

**The Real Jesus**  
**1 John 1:1-4**  
**January 22, 2012**

This line between truth and falsehood is blurred in our society. We pick up newspapers and read touching stories and later find out that the stories were complete fabrications. We are used to politicians making us promises to get our votes, only to forget those promises once they get into office. **We are so used to seeing realistic dramas on television that we often find ourselves forgetting that what we are watching is just pretend.** People stand up and make passionate arguments and we simply accept that what they are asserting is true is actually true.

This carries over into issues of faith. It seems like every day someone is developing a new religion. Many religions contradict each other. In other words, it is impossible for them all to be true.

Jesus says he is the only way to Heaven. Yet, Islam says it is the only path to Heaven. Mormonism says that only those who hold to the teachings of the book of Mormon will rise to the highest Heaven. **They all could be false, of course, BUT they can't all be true.** They are contradict each other. Some People say, "We are all headed in the same direction." I would say, No, we're not. Some are walking with God, some are walking away from Him.

Now all of this is ground work to help us understand how important it is for us to know The Real Jesus. Not the Hollywood version – or the free love version or whatever else might be in circulation at any given time.

John begins his letter to the church with these words, I **John 1:1-4**

**I 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> We write this to make our joy complete.**

Often when I meet someone for the first time as much as I try to pay attention. I nod, shake someone's hand, and try to be genuine. However, I'm easily distracted and within a matter of a couple of minutes (sometimes seconds) I can't remember their name.

In a similar way, it is easy to miss the significance of the early words of a book in the Bible, especially the letters. We are so eager to get to the "meat" that we miss the foundation that is laid in the first words. We so want to get to the "practical stuff" that we sometimes overlook the doctrinal or theological foundation that the practical stuff is based on. That is especially true in this letter from John. So this morning let's take our time and hear clearly what is being said.

## **Slide Christian Faith is Largely Historical**

**The first thing John tells us is that the -- Christian faith is based in fact, not fiction.**

**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**

John testified that this Jesus he proclaims is someone he saw, heard, looked at, and touched. Jesus was a real person, who lived at a real time in history.

Understand how significant and important this is. John is reminding us that he is not sharing some philosophy he's come up with. This is not some theory that he is propounding. He is telling us what he saw and learned from the Jesus of History.

Today there are thousands of people who have embraced Scientology. Tom Cruise, John Travolta and others are betting their lives on the theories found in a book called Dianetics, written by L Ron Hubbard. When people began to embrace the book, Hubbard wrote others and eventually developed a complicated (and rather bizarre) set of beliefs. There is nothing verifiable in his theories. **These are born in the imaginations of a man.** Yet many have accepted his imaginations as truth.

The same can be said about the Book of Mormon. It gives us information about various people for whom there is no historical record. **You have probably heard the commercials that tell us that Jesus appeared to people in America.** However, there is no record, no evidence that any such thing happened.

**Christians are not called to put their brains in neutral to follow blindly. John Wesley said our faith should be practical – understandable.** Right at the beginning of his letter, **John wants us to know that He is going to tell us about a real person. We can check John's facts with history. We can check facts about Jesus with other historians; even secular historians.**

John drew a number of conclusions about Jesus because

- He saw Jesus heal the sick, restore sight to the blind, and make the lame walk
- He listened to the wisdom of His words
- He was with Him on the Mount of Transfiguration
- He was in the boat when Jesus walked on water and again when He calmed a raging storm with a word
- He was present when he took the five loaves and two fish and fed nearly 10,000 hungry people.
- He was there at His crucifixion and remembered that Jesus had predicted it would happen
- More than anything, He saw the resurrected Jesus. Three days after he was dead and buried, **John was having dinner with Jesus! He had a chance to question him and learn from him those forty days after His resurrection.**

As a result of what John witnessed and heard from Jesus he drew some conclusions about this real person, Jesus. He tells us that Jesus is **“the Word of Life”**. It's a familiar phrase for John. In the opening words of His gospel he wrote,

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. (John 1:1-4)**

**“I am the way, the truth, and the life, no man comes to the Father, except through me.” (John 14:6)**

If there is an eternity beyond this temporal life that we are now living, then knowing about eternal life is of the utmost importance. This is the most important issue of our lives! This is not superficial information; it is vital, practical, and life changing.

**Christian Faith is more Personal Rather than Academic, and yet no one can really develop their faith alone.**

John tells us something else that is important. He tells us that his experience with the Word of Life and his confidence regarding eternal life is something that we too can experience.

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.

I love the way the contemporary paraphrase **THE MESSAGE** captures this opening passage from John,

*“From the very first day, we were there, taking it all in—we heard it with our own ears, saw it with our own eyes, verified it with our own hands. The Word of Life appeared right before our eyes; we saw it happen! And now we’re telling you in most sober prose that what we witnessed was, incredibly, this: The infinite Life of God himself took shape before us. We saw it, we heard it, and now we’re telling you so you can experience it along with us, this experience of communion with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. Our motive for writing is simply this: We want you to enjoy this, too. Your joy will double our joy!”*

Christianity is not a class where you learn a bunch of facts. **The message of Christ offers us a chance for a new beginning.** John’s passion is for us to know the Jesus that set Him free. **The message of salvation is a message of forgiveness for acts of rebellion and indifference to God.** It is a message of **hope to a person who is broken** because of failure. It is a message of **healing to those who have been victims** of life’s dark side. It is a message of life to those who are watching the gradual decay of their physical frame. It is a declaration of value for those who feel worthless. It is a message of a love that exceeds any love we have ever known.

John is not simply interested in us merely learning his story.

**John wants us to meet the Jesus that changed his life** and the life of millions since. He shares what He saw, heard, and touched so that you and I might come to trust the Savior with our lives.

Warren Wiersbe writes,

**“A counterfeit Christian—and they are common—is something like a counterfeit ten-dollar bill. Suppose you have a counterfeit bill and actually think it is genuine. You use it to pay for a tank of gas. The gas station manager uses the bill to buy supplies. The supplier uses the bill to pay the grocer. The grocer bundles the bill up with forty-nine other ten-dollar bills and takes it to the bank. And the teller says, “I’m sorry, but this bill is a counterfeit.” That ten-dollar bill may have done a lot of good while it was in circulation, but when it arrived at the bank it was exposed for what it really was, and put out of circulation.”**

We can live our lives and have everyone believing that we are a child of God. We can good people and even help other people. However, when the Lord, who alone determines our eternal destiny, looks at our lives, it won't matter what other people have thought of us. **He will know whether we are real or counterfeit; whether we are followers or pretenders.** Jesus said,

**“Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophecy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me you evildoers!’” (Matthew 7:22-23)**

So at the beginning of our study on how to be a Real Deal Christian, let me ask you a key question: On what do you base your faith? Are you building your life on an illusion? Have you examined the facts? Are you being scammed by the imagination of men? Have you dismissed the Bible and Christianity without ever reading the Bible and examining the evidence?

I extend to you a challenge to Study the life of Jesus. See if His life matches the claims about who He is. Hear His words. Check out the facts. Take time to look at the evidence for the resurrection. **Christians are not afraid of serious and honest study.** It was Paul who wrote, **“If Christ has not be raised, then our faith is useless.” (1 Corinthians 15:17)**

**If Jesus is the truth, He will stand up under any scrutiny.** If He is not what He claims to be, then you shouldn't follow Him. **Chrysler chairman Lee Iacocca once had a great ad. He said “If you can find a better car, buy it!”**

I would say If you find a better Savior, follow that one.

If you will honestly and objectively examine the life of Jesus I believe you will discover that He stands out above all the pretenders. If you commit your life and put your hope in this Jesus for forgiveness and eternal life, you will be changed. And if you will listen to what John tells us in the weeks ahead; if you take this message to heart and not only listen in the classroom of the sanctuary but put his counsel into practice it in the laboratory of your daily life; you will discover that **Jesus is the Real Deal**. You will have a new confidence in your faith. You will not only share the truth but you will DECLARE the truth. You will see with new eyes. And faith will become the most practical thing of all. But don't take my word for it. Find out for yourself.