

The Network of Light and Joy

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[0 : 00] We're going to sing, no, we're going to read the scriptures together. I'd like you first to turn to John's Gospel and chapter 20.

You'll find that on page 906 in the Church Bibles, John's Gospel, chapter 20. And you might like also to have a finger in 1 John, chapter 1, which we'll read from just in a moment.

John, chapter 20, and verse 19. On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, Peace be with you.

When he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, Peace be with you.

As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. And when he'd said this, he breathed on them and said to them, Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of anyone, they're forgiven.

[1 : 33] If you withhold forgiveness from anyone, it is withheld. Now, Thomas, one of the twelve, called the twin, was not with them when Jesus came.

So the other disciples told him, We've seen the Lord. But he said to them, Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails and place my finger into the mark of the nails and place my hand into his side, I will never believe.

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again. And Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you.

Then he said to Thomas, Put your finger here and see my hands and put out your hand and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.

Thomas answered him, My Lord and my God. Jesus said to him, Have you believed because you've seen me? Blessed are those who've not seen and yet have believed.

[2 : 41] I'd like you to turn over to 1 John chapter 1. That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we've seen with our eyes, which we've looked upon and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life, the life was made manifest, and we've seen it, and testify to it, and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us, that which we have seen and heard, we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us, and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete. This is the message we've heard from him, and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

This is the word of God. We praise him for it. Let's pray for a moment.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together.

Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Let's pray together. Let me ask you if you feel content with your spiritual life this morning.

- [5 : 0 0] It's a nice day, isn't it? It's a day to be content with things. Are you content with your spiritual life? Are you happy that you have all you need for life and godliness?
- Do you feel like a proper believer this morning on this beautiful day? Well, do you worry sometimes that you've missed something? Some truth that you've neglected?
- Some act of obedience that you haven't embraced? Some secret that if only you knew it would make all the difference to your life as a Christian?
- Well, if that's you this morning, you're in the right letter. Turn with me to 1 John chapter 1. For this is a letter written to people who worried about just those things.
- Were they proper believers or not? Had they missed some secrets? Or did they have the whole picture? Let me remind you of the situation which had necessitated this letter being written.
- [6 : 1 0] A group of people have left the church that John is writing to. Their departure has caused real problems for those who remain.
- Because these people are well enough known and well enough respected and impressive looking enough to have caused big uncertainties for the guys left behind. On the one hand, these people who've left have said things about Jesus that those who remain are not quite sure about.
- And there have been some behavioral issues that those that remain are not quite sure about. And they've had a rather superior attitude to the ordinary Christians.
- Which everybody has found a little uncomfortable. And yet, on the other hand, these are impressive looking people. And they can't be ignored. And when they tell you that there's so much more that you could have than is being offered to you, it takes a very confident person not to be just a little anxious about whether they've got the proper thing.
- Let me illustrate. I was preaching some years ago in a church which was going through great difficulties. I was a visiting preacher. One person came up to me at the door on the way out.
- [7 : 3 2] A very competent looking senior woman. She was gushing. Thank you so much for your sermon. The spirit was really in that.
- I'm afraid that has been very lacking in this church for some time. It was full on raw flattery. I knew it not to be true.
- The preaching in that church was of very high standard always. A few weeks later, she was gone. Along with a bunch of very significant other people.
- With lots of talk about how unspiritual were those that they'd left behind. Now when people like that leave, there is going to be confusion.
- And anxiety. And there is going to be a need for great reassurance. And this is that kind of letter. John does two things in this letter. He makes clear what the departed people are really like.
- [8 : 3 8] So that his readers appreciate what they're up to. And he reassures the real believers left behind that they are real believers. And that they don't need to feel inferior to those who've departed.
- Clarification about those who've departed. And reassurance to those who remain. That's the agenda of this letter. Now we're going to look at these few introductory sentences. And the most striking thing about this introduction.
- Is that John doesn't begin by talking about the problem. Or by talking about the problem people. Isn't that interesting? You would expect him to write something like.

Hello to you guys over there. I'm so sorry to hear about all those dreadful people who departed. You are okay really. But he doesn't do that. None of that. Instead. That which was from the beginning.

Which we have heard. Which we have seen with our eyes. Which we've looked upon and touched with our hands. Concerning the word of life. The life was made manifest.

[9 : 47] Let me tell you. Says John. About the life that was made manifest. And he's talking here of course. About Jesus. He doesn't name him. But that's who he's talking about.

And so let us begin this morning. By talking about. The display of the life. The life that was made manifest. Isn't it interesting. That John doesn't start with the problem.

He starts with that. Which was from the beginning. Now. Those of you who had your ears pinned back. And were listening hard. And your eyes wide open. While these words were being read out. Will recognize.

That this introduction. In 1 John chapter 1. Is really quite like. The introduction to John's gospel. Isn't it? Turn back to. Keep a finger here. And turn back to John's gospel.

And chapter 1. Look for example.

[10 : 49] At verse 5. No. Let's look at verse 1 in fact. In the beginning. Was the word.

And the word was with God. And the word was God. And. Says John. Verse 14.

The word. Became flesh. And dwelt among us. And we have seen his glory. Now that's ever so like. 1 John chapter 1. Isn't it?

Ever so like it. But let me say. Let me say that there are links. In 1 John. To many points. Of John's gospel. It's evident that this is the same writer.

And we'll unpack a few of those this morning. Let me say something first. About. Turn back to 1 John. Let me say something about.

[11 : 45] One or two other bits. Of this detail. Not only is it like. John chapter 1. But it has other things in there as well. First. Notice.

In these sentences. The link between. The life that has appeared. And the words. We. And us. Look at verse 1.

We have heard. We have seen. We have looked upon. Verse 2. We have seen. We proclaim. Manifest to us.

Verse 3. We have seen. We proclaim. Fellowship with us. We are writing. Verse 4.

Verse 5. We have heard. We. We. We. We. We. We. Us. We. We. We. Us. You know. That's how it goes. There's a lot of we in these verses. Is there not? What we is John talking about here?

[12 : 48] Well notice that the we is contrasted with you. Verse 2. We have seen it. And proclaim it. To you. Verse 3.

That which we have seen. We proclaim also. To you. Verse 5. We have heard. And proclaim. To you.

So the. We. Doesn't mean. Every Christian. Everywhere. It means. A particular group of Christians. And for reasons that I'll go into in a minute.

I think. John. Is referring here. To. We. Apostles. We. To you. We. To you. He's talking about him.

As a member of the apostles here. And will that will become clearer. In just a moment. Now. We've already said. That this chapter.

[13 : 44] Is a bit like John chapter 1. But it's like something else as well. Because did you notice. The language of sensation. That's described here.

Verse 1. We've heard. Seen. Looked upon. Touched. Verse 2. We've seen.

Verse 3. We've seen. Verse 5. We've heard. Notice all that sensory language. It's very strong isn't it.

Seen. Touched. Heard. Gazed upon. And I'd like you to turn back to John 20. Because. John doesn't just have.

Jesus arrival in the world. In view here. As he writes 1 John chapter 1. Look at John chapter 20. And look at verse 24.

[14 : 45] See if you recognize this language. Thomas one of the 12. Called the twin. Was not with them. The other's disciples told him. We've seen the Lord. But he said to him.

Them. Unless I see in his hands. The mark of the nails. And place my finger. Into the mark of the nails. As I place my hand. Into his side. I'll never believe.

Verse 27. Put your finger here. See my hands. Put out your hand. And place it in my side. Do not disbelieve.

But believe. This language. Of seeing. Touching with hands. This is also the language. Of seeing. And touching. The risen Jesus.

Jesus risen from the dead. So John looks back. On Jesus arrival. Into the world. That's very like.

[15 : 41] John chapter 1. And on Jesus resurrection. From the dead. But there's more. In 1 John chapter 1. Look at verse 2. 1 John again.

Chapter 1. Verse 2. We've seen. We've looked upon. We've touched. The life was made manifest. And we have seen it.

And. Testify. To it. That word. Testify. Or bear witness. Is a very. Very important. Word. And it's an important word.

In John's gospel. It's used. In John's gospel. Of a variety. Of things. It's a word. Used of John. The Baptist.

Testifying. To Jesus. It's a word. Used of Jesus. Testifying. To what he's seen. From the father. It's a word. Used of the Samaritan woman.

[16 : 38] In chapter 4. Testifying. About what Jesus. Knows about her. To her friends. It's a word. Used to describe. The father. Testifying. To the son. In various ways.

And the son. Bearing witness. To the father. It's used of Jesus. Bearing witness. About himself. Just have a skim. Through John's gospel. Anytime. And that. Testifying.

Bearing witness. Language. It's stuffed. Full of that language. But. The one set. Of people. In John's gospel. Who do not.

Bear witness. To Jesus. Are. Who do you think? The 12. The disciples. Who are with him. All the time.

In John's gospel. The disciples. Are not. Bearing witness. About him. Yet. At all. In fact. They haven't really understood. Much about him. However.

[17 : 35] There is a promise. That one day. They will. Bear witness. About him. Turn to John. Chapter 15. I told you. There were lots of points. Of contact.

Well. Here's another one. John. Chapter 15. Verse 26. Jesus is speaking. To his disciples. About. The day. When the Holy Spirit.

Will come to them. When he's returned. To the father. Verse 26. When the helper. Comes. Whom I will send. To you.

From the father. The spirit. Of truth. Who proceeds. From the father. He will. Testify. Same word. About me.

And you. Also. Will testify. Because you've been with me. From the beginning. One day. The spirit. Will come. Says. Says Jesus.

[18 : 28] And he. Will testify. About me. To you. And you. Too. Will testify. In other words. The spirit. When he comes.

Will make you. Into witnesses. About me. The disciples. Do not. Testify. To Jesus. During the story.

Of John's gospel. But Jesus. Promises. That in the future. When the spirit. Comes. They will. Testify. To him. Because they've been with him. From the beginning.

Now. Back to one. John. Chapter one. Verse two. Please. John. Is writing. Here. Not. Merely.

As one. Who's seen. Jesus. Come into the world. It's like. John. Chapter one. And not. Merely. As one. Who has seen. The risen.

[19 : 21] Jesus. Seeing with the eyes. Touching with the hands. All that kind of thing. But also. From the perspective. As one. Who has been. With Jesus.

All the way through. And has now. Received the spirit. And therefore. Verse two. Testifies. To the life. To the life. That's come into the world.

All of that. Is packed in. To those verses. He looks back. On the Jesus event. He saw the Jesus. Who came into the world. He saw the Jesus.

Risen from. Who's raised from the dead. And now. As a recipient. Of the spirit. He is a testifier. To Jesus. Who has sent his spirit. Now.

You might well ask. Well. So what? Okay. I can see. That all those ideas. Are in there. But. Who cares? Well.

[20 : 16] I think the point. Is this. Where is eternal life. On display. In this world. When you go in this world.

To see eternal life. Or to experience. The eternal life. That belongs to God. Where is eternal life. On display. Answer.

Not just. In the incarnation. When Jesus came into the world. And not just. In the resurrection. When he was raised from the dead. And showed to have an indestructible life.

No. Eternal life. Is manifested. In the world. In the message. Of the testifiers. The witnesses. The ones.

Whom Jesus chose. To be his authenticated messengers. In other words. The whole package. If you like. Which is the work. Of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[21 : 13] Includes. As a key part of it. The designation. Of authenticated witnesses. He will proclaim. That message.

To the world. Where is life displayed. Where is life revealed. In the apostles. Gospel.

About Jesus. That's where you access. Eternal life. Now. Can you see the incarnate Jesus now?

No. You can't access eternal life that way. You can't wander up to him. And touch him. Can you access. The risen Jesus. Now. Can you.

Put your finger in the nail holes. And your hand in his side. No. You can't. Where can you access eternal life. In the apostles message about him.

[22 : 08] Which is part of the package. Now. I have labored this point slightly. You may think. Rather too much. And it may seem. A small thing.

But brothers and sisters. It is a big. Big thing. Let me read this passage. Slightly differently. With a slightly different emphasis. That which was from the beginning.

Which we have heard. Which we have seen with our eyes. Which we looked upon. And have touched with our hands. Concerning the word of life.

The life was made manifest. And we have seen it. And testify to it. And proclaim to you the eternal life. Which was of the father. And was made manifest to us.

That which we have seen and heard. We proclaim also to you. So that you too may have fellowship with us. And indeed our fellowship.

[23 : 05] Is with the father. And with his son. Jesus Christ. Do you see how very significant the we is here. We are the people. Says John.

We are the people. Who've seen. And heard. And touched. And been set apart. As witnesses. To the risen Jesus. We are the people.

You are to listen to. That's the point that he's making. What is he doing here? Is he bigging himself. And the other apostles up? Is he a proud person?

Well no. If you read his gospel. He will tell you all about. How those closest to Jesus. Were totally clueless. About who was wandering around.

In front of them. For three years. They had the eternal life. From the father. Walking around. Sharing their food. Spending time with them.

[23 : 59] Talking to them. Every day. And they basically. Totally failed to understand. Who he was. Or what he was going on about. He is not. Bigging himself up here.

Sometimes people say. If I've been alive back then. And seen Jesus. Then I would not be in any doubt. That God was real. Brothers and sisters. You would be in serious doubt. That God was real.

For they were. They hadn't a clue. Who they were talking to. They just didn't get it. It completely passed them by. Till after the resurrection.

And the pouring out of the spirit. He is not. Bigging himself up. Why is he making this point then? Well because. There are other voices. Around.

There are other messages. About Jesus. Circulating. There are others. Very close to home.

[24 : 54] Who claim to be. Especially in the know about God. Others who are saying that. They should be listened to. And in response.

John says very early on. Don't listen to them. Listen to me. Don't listen to that. Listen to this. The life has appeared. And we've seen it. Not them.

They didn't see it. They're not the witnesses of it. God has made us the witnesses. Pay attention to us. It's our message.

About Jesus and his work. Where eternal life is to be found. The place where you get. True knowledge of God. Is not in their teaching.

Though they say it is. But in ours. The display of the life. Where is eternal life. To be seen and accessed. Answer.

[25 : 47] In the apostles message. About Jesus. That I think is the big point. Of this introduction. Now let me say something. About the proclamation.

Of the life. Verse three. That which we have seen. And heard. We proclaim.

Also to you. So that you may have fellowship with us. And indeed our fellowship. Is with the father. And with his son. Jesus Christ. And we're writing these things.

So that our joy may be complete. This is the message. We've heard from him. And proclaim to you. That God is light. Twice. John mentions.

Why. He is proclaiming this message to them. Verse two. So that you may have fellowship. Sorry. Verse three. So that you may have fellowship with us.

[26 : 42] Verse four. So that our joy may be complete. We want you. To have fellowship with us. Says John.

We want you to relate rightly. To us. And again. You might ask. Why is he so tied up. With having people. Relating rightly. To him.

Well the answer is given. In verse three. And this is the most extraordinary statement. You'll come across. All week. So that you may have fellowship. With us.

And indeed. Our fellowship. Is with the father. And with his son. Jesus Christ. By the way. Says John. John. Our fellowship.

Is with God the father. And God the son. You want to have that. Says John. You need to have fellowship. With us.

[27 : 38] You need to embrace. Our message. Not just any old message. Not just anybody. Who claims to know God. Our message. We want you. We want you to have that.

And that's why. We're proclaiming to you. What we've seen and heard. Second reason. That John gives. For proclaiming. The life to them. Is. So that his joy.

May be complete. That's what will make us. Really happy. If you are part. Of the fellowship. With us. And with the father. And with the son. Now our time.

Is nearly gone. And before we get on. To talking briefly. About some of the implications. Of this. In the contemporary world. Let's just look very briefly. At verse five. For John.

Hasn't yet. Said much. About the content. Of his message. And here. He does get into the content. This is the message. We've heard from him. And proclaim to you.

[28 : 36] That God. Is light. And in him. Is no. Darkness. At all. What does he mean by that? God is light.

And in him. Is no darkness. At all. Well again. John's gospel. Is very helpful. For in John's gospel. The language of darkness. And light. Is used quite often.

Again you might want to. Skim through John's gospel. And just discover that. But let me draw your attention. To a couple. Then look at them. I'll just mention them to you. Chapter one. Verse five. The light.

Says John. The light. Shines. In the darkness. And the darkness. Has not. Overcome it. There's a conflict. Between light. And darkness.

In which light. Will win. Or John chapter three. Light. Has come into the world. But people. Love darkness. Rather than light.

[29 : 31] Because their deeds. Were evil. So when John says. God is light. And in him. There's no darkness at all. That kind of light. He almost certainly.

Means that God. Is good. There is no evil. In him at all. And there is no. Deviousness in him. No. Nothing hidden.

Nothing secretive. Unlike human beings. Unlike human beings. Who love to hide from light. And who love to keep things. Hidden and secret.

And unclear. God loves to make things. Clear. And plain. And true. Because he's good. Transparent in his integrity.

More of that. Next time. Let's draw out some implications of this for ourselves. I want to say three things.

[30 : 30] First. There are good lessons here about how to deal with untruth. Here is a letter written to deal with a problem.

And with problem people. People speaking things that are not true. But John does not start his letter. Talking about the problem. Or the problem people.

He starts the letter talking about Jesus. And about what is true about him. And throughout chapter one. He spends a great deal of time.

Talking not about the problem people. But enlarging on the theme of Jesus. And the work of Jesus. And what he's achieved.

So. Verse seven. Jesus is the one who cleanses people from sin. Chapter two. Verse one. Jesus is the one who acts as an advocate for the father.

[31 : 29] For people who have sinned. Chapter two. Verse two. Jesus is the one who turns away God's anger at sinfulness. There's a lot about Jesus in this letter.

And especially at the beginning. And by the time we eventually get to talking about the problem people. What does God. John call them.

Chapter two. Verse 18. He calls them the antichrists. That little phrase.

It probably means substitute. Ante on the whole in Greek means substitute. Or opposite to. These are the substitute for Christ's people. Or the opposite to Christ's people.

That's the people they are. By the time we get to talking about them. Jesus has been made so much of in this letter. That to call these people.

[32 : 27] Substitutes for him. Or. Opposites to him. Is a huge thing to do. And you can imagine the readers thinking.

John says these are. Instead of him people. Opposite to him people. Really? Are they that bad? And of course they are.

Do you see what he does? He kind of creeps up on the error. By talking about what is. Good and true. And making it really big. So that when you see what is false.

You think. That really is false. Isn't it? Brothers and sisters. If we want to deal with error. Often the important thing to do. Is not to go straight for it.

Sometimes. It is important to go straight for it. But sometimes. If we go straight forward. And say. No, no, no, no, no. That's not true. It makes people think. Well.

[33 : 25] What an argumentative person you are. That's just a matter of opinion. What John does. Is to talk about the truth. And make the truth really big.

And so by the time. He gets to saying. Those guys are substitutes. For that Jesus. You can imagine. The reader saying. I better not listen to them then. I would never have thought that.

But now you mention it. I can see that you're right. Do you see how he does that? Very important that. Untruth sometimes needs to be crept upon.

And surprised with the bigness of truth. Second. Let me say something about the importance of the apostles. Not only does John start his letter talking about Jesus.

Jesus. He starts his letter. He starts his letter. By saying that one of the biggest things that Jesus has done. Is to provide for the world. Authenticated spokesman.

[34 : 28] Equipped to pass on the authenticated message about himself. This is the one of the most important things that God has done for us. It's a vital part of the salvation package.

Yes. Of course. Jesus coming into the world is important. And yes. Of course. His death for sins. And his resurrection from the dead. Is important. And yes.

His ascension to heaven. And his rule at the right hand of the father. Is very important. And his coming again in glory. To judge the living and the dead. Is very important. But. Without a properly validated set of witnesses.

All of that stuff just becomes another opinion. And the number of opinions about Jesus in this world. Is absolutely breathtaking.

An imaginary figure. A good guy. Whose friends made up splendid stories about him in his memory. A wise man. A prophet. The savior of the world.

[35 : 29] And lord of all. Those are very different opinions. Are they not? And only one of them. Is validated by God. The apostles. Are just as unique.

As Jesus is. Just as unique. Because they are chosen by him. To be his spokesman. And is it not true.

That often when people want to avoid the truth. They don't attack Jesus directly. They attack the apostolic witness to Jesus.

Jesus. He's terrific. The apostle Paul. Well his sexual ethics are totally unacceptable. Or his attitude to women is totally unacceptable. Or his attitude to Judaism is totally unacceptable.

We love Jesus. We hate Paul. Or. Jesus. Wonderful. But the apostle John. Well his gospel is just so anti-semitic. We can hardly bear it. And the truth is that you cannot have Jesus without the apostles.

[36 : 36] If you ain't got the apostles. You haven't got Jesus. You can't have Jesus. For we have Jesus. Through their God authenticated witness. And through no other route whatever.

You cannot have Jesus without them. He is just there. Just as unique as he is. Because he has chosen them. That which we have seen and heard.

We proclaim to you. Because we are the witnesses. See you need to listen to us. Do you see? The apostles are very important. Third. Third.

Let me say something about the amazing network of relationships. Which is light and joy and life. Notice the direction of flow.

In verses 2 to 3. With the father. To us. That which we have seen and heard.

[37 : 39] We proclaim also to you. So that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the father. Isn't that interesting? From the father. To us.

To you. To us. With the father. From the father. And back again. The message of salvation. And the activity of salvation.

Comes from the father. To the apostles. To those they proclaim. To. And back again to the father. The apostles message.

Comes straight from God the father. And that message. If believed. And persevered in. Takes. A person. An ordinary person.

Like you. Or me. Into a network of relationships. Not just with other people. But with the apostles. And not just with the apostles.

[38 : 33] But by the way. With the father. And his son. Jesus Christ. Is that not amazing? A network of relationships. Described here. With words.

Like. Life. Joy. Light. No darkness at all. Isn't it amazing to think.

That a message. Just words. Just words. Can bring you. Into a network of relationships.

Which will last forever. And in the end. Flower. And bear fruit. In joy. And light.

And life. Forever. With no darkness at all. Is that not amazing? Isn't it amazing? Isn't it amazing? You would think. Wouldn't you. That to kind of. Plug into eternal life.

An ordinary person. Like you. Or me. Can be plugged. Into light. And life. And joy. Forever. With no darkness. At all. Isn't that amazing?

And the beginnings. Of a relationship. Which will last forever. And be perfect. In every way. And of course. To turn your back. On that message. Is to forfeit.

And nowhere else. Let's pray together. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Hear the words.

For your son. Who came into the world. We thank you. For his life. For his death. Upon the cross. For our sins. For his resurrection. From the dead. We thank you.

Amen.