



Fellowship with the Apostles!

A SUMMER SERIES ON THE EPISTLE OF 1 JOHN

1 Corinthians 15:1-11 1 John 1:1-4 John 20:19-29

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Today we are beginning a summer series on the epistle of **First John** in the NEW TESTAMENT. The Apostle John begins his book in a dramatic fashion, with an exalted prologue that is meant to give you **absolute assurance**, **deep conviction**, and **UNSHAKEABLE CONFIDENCE** in your faith.

John uses **4 words** to emphasize the certainty that Jesus, the crucified Man, *has risen from the dead*.

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. 1 John 1:1

John is teaching that the Apostles, including himself, are **eye, ear, and hand witnesses**¹ to the Risen Savior Jesus Christ. John is declaring to us that he has carefully heard Jesus teach; and now he has seen with his own eyes that Jesus has risen from the dead; that he has clearly studied Jesus to make sure it was really Him; and that he investigated by touching Jesus' body with his own hands and even touching the scars of crucifixion himself! Not only did Jesus let "doubting Thomas" touch His body after the resurrection (John 20); **but He let all the disciples** carefully examine Him and touch His body and see the scars. Jesus is alive! The *crucified* Man has risen from the dead! Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ, and the Savior of the world!

¹ The words that John uses in 1 John 1:1-2 are intense; they "looked upon" Him means to look intently and paid attention; it is the root of the English word "theatre." The physical handling of Jesus has the idea of investigating; they were absolutely sure that the crucified Jesus had now risen from the dead!

If you struggle with doubts; if you are not sure that your sins are forgiven and that you are saved; if you wonder if Jesus really is God, the Savior of the world --> then all you have to do is read the first four verses of **First John** in the NEW TESTAMENT. John writes to give you **absolute assurance**, **deep conviction**, and **UNSHAKEABLE CONFIDENCE** in your faith. He, and the other Apostles, are *eye, ear, and hand witnesses!*

This is one of the reasons why Jesus sent out the Apostles: they were allowed to carefully examine Jesus' body to make sure He was real; and then they were sent to declare, proclaim, preach, and write as **official witnesses** of the *crucified* and Risen Savior!

The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 1 John 1:2

For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 2 Peter 1:16

John and the Apostles have seen Jesus, testify about Him, and proclaim His resurrection to us! In the Old Testament the truth was established by two or three witnesses; in the New Testament, God has established the truth of the resurrection through His 11 Apostolic witnesses, plus Matthias, plus St. Paul, plus James, plus more than 500 other people²! **Jesus is alive!** You can have **absolute assurance**, **deep conviction**, and **UNSHAKEABLE CONFIDENCE** in your faith. The Apostles are Jesus' official *eye, ear, and hand witnesses!*

Remember that this is significant; Jesus' resurrection is the foundation of the Christian faith! Because Jesus has risen from the dead, your sins are forgiven! The resurrection proves that God the Father accepted His Son's sacrifice on Good Friday! God the Father considers your sins *paid in full*, and you are now declared "Righteous!" that is, "not guilty!" Jesus' death and resurrection is the cornerstone of the Christian faith!

² St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 15:4-8 *He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.*

In the context of First John, John is teaching us that the Jesus who lived, taught, and worked miracles is the **same** Jesus that was crucified, buried, and rose from the dead on the Third Day. In John's day, there was a false teaching that says that Jesus was just a good man whom God adopted for a short time, and then left Him when Jesus started to suffer in Jerusalem³. The result of that teaching is that only Jesus *the man* was crucified; there is no salvation value in His death. He is remembered as simply a teacher and a good example to follow.

The Apostle John's
New Testament Books
(in probable order, perhaps 95-96AD)
Revelation
1 John
2 John
3 John
Gospel of John
(Perhaps last NT book written)

The truth is that the Jesus who lived, taught, and worked miracles is the **same** Jesus that was crucified, buried, and rose from the dead on the third day. Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Savior of the world! His life, death, burial, and resurrection is the work that was required for your eternal salvation! Jesus' life, death, burial, and resurrection is the only work that God accepts on your behalf. You can have **absolute assurance**, **deep conviction**, and **UNSHAKEABLE CONFIDENCE** in your faith --> Jesus is alive, and He is your Savior!

Jesus sent the Apostles be **eye, ear, and hand witnesses** of His resurrection. He sent them out to bear witness to the world, *including us today*, that **HE IS ALIVE!**

Their words are recorded in the New Testament; the Holy Spirit works through their witness to create faith within you.

We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may 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. 1 John 1:3-4

³ This false teaching is called Gnosticism. The False Teaching is called Gnosticism; sometimes it is called Docetism or Adoptionism. It teaches that Jesus, the natural son of Joseph, was joined to the eon (=hidden) "Christ" at His Baptism, but this Christ eon left Jesus at the time of His passion so that He died as a mere man who was never "the Son of God," was never the Incarnate Logos, the Second Person of the Godhead, but had the Christ eon only for a time. This heresy deprived the death and "the blood of Jesus, the Son of God," of all efficacy as a "expiation" for the sins of the world. The Interpretation Of The Epistles Of St. John, R.C.H. Lenski, p.525 adapted Various forms of this teaching still exist even today, including the cults of Mormonism and Jehovah Witnesses.

By holding to the testimony of the Apostles, not only do you have fellowship with them, but also with God the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. *When you trust the witness of the New Testament, you are exactly where you need to be in the Christian faith.* You are in communion with the Holy Christian Church; you are aligned with God's people of all times and all places. You are in fellowship with John, Peter, and Paul and all the Apostles that the crucified Jesus is alive and that He is the Savior of the world!

Today we walk by faith, trusting the witness of the Apostles in the New Testament. But a day is coming when we will no longer need faith, because you will see Jesus *yourself with your own eyes!* *You yourself will see, with your own eyes,* the *crucified* and Risen Jesus in the full glory of heaven with all the holy angels with Him⁴. On the Last Day when Jesus returns, you will see Him; and He will invite you into His Heavenly Kingdom where you will live forever in the glory of heaven!

The Apostle John begins his 1st Epistle with strong words of confidence and assurance: John and the other apostles are *eye, ear, and hand witnesses* to the *crucified* and Risen Savior Jesus Christ! He writes these things to give you **absolute assurance**, **deep conviction**, and **UNSHAKEABLE CONFIDENCE** in your faith. You are exactly where you need to be; by trusting the New Testament you are in fellowship with the Apostles, with God the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ,

Amen!

⁴ There are two phrases that describe when we finally get to see Jesus: eternal bliss and the beatific vision. Both of these terms are part of our **HOPE**: confident faith that you will see the Risen Savior Jesus Christ with your own eyes and live with Him forever in His heavenly Kingdom! We believe in the Resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting!

Risen Lord Jesus,

we thank you for the Apostles; and that Your Holy Spirit inspired them to write the New Testament.

Help us to hear their witness and to believe it.

Help us, who have not seen You with our own eyes, still believe in You through the Spirit inspired writings of Your official witnesses, the Apostles.

We look forward to the Last Day, when we will see you with our own eyes in the Kingdom of glory!

Amen!

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 11 Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

1 John 1:1-4

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. 2 The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. 3 We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 We write this to make our joy complete.

John 20:19-29

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together, with the doors locked for fear of the Jewish leaders, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 20 After he said this, he showed them his hands and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord. 21 Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” 22 And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. 23 If you forgive anyone’s sins, their sins are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.” 24 Now Thomas (also known as Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. 25 So the other disciples told him, “We have seen the Lord!” But he said to them, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.” 26 A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!” 27 Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.” 28 Thomas said to him, “My Lord and my God!” 29 Then Jesus told him, “Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”