most likely refers to the letter as a whole. As Watson points out, 1:4 ('these things we write') & 5:13 ('these things I write') form an inclusio for the body of the letter.'** (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 74)
  - d. **'Why does John write concerning the subject of fellowship? The reason is that our joy may be full. John realized that the world is not capable of providing true & lasting joy for the human heart. This Joy can only come through proper relationship with the Lord. When a person is in fellowship with God & with the Lord Jesus, he has a deep-seated joy that cannot be disturbed by earthly circumstances.'** (William MacDonald, *Op Cit*, p. 2309)
6. The Incarnation in a Pluralistic Society
- a. An assertion of power
    - a. **'In our day the proclamation of the gospel as the exclusive truth about Jesus Christ has fallen out of favor with many, even among those who would self-identify as Christians. The influence of cultural pressures such as rationalism & historical criticism, New Age spirituality, & radical ecumenicalism with non-Christian religions has reduced the NT to an irrelevant ancient artifact, at worst, or as simply one option for modern religion, at best. To preach the NT as the exclusive truth about Jesus Christ & his mission to reconcile humanity to God is often**

*viewed dimly as an assertion of power & inappropriate behavior in our largely pluralistic modern society.'* (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 76)

b. A stumbling block

a. *'I don't think it is so much the mystery of a divine & human nature in one person that causes most people to stumble over the doctrine of the incarnation. **The stumbling block is that if the doctrine is true, every single person in the world must obey this one particular Jewish man.** Everything he says is law. Everything he did is perfect; **This is the stumbling block of the incarnation when God becomes a man, he strips away every pretense of man to be God. We can no longer do our own thing; we must do what this one Jewish man wants us to do.** When God becomes a man, man ceases to be the measure of all things, & this man becomes the measure of all things. This is simply intolerable to the rebellious heart of men & women.'* (John Piper, *Eternal Life*, p. )

c. Still as relevant as it ever was

a. ***It can be reassuring to realize that this situation today is similar to that of the first century, when heresy made inroads into Christian communities through the influence of Greco-Roman philosophy, through the beliefs & practices of pagan religions, & under the pressure of the Roman rule to accept polytheism & pluralism in the name of the empire so that one might not be a 'hater of mankind' (Suetonius, Nero 16). It is reassuring to realize that despite such a hostile environment, the NT & its apostolic witness have survived, bringing the true gospel message to successive generations of people from the time the ink dried on the autographs down through the centuries to our present day.'*** (Karen Jobes, *Op Cit*, p. 76)

b. *'The impact that Jesus has on His followers cannot be put into words. They were radically changed & really did 'turn the world upside down' (Acts 17:6). **The impact of the life of Jesus, this 'life like no other,' compelled them to take Him & His gospel to the nations. They simply believed they must. They had no choice. What they had experienced in Jesus they wanted others to experience too.'*** (Daniel Akin, *Op Cit*, p. 18)