

1 John Chapter 1

THE FACTS, JUST THE FACTS

Back in the early days of television *Dragnet* was a popular show. Sergeant Joe Friday, when interviewing someone from whom he was trying to get pertinent information on a given situation, is known for this statement: “Just the facts ma’am, just the facts.”

That is all the great Apostle John was concerned with: the facts, just the facts. Facts about who Jesus Christ of Nazareth truly was.

Instead of opening with some salutation, John decided he would confront a major falsehood that was being propagated and becoming popular in his day. Christianity was still in its first one hundred years when John penned this letter and yet, one of its most important doctrines was being attacked and John came to its defense with undeniable eyewitness testimony.

In order to understand what John was opposing it is important for us to dig a little bit. In that day there were individuals who thought they possessed some type of super-knowledge. They were known as the Gnostics. They promoted what is known as “Gnosticism” which was a philosophy of religion and especially concerning Jesus Christ. They held and stated that matter was essentially evil and that only the spirit is good.

Therefore, Gnosticism despised the body and held that the spirit within the body was like a seed in dirty soil.

A basic tenant of their thinking was that man rose from the mundane to the spiritual. That type of thinking resulted in two false theories concerning this Jesus of Galilee. The first was known as “docetism” which regarded the human part of Jesus as a ghost. The second was known as “cerinthianism.” This heresy was taught by a man by the name of Cerinthus. He taught that Jesus was a dual personality meaning, at times He was human and at other times He was Divine.

The docetic line of the Gnostics taught incarnation impossible. They taught it was impossible for God to unite with anything evil such as a body. They taught Jesus only “appeared” to have a body but actually did not. In fact they believed Christ’s body was not human but either a phantasm, which means something not real or a figment of one’s imagination, or of real but celestial substance and that therefore His sufferings were only apparent and not actual. To give a very simple example

of this, they believed when Jesus walked he left no footprints in the place He was walking.

The Cerinthian line of the Gnostics taught something somewhat more subtle. They taught Jesus was both Divine and human **but** the Divine part of Him came upon Him at His baptism by John in the Jordan and departed from Him just prior to His crucifixion at a place called Calvary.

So, this “son of thunder” proved the nickname given him to be totally appropriate for him. Instead of introducing his letter with a salutation he boldly set forth a powerful statement about the truth of this God/man who was truly both Divine and human. He was so Divine and so human it was impossible to tell where the one began and the other ended. He was both God and man in the truest sense of the term. He manifest both in one body!

This truth can be seen in the Gospel accounts of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in many undeniable ways. For instance, at the tomb of Lazarus in **John 11:35** the Scripture says “Jesus wept” and in just a few moments after He gave a command which brought a man four days dead out of a tomb still bound with grave clothes. Or what about the record of **Matthew 8:23-27** and the day we find Him in a boat with His head resting on a pillow sleeping, only to see Him awakened out of sleep by His frightened Apostles in order to still a storm that was attempting to sink the vessel He was riding in.

Since the beginning of the Gospel there have been men who have denied the incarnation either intentionally or through ignorance. Either way, they end up being totally wrong in their opinion about Jesus. In this epistle, we find no place for that kind of thinking in the mind of John. So, he decided he would try to put those kinds of thinkers out of business. John had no place for teachers of such nonsense and neither should we. Heresy of any sort must be confronted clearly and firmly.

John knew that if someone was wrong about Jesus Christ then they would be wrong about everything else. It was just that simple. We must be right about the only begotten Son of God. There are no options. To be wrong about Him is simply to be wrong.

In light of this fact, John makes certain things clear about who Jesus Christ was. The great Apostle made no mistake in identifying Him in the following verses:

1 John 1:3 he states “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”

Then John proclaims and declares without apology in **1 John 2:22** “Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist that denieth the Father and the Son.” He continues to say in **verse 23** “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father:[*but*] *he that acknowledgeth the Son had the Father also.*”

Once again in **1 John 4:2-3** he states “Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is the that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already it is in the world.”

Anyone who would be truthful would testify that John began his letter with a great declaration. In **verses one** and **two** it reads: “That which was from the beginning...” What a statement! But the question must be asked, what beginning was John referring to?

There are references to three different beginnings in the Bible. For instance, in **Genesis 1:1** we find the Bible speaks of the beginning of the creation as we know it now. Then in the Gospel that bears his name, in **chapter 1** and **verse 1** he speaks of a beginning when there was, actually, no beginning. Here finally in **1 John 1:1-2** the aged Apostle references a beginning which was the beginning of the incarnation of Christ when God fleshed out His Word. (Just as a side note, that is what He wants His followers to do in this day, flesh out His Word.)

It is important to understand this last mentioned beginning does not imply a **start** by rather a **state**. It is a statement, actually, of the fact that Jesus the Christ was eternal, pre-existing prior to becoming clothed with flesh or manifest in the flesh. According to **John 1:1** and **John 1:14**, the Word that was with God was, in reality, God and was made flesh and dwelt or tabernacled among man for a short period of time and for a specific purpose.

Please allow me one more reference which would be all but shameful to leave out of our discussion. In **1 Timothy 3:16** we find Paul making an absolutely amazing statement. It reads like this: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.” May I say something real spiritual about that? Wow!!!

It is my opinion this aged and seasoned Apostle John presented a powerful, convincing, and irrefutable agreement about the fact that Jesus the Christ was both fully Divine and fully human, He was truly the God/man.

THE FACTS ARE

According to **John 16:26** one work of the Holy Spirit was to bring back to the remembrance all things Jesus had taught those He had chosen ones to carry out a great mission by proclaiming a great message. In the opening two verses of **1 John** this sage elder says, in essence, “Although I know I have the aid of the Holy Spirit, in this case I really don’t need His help. Although it has been nearly sixty years since being in His presence, as I am the other Apostles followed Him in the Land of Israel and heard Him, saw Him, and touched Him, it is as though I can still to this very day hear His voice, see Him with my eyes, and feel Him with my hands.” I know John had the aid of the Holy Spirit at his disposal, but in reality his experience was still so fresh in his mind and heart it is doubtful that he had so soon forgotten. It seems there are times and experiences in our lives we can never forget and I feel sure this was one of those for John the beloved.

In simple terms, John was saying in every way possible, this Jesus Christ of Nazareth was truly God manifest in the flesh. He sounded like a man when He spoke; He looked like a man in all that He did; He felt like a man when we touched Him.

Can we not just imagine the memories John the beloved was considering in his mind as he wrote those words? Was he thinking about the great discourses He spoke as recorded in **Matthew 5-7** or the one in **Matthew 13** or maybe the one recorded in **John 13-17**? Maybe he was simply thinking about some specific parts of the things Jesus said or did like the model prayer as given in **Matthew 6:9-13** or the actual Lord’s Prayer as recorded in **John 17**?

Was he recalling the day Jesus had fallen asleep in one his old boats on the Galilee? Or maybe that day he watched Jesus weep at Bethany with Mary, Martha, and the town’s people? What about the possibility that he was remembering that special time in the upper room just hours before His crucifixion when he leaned on His breast and asked a question?

Whatever the memory or the event, John was as certain as anyone could be in his heart and in his mind that Jesus Christ was no phantom but that He was a real man in every sense of the word. In essence John was saying, although it has been so

long ago, I can still hear Him. I can still see Him. I can still feel Him. It is obvious Jesus made a lasting impression on this aged man of God.

Please note the word “manifested” in **verse 2**. It means to “declare, to set forth, make known.” John was saying this Jesus Christ was “eternal life” who was “with the Father” had now been made known unto all men. Paul says something very similar to this in **2 Timothy 1:10** “But is not made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death and hath brought life and immortality to life through the gospel.”

I don't know about you but I must willingly proclaim, I am convinced by John that Jesus Christ is truly the Son of God manifest in the flesh. Personally I need no additional convincing but John has more facts to share.

By God's grace, we will consider some of those things in our next lesson.

Thomas Price, 2020