

1 John
The Apostles' Proclamation (Part 2)
1 John 1:1-4
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So, let's go then to 1 John, chapter 1. In the prologue, in the first 4 verses of his letter, John is providing evidence for the truth of the gospel that we have believed. I think you understand that even in our own jurisprudence system, in the legal system of the U.S., there are rules of evidence that govern what is admissible in a court of law.

One of the acceptable types of evidence is the testimony of a witness. This is, in some ways, the most familiar to us, testimonial evidence, we're told by the legal system, is only admissible if, first of all, it is material, if it is relevant, and if it is competent. Now, for testimony to be competent, for someone who purports to give testimony in a court of law, for that testimony to be competent, it must meet four basic conditions of reliability.

First of all, it must be under oath. Secondly, the person must have personal knowledge, that is, they have perceived something with their senses that applies to the case at hand. Thirdly, they must be able to recollect what they have perceived; they have to remember what they witnessed. And then finally, they must be able to report what they perceived. So, for a witness in the U.S. courts to be competent, to bear testimony, those things must be true. One must be under oath, have personal knowledge, having witnessed something with his own senses, and he must be able to recollect what he perceived, and then able to report what he saw and witnessed.

It's interesting, testimonial evidence is one of the only kinds of proof that does not need supporting evidence to be admissible. In the prologue to both his gospel and his first letter, the Apostle John presents his own testimony, but not merely his own testimony, the testimony of the other Apostles as well as evidence for the gospel. And as we will see, it is evidence that meets the legal standard for reliable witnesses, even in our own system. We're studying this prologue together; let me read it for you again, 1 John, chapter 1, verses 1 to 4. This is the introduction to his letter:

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life--and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

This paragraph teaches us that the ultimate foundation, the ultimate foundation of fellowship with God, of our assurance of that fellowship, that is that we have eternal life, and our resultant joy because of that assurance, all of those are bound up in the proclamation of the gospel that came from the Apostles. In other words, understand that the foundation of everything for you, if you're a follower of Jesus Christ, the foundation of everything is the gospel the Apostles proclaimed. That's what John is telling us here.

Now, this paragraph consists of two sentences, the second sentence is simple and straightforward, it's verse 4, but verses 1 to 3 is a long, difficult sentence. The subject and the verb of that sentence are in verse 3, "we proclaim;" that's the main subject and the main verb, "we proclaim." But what was it that the Apostles proclaimed? Well, the direct object of the verb 'proclaim,' is the four phrases of verse 1. Here's what they proclaim, "What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes what we have looked at and touched with our hands." Now, the last phrase in verse 1, identifies the one that those other phrases describe, the person who was at the center of the Apostles Proclamation. Notice the end of verse 1, their message was concerning or was about the "Word of Life." That's not just a message; it's a message embodied in a person. Just as John does in his gospel, he gives the name, "The Word," to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, verse 2, you'll notice in our translation is set off with dashes. That's because it's parenthetical. Verse 2 is explaining how it was that The Twelve, the Twelve Apostles, came to hear and to see and to look at and to touch the Son of God. It was through the incarnation.

Then verses 3 and 4 explain to us the reasons for both the Apostles' Proclamation of that gospel, and for the Apostle John's letter that we call 1 John.

Now, I've noted for you that this prologue then is about the Apostles' Proclamation. Again, the main subject, "We," the main verb, "proclaim." That's what it's about, and it points out, for us, three key features about that proclamation, three key features of the Apostles' Proclamation.

Now, last time we looked at, "The Focus of the Apostles' Proclamation," and the focus of their message is Jesus Christ. As we discovered last time in the first 3 verses, John explains several crucial truths about our Lord. I'm not going to take time to reexplain them, I'll just list them and if you missed last week, you need to go back and catch up because this is the focus of the message. In those first verses, we learn that Jesus our Lord existed eternally, that He is truly human, that He is God's self-expression, that He is self-existent; that is, He has life in Himself and depends on nothing and no one for that life. Instead, He gives life to everything and everyone. He was manifested in human flesh, He was eternally with God, He is Jesus of Nazareth, and He is, this was His mission, the promised Messiah and Savior. All of that in the first 3 verses of this letter.

Now today, we come to a second feature of their message; we've seen the focus of their message; today we come to, "The Integrity of Their Message," the integrity of the Apostles' Proclamation. You see, when you look at those 3 verses, the first 3 verses, you not only see those truths about Jesus, but interwoven with those truths about Christ, in the very same verses, John also gives us several reasons that we can trust the message that they proclaimed about Jesus.

Why should we believe the message that the Apostles preached about Jesus of Nazareth? Why should we believe those things that we just pointed out they said were true about Him? Well, here, in this text, we are given those reasons, the reasons that we can trust their proclamation about Christ.

Let's look at these reasons together. First of all, because they were reporting historical events. Notice verse 2, "...and the life," talking about Jesus, remember He was just called, "The Word of Life," the end of verse 1. "And the life (Jesus our Lord) was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life." He's not talking now just about the idea that you can have eternal life; he's talking about the person who embodies eternal life, Jesus. "We...proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--."

Now, you'll notice twice, at the beginning of verse 2, and then again at the end of verse 2, John underscores that the eternal Son was manifested, He was publicly revealed, He was made known, and specifically he means, He was manifested in the flesh. How do I know that? Because this is almost identical to what John said at the beginning of his gospel. Go back to John 1, you remember that there is so much overlap between the prologue of John's Gospel, written around the same time, at the end of the first century, and his first letter. You remember, he begins with this concept of the Word, verse 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God;" he goes on to say that He created all things, in verse 3.

Verse 4, He was again self-existent, "In Him was life, and (He gave life to everything else.) the life was the Light of men." He talks about the witness of John the Baptist, but notice verse 14, here's how he puts it in his gospel, "...the Word became flesh." That is the same concept as "the Word was manifested, "the Word became flesh."

You know, we read that and I'm afraid we've become so accustomed to that idea that we just sort of read past it. Stop, and let that sink into your mind, the eternal Son of God became just like you; he has a human soul and a human body. He added that to His divine nature, and now He is the God-man. He was manifested in the flesh, "...the Word became flesh," He became one of us and He "dwelt among us," verse 14 says. Literally, "He tabernacled among us." He goes on to say, "...and we saw His glory," and what we saw, it was glory as of the only begotten, the one-of-a-kind, unique Son, from the Father, "...full of grace and truth."

Turn over to I Timothy; I Timothy, chapter 3. A few moments ago, we sang together the “Confession of the Apostles’ Creed.” Well, here is one of the earliest creeds of the church, one of the earliest confessions. I Timothy 3, verse 16, “By common confession,” this is the confession we make, “...great is the mystery.”

Now, you remember in Biblical terms, a mystery is something that was not previously known and could not be known if God didn't reveal it, but that God has now revealed. So, “...great is the mystery of godliness,” that is the mystery of how sinful human beings like us can become godly, how we can have a relationship with God. Basically, we would say this, “Great is that once secret plan that God has now revealed about salvation,” how we can be reconciled to God. And you'll notice, it's all about a person. He who was revealed, same word ‘manifested,’ He who was revealed in the flesh.

“(He)... Was vindicated in the Spirit,” that's probably an acknowledgment of the resurrection. You remember Romans, chapter 1, verse 4 says, “...(He) was declared (to be) the Son of God with power by the resurrection of the dead,” through the work and testimony of the Holy Spirit. Everything He claimed to be was vindicated by the Spirit in resurrecting Him from the dead. He was seen by angels; certainly that was true at his resurrection; it was also true at the ascension forty days later. “He was seen by angels, and as a result of His being manifested in the flesh, His incarnation, His life, His death, His resurrection, being witnessed by angels, notice He was proclaimed among the nations, among all the peoples of the world, and some believed that message, believed on in the world.” (Paraphrased)

Folks, that's us! “And then taken up in glory.” That's obviously a reference to the ascension, but it's out of chronological order here, why? Because it's also pointing forward to His ultimate exaltation when as Philippians 2 says, “Every knee will bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord.” This is our confession; this is our common confession of how sinners like us can become godly and have a relationship with God. “He was manifested,” Jesus was manifested or revealed in the flesh. He became one of us. Folks, He is a person of history.

And by the way, no credible historian denies that a historical person named Jesus of Nazareth lived and died during the first century, no credible historian. You know, every Christmas and Easter, some nut will come along on television, and they'll actually put it on, saying, "You know, well we don't even know if there was a Jesus." Try visiting Israel and find out if that's true. Nobody there says, "Oh, we don't know if Jesus of Nazareth really lived." If you want to study this further, by the way, read, The Historical Jesus by Gary Habermas; it lays out the case for the historicity of Jesus primarily from secular documents. Of course, Jesus was a person of history. John and the other Apostles were discussing real historical events, not myths or fables.

Let me just say, if you're here this morning and you're not a follower of Jesus, don't think for a moment that you can deny His claims against your life by denying that He really existed or was real. You can write Jesus off as a myth or a legend, you can deny His claims, you can call Him a liar, a charlatan, or a fraud; but ultimately, you really cannot deny that He lived in Israel in the beginning of the first century; history will have none of it. "He was manifested in the flesh;" that is simply a fact of history. The Apostles were reporting real historical events, and that lies at the foundation of their integrity and reliability.

Secondly, we can trust their message, their proclamation, because they were firsthand eyewitnesses. Verse 1, "What was from the beginning," that is that Word that existed eternally and was, the end of verse 1, "...the Word of Life--." Verse 2, "and the life was manifested, (And notice this.) ...we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--." It was the Apostles' first-hand observation of the eternal Son of God revealed in the flesh that was the basis of their gospel. That's the point of verse 1, look back up there, verse 1, John says, "(We proclaim) what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life--"

Now, look first at that word, 'we' there in verse 1. Various writers have suggested that that word 'we' could mean several different things. Some say it means 'I.' In other words, it's an editorial 'we' in which 'we' just means John. But that doesn't work because that means John is presenting himself as the only witness. Now, John understood Old Testament Law, and he

knew that under Old Testament Law, one witness wasn't enough. Deuteronomy 17:6, Deuteronomy 19:15 says there has to be two or three witnesses for a matter to be confirmed. And John quotes that very concept from the mouth of Jesus in his gospel in John 8, verses 17 and 18. He knew there had to be two or three witnesses or more, and we will see this we get to 1 John 5:7. There, he brings together three witnesses. So, John understood this concept of two or three witnesses required; so, he's not presenting himself here as the sole witness and saying, "Believe me."

Also, another argument against this meaning 'just John' is John, in other places in this letter, uses the first-person singular pronoun. Look at 1 John 2, verse 1; 1 John 2, verse 1, "My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin." Verse 7, "Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment." Verse 8, "On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you." So, in the first verse when John says, "we," he knew the first-person singular pronoun and he used it in other places, so he has to mean more than just 'I' in that context.

Another option that some say 'we' means here, is it means John and the leaders of the church in Ephesus. John was there pastoring in that church and serving that church and was reaching out in the communities around, and they say, "Well, he means that." Others say, "No, he didn't mean him and the leaders of the church in Ephesus; he means himself and all believers, in a sense we have all given witness to these realities. Folks, that doesn't work either because neither the first century leaders in Ephesus, nor all of us, have seen Jesus with our eyes or touched Him with our hands.

So, that leaves us with only one other option, and it's the obvious option in this context. When he says "we" in verse 1, he's talking about himself and the other Apostles. The nature of the experiences here: hearing, seeing, touching, demands that these are eyewitnesses. So, by 'we,' John means himself and the other Apostles. It's like over in chapter 4, verse 14, "We have seen," there again, he switches back from 'I' to 'we;' "We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world." You see, John was the last living Apostle when

he wrote this letter, but he still recognized that he was one of a select group of men who were firsthand witnesses of the events in the life of Jesus.

Consider what the Apostles experienced as first-hand witnesses; look back at verse 1, "...what we have heard," you'll notice the perfect Greek tense is reflected in the way it's translated here, "have heard." The perfect tense implies that what they had heard Jesus teach in the past continued to influence them, it continued to echo in their minds and memories, "...what we have heard."

I mean, think about what John would've heard. As one of the Inner Circle, John had literally heard everything Jesus had said and taught. Verse 1, "...what we have seen with our eyes." John says, "I and the other Apostles have seen Jesus Christ," and he adds, "...with our eyes," meaning, "We really saw Him;" we're not talking about a spiritual vision here. John himself saw everything Jesus did for the better part of those three-and-a-half years.

You remember initially, he didn't travel with Him day and night until Jesus called them out of the rest of the disciples to be the Apostles; and from that point forward, for probably the better part of two-and-one-half years, he was with Jesus twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week! He saw the miracles that are recorded in the Gospels, he witnessed them with his own eyes, he was with Jesus from his baptism by John the Baptist until Jesus ascended into heaven on the Mount of Olives on the day of the Ascension. He saw it all! John was even there at the trials, you remember. Peter was there for a short time and then denied the Lord and left, but John was there the entire time, and John was the only Apostle at the crucifixion; he saw it all. He was at the empty tomb on the morning of the resurrection; he saw the resurrected Christ. Again, the perfect tense here, "We have seen," implies that what John had seen was still vivid in his mind's eye sixty-years later.

He goes on to say in verse 1, "...what we have looked at." This is a different Greek word than "have seen." It means to look intently at something; it describes a literal, physical inspection of something with your eyes so that you can interpret its nature and its significance. As I have shared with you, Burdick writes, 'The Apostles scrutinized Jesus so thoroughly that they had no

doubt concerning His physical reality.” John assures us here that he and the Apostles, they scrutinized, they studied, they analyzed what they saw in Jesus.

And then he adds, “...and touched with our hands.” The Apostles intentionally touched the physical body of Jesus in order to verify its physical reality. That undoubtedly happened prior to the death of Christ, but of course, it was crucial in validating the reality of Jesus’s resurrection. Jesus Himself called that into play in Luke 24, verse 39, He said to them, “See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”

Now, when you read verse 1, what you read there raises a really important question, and that is, “How could John still accurately remember the facts about Christ and His ministry that happened sixty-years before he wrote his gospel and before he wrote this letter; how could he remember all of that?” Well, there are several answers to that. I mean, the first and most obvious is the intensity of those experiences burned themselves into his memory in much the same way that some of the most intense events in your life are burned into your memory so that they’re like yesterday. A second explanation would be that, for sixty-years since he witnessed those events, can you imagine how much every day somebody said to John, “John, tell us again, what did you see, what did you hear, what did Jesus do, tell us what He taught.” And so, for those sixty-years, it wasn't like those memories were just allowed to drift, he was asked to recall them every day until they were cemented in his mind, just like those stories your kids get tired of hearing.

But, the Apostles had more than a good memory. Their accurate recollection of the events they witnessed was guaranteed by the work of the Holy Spirit in inspiration. Turn back to John's Gospel, chapter 14; John 14, and look at verse 25. John 14, now, let me just remind you of the context here. This is the upper room discourse; it's the night before our Lord's crucifixion; Judas has already left; and in verse 25, Jesus says this:

These things I have spoken to you while abiding with you. But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said to you.

Now, this verse has been terribly misused by every generation of students since our Lord walked the earth, or since it was written by the Apostle John. There are students who recite this verse in their prayer, “Lord help me to remember everything I’ve studied.” Well, I hate to tell you that, I think the Lord will be faithful to you and will help you do that, but this is not promising that. There are other students who even misuse this verse in a greater way by saying, “Lord, help me to remember things I haven’t studied.” This verse has nothing to do with us. This is a promise from Jesus to the Apostles, that when the Holy Spirit came, He would teach them the rest of what Jesus wanted to teach them but had not yet had time to do, and the same Spirit, notice the end of verse 26, would “...bring to (the Apostles) remembrance all that I said to you.” Jesus guaranteed that their memories would properly preserve what had transpired so that, under the direction and inspiration of the Spirit, they could record exactly the truth. So, it wasn’t just their memory; it was the work of the Holy Spirit, supernatural intervention of the Holy Spirit. John was a first-hand eyewitness, but it was more than that; through the Holy Spirit, Jesus supernaturally enabled John and the other Apostles to remember all the things that Jesus taught and did. They were eyewitnesses!

Now, think about that for a moment. John is writing this letter at the end of the first century; and the false teachers that he’s addressing that he’s trying to help the true believers in these churches navigate, those false teachers, attacking the churches in Asia minor, the churches that John loved, they had never heard, seen, or touched Jesus. They weren’t eyewitnesses. They lived hundreds of miles from Israel, and they were more than sixty-years removed from the time Jesus walked the earth.

Can you imagine the hutzpah to say to the people in those churches, “Yeah, yeah, I know, I know John was there, but listen, here’s what really happened, here’s what Jesus was really like.” Let me tell you, that didn’t stop in the first century; that continues today. They completely ignored the testimony of firsthand eyewitnesses, and they came up with their own theory. That happens every day in our world; many of the experts today will claim to know more about Jesus than the eyewitnesses who report their testimony in the New Testament. The Apostles were first-hand eyewitnesses of the events in the life of Jesus.

But they were more! Thirdly, they were official witnesses, they were official witnesses. Go back to 1 John and look at verse 2 again. He says, "...we have seen and testify." Now, the Greek word 'testify' here means, according to the leading Greek lexicon, 'to confirm or attest something on the basis of personal knowledge and belief, to bear witness, to be a witness, to offer testimony.'

Now, in the New Testament, this word can be used of someone who accidentally witnesses an event; it's used that way for example in Acts 26:5. We use the word like this when we talk about those who testify in court. Usually, they weren't picked to be a witness of the event; they just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time, they saw the crime unfold, they saw what happened, and they witnessed, they gave witness to what they saw; it was an accident, but they ended up being a witness.

But like our English word, the Greek word 'testify' can also refer to those who are chosen to be official witnesses. For example, in John 1, verse 7, we learn that John the Baptist was sent to be a witness; he was picked for that purpose. And we understand this; I mean if you have to sign legal documents, often, those legal documents require that there be witnesses, that it is, in fact, you signing those documents, either disinterested parties or a Notary Public, but somebody has to officially witness and say, "This document was signed by this person as is claimed."

The reason that the Apostles, don't miss this, the reason that the Apostles were first-hand eyewitnesses of all that happened in the life of Jesus was not by accident; it wasn't just, they happened to be there. Jesus chose them for that purpose! The Apostles were His official, handpicked eyewitnesses. After His resurrection in Luke 24, verse 48, He says, "You are witnesses of these things."

But this concept of bearing witness to Jesus takes center stage in the book of Acts. Turn to Acts, chapter 1; Acts, chapter 1, just before the ascension, Jesus has gathered the Disciples together, and He says this to them in verse 8, "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses." This wasn't an accident; this was, "I'm

assigning you this responsibility, you will be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”

Now, this verse rightly applies to all of us, but that's not the primary point of this verse. This verse is Jesus talking to the Apostles saying, “I am assigning you the responsibility to be witnesses on my behalf throughout the world.” And this is what they took up. Go over to chapter 2; chapter 2, on the day of Pentecost, verse 32, Peter says in his sermon, “This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses.” His second sermon in chapter 3, verse 15, he brings this up again, the leaders of the nation “...put to death the Prince of life, the one whom God raised from the dead, a fact to which we are witnesses.”

Now, Peter, in chapter 10, makes it clear that this wasn't an accident. Go to Acts 10, he's preaching to Cornelius, the first Gentile converts in terms of that change in the history of the church here as it unfolds outside the Jewish nation. And in chapter 10, verse 38, he says this:

You know of Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed Him with the Holy Spirit and with power, and how He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with Him. We are witnesses of all the things He did both in the land of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They also put Him to death by hanging Him on a cross. God raised Him up on the third day and granted that He become visible, (Watch this, verse 41.) not to all the people, but to witnesses who were (What?) chosen beforehand by God, that is, to us who ate and drank with Him after He arose from the dead.

The Apostle Paul strikes the same note in his sermons; look at Acts 13, verse 28, he says He was crucified, and He was, verse 29, He was buried, “...laid...in a tomb.” Verse 30, “...God raised Him from the dead.” Verse 31, and for many days He appeared to those who came up with Him from Galilee to Jerusalem, the very ones who are now His witnesses to the people.” But Paul explicitly states this about himself in Acts 26; look at Acts 26, verse 16, he's recounting, before Agrippa the Damascus Road experience, and he says, he responded, verse 15, “...Who are you Lord?” The Lord said, “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting.” Verse 16, “But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a

witness not only to the things which you have seen, (That is to the resurrected Christ.) but also to the things in which I will appear to you.”

Now, why is all this important? Some people read the testimony of the Apostles in Scripture; they take this book, they take the New Testament, they read the testimony of the Apostles, and they respond something like this, “Look, I just can't believe that. I mean, believing in Jesus, that's just like a leap of faith.” But that's simply not true because what is happening here with the gospel is exactly how we come to believe absolutely everything that we have not witnessed personally, and that is through eyewitnesses.

I mean, think about this, this is how you believe all the events of history. Why do you believe there was a Greek civilization? Why do you believe how that ended? Why do you believe about Alexander the Great? Why do you believe about the four generals who divided his kingdom after his death? Why do you believe about the Romans? Why do you believe about World War II? Why do you believe that men landed on the moon? Well, for some of you that may not be true, but for most of us, that's true. Why do you believe those things? Because of the testimony of eyewitnesses! You didn't see them, you weren't there, but you accept the testimony of credible eyewitnesses.

The same thing is true the events reported in the news. Why do you believe the terrible events that unfolded in Afghanistan? You weren't there. It's because you believe the eyewitness testimony that was shared with you. Why do you believe what family and friends tell you? Why do you believe that you're now an uncle or an aunt, or you know that a child was born to a relative? Why do you believe that so-and-so got sick and got better? Why do you believe they have, you know, a terrible disease? Because you believe the report of eyewitnesses. Folks, we always believe those things that we have not seen based on the testimony of others, and our confidence in the genuineness of the events is based on our confidence in the integrity of the witnesses.

So, can I just say, and I don't mean this in any way that's angry or upset with you, I just want to be honest with you, “If you don't believe in Jesus Christ, then just be honest and say, ‘You know

what, I just don't trust Jesus. I don't believe in His integrity; I don't believe in the integrity of the witnesses He chose to share His story.” Fine, say that, but just don't say that you “Don't believe because I wasn't there to see it.” That's just dishonest; you believe things every day that you haven't seen. The Apostles were Jesus's official witnesses.

Can I just plead with you to believe those witnesses? Recognize what this is. It comes down to, “Is Jesus credible? Did He select credible witnesses or not?” If He did, then believe Him, submit yourself to Him. If He didn't, then write Him off, just be honest.

A fourth reason we can trust their testimony about Jesus is that they were legal representatives. Look again at 1 John, chapter 1, verse 2, “...we have seen and testify (And notice this.) and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--.” Notice verse 3, “what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you.” Did you notice the change in pronouns? “(He) was manifested to us--, ...and...we (now) proclaim to you.” The Greek for ‘proclaim’ refers to ‘those who speak publicly;’ sometimes it refers to ‘those who speak publicly, an official announcement made as the legal representative of someone else.’ Clearly that was true of the Apostles.

I read a moment ago Acts, chapter 10, Peter's message to Cornelius, I stopped at verse 41, listen to verse 42, “...He ordered us to preach to the people, and...to...solemnly testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as (a) Judge of the living and the dead.” We were ordered, we've been legally sent out to proclaim this message on His behalf; we are His legal representatives.

That, by the way, is what the word ‘Apostle’ means. By definition, an Apostle is a legal representative. Do you understand that the word ‘apostle’ is really just a Greek word that's been brought into English? It's not translated; there wasn't an English word ‘apostle.’ There was a Greek word, ‘*apostolos*.’ And, all the translators did was take each of those Greek letters and give us the English letters, and what we got was, instead of ‘*apostolos*’ in English, we got apostle. But the Greek noun ‘*apostolos*’ means ‘one sent out.’

The writers of the New Testament will occasionally use the word 'apostle' of anyone sent out on a spiritual mission, and that can be confusing. Occasionally, you'll run across this word, it's like, wait a minute that isn't one of the Twelve, and it's not Paul, are they really an Apostle? No, occasionally this word can be used in its broader sense of someone who's been sent on mission. But most often, it refers to a 'unique group of men who occupied a special office.'

You see, to be an Apostle in this sense, you had to be personally chosen by Christ. It was certainly true of the Twelve. Go back to Luke, chapter 6; Luke, chapter 6, and look at verse 12:

It was at this time that (Jesus) went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. And when day came, He called (all of) His disciples (the entire group of His disciples) to Him, (And from that larger group, notice, He) chose twelve of them whom He also named as apostles."

He says, "You are my sent ones." So, He sovereignly chose this group; He sovereignly chose them to be His official representatives, and He gave them this name, 'apostles,'

You see the same concept in Acts, chapter 1, verse 2, where we read, "(Christ gave) orders to the apostles (the sent ones) whom He had chosen."

Christ also chose Paul to be His Apostle. Galatians 1, verse 1, "Paul, an apostle (Listen to this.) (not sent from men nor through the agency of man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead)." Paul says, I'm an Apostle, I'm a sent one, picked by Jesus and the Father. So, the Apostles then were chosen and commissioned by Christ to be His direct representatives.

An Apostle can legally act for another; he's an authorized messenger, he's a legal representative. In our culture, the closest thing we have to this is Power of Attorney. You can delegate Power of Attorney to someone to act as your legal representative, either for a specific situation or generally for all of your legal or financial affairs. This is what the Apostles were; they were official proxies for Jesus because they had been His chosen witnesses of His life and teaching. In John 15:27, He says to them. "...you will testify...because you have been with Me from the beginning." And, even in 1 John, chapter 1, verse 5, John says, "This is the message we have

heard from Him and announce to you.” He says, “I didn’t come up with this message; I’m just His proxy, I’m His legal representative, telling you what He said.”

So, there's the integrity of the Apostles’ Proclamation; they were reporting real historical events; they were first-hand eyewitnesses of those events; they were officially chosen to be witnesses, and they had been commissioned as Jesus’s legal representatives, His official proxies to report His story.

Now folks, what should our response to all of that be? What should we do with what we’ve learned this morning? Well, let me start by just addressing those of you here who know you're not followers of Jesus Christ. You just need to understand this; if you choose to reject the testimony of Jesus’s official, chosen representatives, you are rejecting Him. If you sit there this morning and say, “You know what, no, I’m not going to have that.” You're not rejecting me; you're not rejecting even the Apostles who wrote the New Testament; you are rejecting Jesus Christ Himself, and we understand this in a very personal level. I mean, if this afternoon, a staff member from Governor Abbott’s staff showed up at your house, and he had all the right credentials and all the right documents, and he says, “I’m here on the governor's behalf and I'm asking you to do this.” If you say to him. “No thank you, not interested. I don’t believe it, and I don’t want anything to do with it.” You have not only rejected that staff member; you've rejected the governor who sent him.

Well, the same thing is true with Christ. In fact, Jesus said this to those He was sending out in Luke 10, verse 16. He says, “The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me.” Jesus said, “Listen, if they don't accept those I've sent, they’re rejecting the ones I sent; they’re rejecting me, and they’re rejecting the Father who sent me.” You just need to understand, if you're sitting here today and you’ve rejected the message of Jesus, that's what's going on.

So, what should your response be? You should believe the proclamation of Jesus’s personally chosen, official witnesses and legal representatives. You should believe it! John 13:20, “Truly,

truly, I say to you (Jesus says.), he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me.”

There’s a passage that speaks so powerfully to this. Go to the end of John's Gospel, John, chapter 20, verse 19, this event unfolds on the evening of the day of resurrection, the first day of the week when our Lord was raised. That evening, verse 19 says:

So when it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, “Peace be with you.” And when He...said this, He showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

And then in verses 21 to 23, He gives them a commission to go out on His behalf.

Now, fast-forward, verse 24, sometime after that event, verse 24 says:

But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came.

So the other disciples were saying to him, “We have seen the Lord!”

Now, don't miss what's going on here. The other disciples were first-hand eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ, and they’re reporting to Thomas who wasn't there, what they saw; they’re giving their testimonies and they said, “We were there, we saw and we touched Him; it's really Jesus, He's been raised from the dead.” And what was Thomas's response, my namesake here? It’s not good, but he said to them, middle of verse 25, “Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”

In other words, I'm not going to accept your testimony; I want to be a first-hand witness. Verse 26:

After eight days (So we’re now the next Sunday night, after the resurrection.) His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, “Peace be with you.” Then (And I love this, Jesus’s grace here to Thomas.) He said to (him) Thomas, “Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into my side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.

And I don't know if Thomas did those things or not or if he just believed, but regardless, he didn't believe till he saw. And “Thomas answered (then though) and said..., ‘My Lord and my God!’” One of the greatest confessions and, of course, the high point of the gospel of John, he says, “You are my *‘kurios,’* (My master; I submit myself to you. That's real faith.) and my God! You are deity, you are God Himself!”

This, by the way, is the confession every person must make who wants to come to God through Jesus Christ. But don't miss verse 29, “Jesus said to him, ‘Because you have seen Me, have you believed? (You've been a first-hand eyewitness, and that finally brought you to believe.) Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.’” You know what Jesus is saying? He's saying, “I'm pronouncing a spiritual blessing on those who will receive the eyewitness testimony of those I've chosen and not have to insist on seeing it themselves.”

Now, notice the connection, verse 30, begins with the word ‘therefore.’ In light of the fact that Jesus pronounces a blessing on those who listen to the report of the Apostles, “Therefore, (John says.) many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book.” He said, “I could have given witness to a lot of other things, but I've written these so that you, not seeing, may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God; and that by believing you might have life in His name.” (paraphrased with scripture)

That's the response Jesus wants from you. He wants you to see who He is from the report of those He's chosen to be His witnesses. He wants you to believe in Him not having seen Him and to follow Him and to say what Thomas, “My Lord and my God!,” even though you've not witnessed Him firsthand; instead you've believed the witness He's given.

You see, we couldn't all be there. The entire universe, all of the people who would ever live on earth couldn't have been in first century Israel to see firsthand. So, what did Christ do? He did the next best thing; He chose eyewitnesses, and He said, “Believe them, they are the ones I've picked. Listen to them and if you listen to them, you're receiving me.” I urge you today to believe His witnesses, to repent of your sins and believe in Christ as Lord and God.

For those of us who have believed in Christ, listen, John wants you to know that you can be confident of the testimony in which you have placed your hope in life and in death and eternity. It's valid testimony; it meets even the standard of testimony given in U.S. courts, and it meets the divine standard. You can be confident in the testimony in which you have placed your faith because Jesus handpicked those witnesses to tell you what happened, and you're blessed by believing even though you weren't there.

Let's pray together. Father, thank you for this amazing passage! Thank you for what it reveals about our Lord; and thank you for how it reassures us about the testimony that His Apostles have given to us of Him. Lord, we do believe, we do acknowledge that He is Lord and God, that is the confession of our hearts, and we accept the testimony that we have received. We don't demand to be first-hand witnesses as they were. Instead, we willingly, freely accept the testimony of those that Jesus chose. Lord, thank you that there is a solid foundation for our faith in the testimony of official, legal, first-hand eyewitnesses! We thank you, in Jesus's name, Amen.