

Light & Love: 1 John

Introduction

Fairview Missionary Church | Angola, IN

Scripture: 1 John 1

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What you believe about Jesus will determine where you spend eternity. What you believe about Jesus will determine where you will spend eternity. That one sentence even coming out of my mouth does sound a little insane, but it is what the Bible teaches. That what we believe about Jesus will determine where we spend our eternities.

And if I believe that to be true, which I do, then the most important conversation I could have with anyone has to do with Jesus. So of course, what you believe about Jesus will also determine what faith community you belong to. That is the defining question that separates most monotheistic faiths. Let me give you a few examples.

If you're watching online or listening on the radio or even here with us and you claim to be a Jehovah's Witness known as the JW's, they believe that Jesus was created by God as the archangel Michael. They believed that he was still a powerful God, lowercase G, but lesser than God, uppercase G. Jehovah's witness don't believe that Jesus was part of the Trinity. And when he was born, he was born a mere human, not God, when Jesus was in the flesh.

The Mormons believed that Jesus was the spirit child between a heavenly father and mother. His brother was Lucifer, and Jesus became the Messiah because he came up with a better plan than Lucifer did, thus winning the title of Messiah. Mormons would believe that he is one god, lowercase G, of many. Muslims, they believe that Jesus was a prophet of God, whom they call Allah, but not God Himself.

They simply believed that Jesus was a great teacher. Atheists, they believe that Jesus was just a normal man. They don't believe that he was God at all. They believe that this man, Jesus, was either crazy, deceitful, or simply a good storyteller. And I have met atheists that fall in every one of those categories. But Christians, I identify as a Christian, believe that Jesus is 100% God and 100% man at the same time.

They believe that he was the Son of God. So if you ask the question, was he God or was he human? The answer is yes. I believe that he is part of the Trinity. We believe that Jesus died on the cross in our place. We believe that Jesus was resurrected on the third day, lived a sinless life, and went back to heaven, and we await the day he will return and take us home to be with him. This is what we believe about Jesus.

Now, let me take a quick moment to share with you something that you already know. Just because someone claims to be in one of these faith categories doesn't mean that they actually believe what that faith category believes. I have met many people, many Jehovah's Witness, who don't know the history of what the JW's believe about Jesus, and they will try to tell me that Christianity and Jehovah's Witnesses the same thing, and we believe the same thing.

I have talked to many Christians, those that claim to be Christian, that believe that Jesus was just a good person, but not God. You see, the crux of every monotheistic faith and every belief system is Jesus. Therefore, there is no more important conversation than you and I could ever have.

If anyone ever comes to your house and they want to talk to you about faith, which I think is great, I don't have a problem with that whatsoever, your first question should be, "Who is Jesus?" That's how the conversation should begin, and that's how the conversation should end. Here are some follow-up questions. Was he 100% God? That's a great question to ask. Do you believe that he's part of the Trinity? Was he 100% man? Do you believe that Jesus lived a sinless life?

Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross? Do you believe that Jesus was resurrected? And where is he now? These are good questions to ask of those that want to talk about faith because for us, Jesus is the center of it all. And if this is the most important question that you and I will ever answer, then I want to know what is the best way to find the truth. At this point, if this truly determines my eternity, I'm sorry, but I don't care about people's opinions.

I want to know the facts. I want to know the truth so that I can come to my own best conclusion. So what is the best way to get the facts about who Jesus is? How do we answer that question? In the court of law, some of the best evidence that a lawyer can ever produce is video evidence. If we had video evidence of Jesus, that would be great. But guess what? We don't have that.

And even today, with artificial intelligence and the technologies that exist, video evidence is not as much as it used to be in the court of law. It's crazy. The next best thing in the court of law is picture evidence. That would be nice, but as you and I know, unfortunately, neither do we have picture evidence of Jesus. The next best thing, though, after video after picture in the court of law is personal testimony from eyewitnesses.

And if you have multiple testimonies from multiple people, that would be even better. It would be great if these eyewitnesses could just share the facts and be impartial. But even in the court of law, and when you and I share our eyewitness account of anything, we are sharing our interpretation of the facts and what we saw.

Now, what many of you know is amazingly, we do have eyewitness accounts of Jesus' life that took the time to write down what they saw, what they heard, and the conclusions that they came to based on what they saw and heard. And this is the best truth that we have to answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" And so today, you and I are going to start in a book that was written by one of these men.

Many of you have heard of him. His name is John. And he wrote in 1 John, his interpretation of the events that took place as he spent time with Jesus. This is the John who we call the apostle. His brother was named James, and they would affectionately be known as the Sons of Thunder. And when you read the Gospel of John, and certainly as we go through 1 John together, you will see some of that passion come out in the way that he writes.

This is the same John who spent over three years with Jesus doing life together, doing ministry together. This is the same John who was with Jesus from the time of his baptism all the way to his death on the cross, and he also was a witness of the resurrection. If anybody knew who Jesus was, it was John. He spent time with him. He had conversations with him.

And as we will see, he claims that I heard, I saw, I physically touched this man named Jesus. So if you have your Bibles, I encourage you to open up with me to 1 John chapter 1. If you don't have your Bibles, it'll be on the screen behind me. 1 John chapter 1, it is towards the very end of the New Testament, so towards the very end of your Bible. If you get to 2nd John or 3rd John, I'd be amazed because there are only one page each. But if you did, go back, all right? 1 John is five chapters long, so you should be able to find that.

1 John chapter 1. Let me pray, and then we will read the text. Heavenly Father, we come before you today. And my prayer is for all of us, as we're here, for those that are watching online, listening on the radio, that we would at least have an honest conversation about who we think Jesus is based on those that knew him best. And then we would come to our own conclusion.

Of course, my prayer, I know your heart as well, is that we would be open to receive Him as Lord and Messiah, for that is what John claims him to be. So open our hearts and our minds in Jesus' name. Amen. First John chapter 1, starting in verse 1. John says, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched.

This we proclaim concerning the word of life." Now, that is a fully packed sentence in first verse there for John. He's making a lot of claims in this first verse that we need to take time to kind of dissect and look at. What are the claims that John is making? The first claim that John is making is that Jesus was from the beginning. He is making this statement as we look at this verse, "That which was from the beginning, that which was around," meaning he wasn't created.

He didn't come about. He wasn't created by another God. There wasn't a relationship that took place. He has existed from the beginning. That is the claim that John is making. He has always existed. Then he goes on to make the claim

that Jesus was physically present. John says, "Listen, I saw him with my own eyes. I heard him with my ears. I touched his body with my hands. He was a physical being, 100%." That's also an important truth.

And the third truth that John claims is he gives him the name as the Word of Life. Now, this should not surprise us for those of us that have read the gospel of John. John starts out in his gospel by saying, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This is the claim that John is making in all of the letters that he's writing, all of the books that he's writing, that Jesus is the Word of life, that He gives life, that Jesus is the source of life.

He is the Word. This is what John is claiming about Jesus. So we go on to verse 2. John says, "The life appeared. We have seen it and we testify to it. And so we proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and has appeared to us." He uses this strange phrase, "The life appeared." We know that he's called Jesus the life. We have seen it and we testify to it, the life of Jesus.

And so we proclaim to you the eternal life. Do you see that definite article there? That's what the word "the" is, the definite article. It's defining something, the eternal life. Not only does John call Jesus life, but now he is going to call him the eternal life. This isn't surprising. Again, for those of us that have gone back into the gospel of John, John heard Jesus say, "Now this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." Jesus is eternal life.

He goes on in verses 3 and 4. John says, "We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard." Are you picking up on a theme here? John's saying, "Listen, these are things that we saw, we heard. We were eyewitnesses. We are proclaiming it to you. Why? So that you may also have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete. Why is John taking the time to write this letter?

Why is it included in Scripture for us? He gives us the answer. It's so that we, so that you and I may have fellowship with them, with the other believers. 1 John is written so that you may know. You may know what. You may know the truth. You may know the Word of life so that you may know eternal life. And John says his whole point for living, his whole point for moving forward, his entire joy in life comes from knowing that others will receive the good news of Jesus along with Him.

Now, as John continues, he's going to use a familiar and simple analogy to help us understand the world in which we live. And this analogy has been used even in movies that are still created today. And you will pick up on that here in a moment. 1 John chapter 1 verse 5. This is the message we have heard from Him and we declare to you, God is light. In Him, there is no darkness at all.

For if we claim to have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another and the blood of Jesus His Son purifies us from all sin. Here is the analogy, light and darkness, good and evil, right? This is still used in movies today. It's this analogy of understanding that God is light.

He is perfect. He is good. He is pure. He is holy. He is eternal. There is no darkness in Him at all. He is that pure. Some of you are familiar with this symbol. It's called the yin-yang symbol. It comes from the Middle East, from China. And this symbol in its original meaning means that in everybody, in every evil, there is a little bit of light, and in every light, there's a little bit of darkness.

And John would say, "Not true." Not true. God is purely good. He is purely good. There is no evil, no darkness in Him at all. In other words, then, you cannot have true fellowship with Him if you continue to walk in the darkness. It simply isn't possible. John says, even in our world, we understand that light and darkness cannot coexist. They cannot exist together.

When you walk into a room, it is either dark or it is light, but you can't have both. In other words, John is saying, "You cannot claim to be a Christian and yet not believe Jesus to be God because that's who he said he was." You cannot claim to be a Christian and a Christ follower and continue to live in darkness. It just can't happen. But yet, John says, if we will walk in the light, we will experience true fellowship with God and others.

Now, hopefully, nobody turns me off or you guys don't leave yet because I know some of you are thinking, "Uh-oh, I'm still not perfect." So what does that mean? Can I be a follower of Christ and still make mistakes? John knew that this

was something we were going to struggle with as he's talking about being in the light and not being in darkness. And so he goes on. So don't give up on him yet, all right? Verse 8. John says, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."

But if we will confess our sins, He is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. In fact, if we claim we have not sinned, we make Him out to be a liar and His word is not in us. John wants to make it perfectly clear that walking in the light doesn't mean that those who follow Christ are perfect and have never sinned.

In fact, the opposite is true. The first step to seeing the light is the recognition that you are a sinner and need help. We have to come to the conclusion, "Yes, I am a sinner. Yes, I have made mistakes. Yes, I need help." John even says, "If you don't come to this conclusion, then the truth is not in you." Verse 9, "You may have recognized, as we read it, is a popular verse in Scripture.

You probably have recognized it and heard it before." John says that if you and I will confess our sins, if we'll come before God, our Holy Father, if we will confess our sins, the faithful and just one, Jesus, will forgive us and purify us from all that is wrong with us. This is how we enter the light and leave the darkness. It's the first step to our realization of the help that we need.

There's only one other option if you don't choose that option, and that's to claim that you have not sinned and you don't need a savior. And in so doing, you are calling God a liar, and Jesus has no place in our lives, and there was no purpose for Him to exist. So either you're a sinner in need of a Savior or you're perfect, and the whole point and story of Jesus is pointless. Again, Jesus is the crux of our faith. Jesus is the central focus.

It truly is all about Jesus. So what do you believe to be true? I ask you that question today. If you're watching online, I ask you, what do you believe to be true? What conclusion have you come to about Him? How many conversations have you had with others about Jesus? How much time have you taken to learn exactly who He is?

Have you looked at the stories that we have that have been handed down to us from generation to generation that share the story of the eyewitnesses of Jesus? You and I have eyewitness testimony from a man who spent over three years with Jesus in the closest setting possible. I've had the privilege and the opportunity to go on many mission trips over the years, and I'm always amazed at how close you can feel to people in such a short period when you're in a different environment, a different culture, maybe you don't even speak their language, and you're doing ministry with them, there's a bond that happens in that short period of time.

I've gone on mission trips with people where I've been with them for seven days, 10 days, and I honestly, after that trip, feel closer to them than I do some of my own family. There's something that happens when you're doing ministry with others. Maybe when you're in a difficult situation together, you experience things together. Now think about the fact that John was on at least three-and-a-half-year mission trip with Jesus. He lived life with him. He heard him speak. He probably heard his sermons so many times that he could quote them.

He could share what Jesus was going to share. He saw the miracles. He went through the difficulty. He endured the persecution. And he is writing for us the conclusion that he came to. You see, you have the freedom to believe whatever you want. That's the God that I believe we serve. He's given us the freedom. But if we're going to talk about evidence, the Bible is clear as to the stance that it is taking. John is clear.

Matthew is clear. Mark, Luke, they're all clear as to who they believed Jesus to be. I find it interesting and strange that someone would choose to give authority to a source other than the Bible that is a third person and often many times written hundreds of years after the life of Jesus. The Book of Mormon, for those that are Mormons, was first published in 1830, over 1,800 years after Jesus.

Jehovah's Witness, they trust the elders in New York. And if you don't know anything about Jehovah's Witness, I'm not encourage you to go home and study, but if you want to, you can. They believe these elders, these men who live in New York today over the biblical text. They have authority over the Bible. The Quran, even in the Muslim faith, was written in 650 AD, 600 years after Jesus.

Those that would claim to be atheists, most of whom believe in science, just simply look to the latest theories about the origin of life which have changed over and over again. I've had enough conversations with these types of

individuals to know that these people have their reasons as to why they believe what they believe. And I even know some of these people that, in all honesty, seem to be great human beings. They love others well.

But I will tell you in our conversations, their belief is based more on faith than logic. You guys know that I'm a man of faith, and I claim to be a man of faith. But I've also shared with you many times that I'm a person of logic as well. I went on my own spiritual journey when I was in high school, trying to find out what was true and what was right. And so I did the research. I looked at other religions.

I wanted to know why what I was being taught was actually true, and what others were being taught was potentially not true. And I can tell you, based on my own research, based on my own time in Scripture and other books, that not only do I believe in Christianity as a man of faith, I believe in Christianity because I believe it's the most logical choice to answer the questions of why we're here and what happens when we die.

This is too important of a question to just take someone else's word for it, even my own. I encourage you to go on your own spiritual journey. Ask Jesus to reveal Himself to you. Ask Him to show Himself to you. Read the words of God. Read Scripture and say, "Jesus, I want you to reveal yourself to me." I've talked to people that were formerly Muslims that prayed that prayer, and they have experienced things that I've not even experienced with dreams and visions and things like that of Jesus revealing Himself to them.

And so I encourage you, just ask Him, "God, if you're real, would you please reveal yourself to me? Spend time in the Word. If you're here today or watching online, listening on the radio, and you've already concluded that Jesus is Lord, then you and I just get to worship Him because He is worthy. He is worthy. God is light. We are called to submit to Him. If I claim Him as my Lord, it means that He's my authority. It means that He is my everything.

And so for the rest of my life, I will learn what it means to submit to Him. If you have any questions, if you love to have conversation about this, know that I'm available. There'll be people up here that want to pray with you if you just need prayer. If you want to come to the altar, it's always open to do your business with God, to praise Him. I'm open to conversation. Let's close in prayer.

Heavenly Father, would our hearts be open to hear from you? Thank you for loving us where we're at. We are all sinners in this room. Everybody that's watching online, everybody that's listening. We are all sinners. The only difference is some of us have received your grace and your mercy, and that is what saves us.

And so, Lord, for those that have not received that, may they open their heart to You. And for those of us who have, may we continue to live a life that is worthy of our calling in you. We ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.