

I JOHN: TRUE SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP

I. The Basis Of True Spiritual Fellowship

(1 John 1:1-4)

I. Introduction

- A. When the Apostle John wrote 1 John around A. D. 90 ("Introduction To The First Letter Of John," Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, p. 1770) he implied in 1 John 1:3 that a significant number of his readers were not enjoying spiritual fellowship with the Apostles, with God the Father and with God the Father's Son, Jesus Christ!
- B. That lack of fellowship with God in John's era certainly occurs in many believers today, for Christ predicted this would be the case in Revelation 3:14-22 in His message to the Laodicean Church. We thus begin a study of 1 John with a view to understanding the basis of real spiritual fellowship with the Lord and godly believers:

II. The Basis Of True Spiritual Fellowship, 1 John 1:1-4.

- A. When the Apostle John wrote 1 John, the Church faced three especially significant errant cults:
 - a. Gnosticism "held to a strict dualism in which spiritual and material things were sharply distinguished" so that the Gnostics rejected belief in Christ as God come in the flesh. (Ibid.; Ibid., Ryrie, "Gnosticism")
 - b. Docetism held to the "belief that Jesus' humanity was not real and that He only appeared to have a physical body," Ibid., Bible Know. Com., N. T.
 - c. Cerinthus taught that "Jesus was only a man and that the divine Christ descended on Jesus at His baptism and left Him before the Crucifixion," Ibid.
- B. Since 1 John 2:18 and 4:1 KJV revealed that "many antichrists" and "many false prophets" were in the world in John's time, he wrote this epistle not to focus on just one cult, but to equip the Church to handle both what it then faced and what new cults might arise in future ages of the Church. John was elderly, so he would have wanted to leave a record on comprehensive discernment for future generations of believers.
- C. John then introduced this epistle to provide a firm foundation for assuring his readers that he was certain of the true fellowship of God and His Son Jesus Christ, what is clearly evident in 1 John 1:1-3a (as follows):
 1. The word rendered "was" (*en*) in 1 John 1:1a KJV is written in the imperfect tense (U. B. S. Grk. N. T., 1966, p. 813; The Analyt. Grk. Lex., 1972, p. 187) to indicate "continued action in past time" (J. Gresham Machan, New Test. Gk. for Beginners, 1951, p. 65), so the Person of Jesus about Whom we will learn John was writing had already been continually existing from the beginning, implying He is Eternal God!
 2. The verbs "we have heard" (*akekoamen*) and "we have seen" (*heorakamen*) in 1 John 1:1b are **both** in the **perfect** tense. (Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 12, 180; Ibid., Machan, p. 1-5) John meant to clarify that he and the other apostles had been so **indelibly impressed** by what they had heard and seen of Jesus in His incarnation that they could never logically forget or deny it!
 3. John added that the apostles like him had not only looked upon Jesus, but they had also "felt, handled" (*pselaphao*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 900) His body with their hands, noting that Jesus had truly come in an actual physical body as the "Word of life," 1 John 1:1c.
 4. This "life" was thus manifested, the apostles had seen it, they bore witness of it and "were announcing" (present tense of *apaggello*, "announce, report" (Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 35; Ibid., Arndt & Gingrich, p. 78) to believers like John's readers that eternal life that had eternally existed with the Father and was manifested to Christ's apostles, 1 John 1:2-3a.
- D. What John and the apostles had seen and heard of Christ in His incarnation John was declaring unto his readers that they might fellowship with the apostles, which fellowship also included fellowship with God the Father and with His "Son" (*huios*, U. B. S. Grk. N. T.) Who is thus co-equal with the Father as God (cf. John 5:18), Jesus Christ, 1 John 1:3b. John's aim was to make the joy of the apostles *as well as* the joy of John's readers (*hemown* ["our"] instead of *humown* ["your"] in the variant readings, Bruce M. Metzger, A Text. Com. on the Grk. N. T., 1971, p. 709) "once-for-all complete" (*pepleromene*, a perfect participle; Ibid., p. 676-678; Ibid., U. B. S. Grk. N. T.; Ibid., The Analyt. Grk. Lex., p. 316); 1 John 1:4.

Lesson: Fellowship with God is based on the validity of His revelation about that fellowship in the Word of Life Who came to earth as God Incarnate and in the testimony of the apostles who witnessed His life. John clarified that both the Incarnate God and the apostles' witness of the Incarnate God were real and true, and John's mission then was to tell his readers how they might truly fellowship with the apostles, God and His Son, Jesus Christ.

Application: May we TRUST the words of the apostles as God's TRUE Word on fellowship with the Lord.