

Sunday, January 18, 2009  
Living Hope EFC

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1 John: True Christian Fellowship – with God & with others.

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### **Watergate Cover-up**

“Oddly enough **what ultimately persuaded me of the Bible’s truth was my own experience in the Watergate scandal.** It was March 21, 1973 when John Dean walked into President Nixon’s office and said, ‘Mr. President, there is a cancer growing on your presidency.’ And that was the day he laid out everything about the Watergate cover-up to Mr. Nixon. That’s the first we really knew it was a criminal conspiracy that could involve the White House. There was talk of perjury, obstruction of justice- the type of things that give grown men sweaty palms. It was on April 8, 1973 that John Dean went to the prosecutor to turn himself in and ‘to save his own skin.’ *He would testify against the President in exchange for immunity from prosecution.*

And at that point the conspiracy was gone. Mr. Nixon didn’t know it at the time but he was finished. Jeb Magruder went to the prosecutor next; then a half-dozen other people. I took a lie detector test to show I knew nothing about the Watergate break-in. My lawyers released it to the New York Times. We were all scrambling to save our own skins. The Watergate cover-up, the criminal part, lasted less than 3 weeks.

Put yourself in our shoes. **There we were, 10 or 11 of the most powerful men in the world,** the colleagues of the President of the U.S. We could press a button and have a jet waiting for us at Andrews Air Force Base. We could order government agencies around, deal with heads of nations. We had all this power at our fingertips, but when threatened with jail and political embarrassment, we couldn’t contain a lie for even three weeks.

Now contrast Watergate with the Apostle’s testimony about the Resurrection. For 40 years those men, who were powerless—without money, armies, or resources—proclaimed throughout Palestine and the Roman Empire that Jesus had been bodily raised from the dead. Every one of them went to jail and was persecuted. All but one died a martyr’s death. They could never have maintained their story that was so offensive to the powerful of their day unless it were true and they had seen the risen Christ. The Apostle Peter would have been just like John Dean. There would have been a deathbed confession, a smoking-gun tape, something. But the evidence is overwhelming that not once in those 40 years did any of the apostles renounce Jesus. **They had seen Him!**” - From: *The Role of the Church in Society*

It is interesting that both Peter and John – writing some 35-50 years after His resurrection, during a time when persecution had intensified (Nero) –are **even more emphatic:**

- They were “eye-witnesses” of the person, Jesus Christ!
  - **2 Pet.1:16-18; 1 John 1:1-4.**

**- If a lie/ conspiracy, it would have been found out – in 40 years!**

- WHY this emphasis that they were personal eyewitnesses?
- There were those denying His reality & they set forth the truth!
- **The truth was not just their personal beliefs, but historical fact!**

**THEME:** John the Apostle writes about the essence of REAL fellowship with God, that only Jesus Christ establishes for believer, & what that fellowship looks like as it is lived out in love for others.

1 John 1:1-4: John reflects back; what it was like to experience Jesus in person.

READ 1:1-4.

John clearly felt a need to emphasize the reality of the physical existence & presence of **God's eternal life** in the person of Jesus.

- Human language limits what he wants to express!
- Note the verbs...heard, saw, looked at, touched, appeared.
- Vs.1: **Looked at**: = "The calm, intent, continuous contemplation of an object that remains before the spectator."

**I wonder what pictures - going through John's mind as he writes?**

- The parables they listened to, Sermon on Mt., private words?
- The meals they shared, his special stride, expressions, reaction
- The times they embraced, leaning on Jesus at the last supper
- The storm, demonic, Jairus' daughter, blind, Lazarus, fish?

HOW...could there be those who now denied His very reality?

Paul, 1 Cor.15, said there were over 500 people living who saw Christ after His resurrection? How could anyone doubt it?

- A variety of Gnosticism called **Cerinthianism** (named after Cerinthus), taught that Jesus was only a man & the divine Christ descended on Him at baptism & left before the cross.
- John's strong claims also fit **Docetism**; He only seemed real.
- Whatever the brand, the spirit of antichrist was active!
- John bears witness to the historical person of Jesus Christ!

John also tells us several things about Him, His uniqueness:

- He was (impf) from beginning ( $\alpha\pi\ \alpha\rho\chi\eta\varsigma$ ) – *eternal*.
- Real human being. He was/is eternal life! With Father.

Verses 3 & 4: John states the purpose he is telling us this.

- Fellowship with God & between Christians rests on common understanding of the Person of Jesus Christ.
- Fellowship with God – also means fellowship with Jesus.
- Completeness of joy – is contingent on **knowing** J.C.

**APPLY: As never before – we face those who deny J.C. existed!**

We live in a day when beliefs are controlled by such concepts as "relativism" and "post-modernism" (skepticism about truth?)

These are the **offspring of "secularism."** Secularism believes:

- Is a worldview that assumes the world – the material world – is all we have. Any view that affirms the supernatural is, by definition, considered irrelevant or irrational.
- It is one of the most powerful conditioning influences in cultural formation today. It is the philosophy of choice for American intellectual and political life.
- It asserts that public life is to be conducted without reference to religion or to any notion of transcendence.

- Secularism naturally gives birth to “relativism.” Man=measure.
- Man is no longer responsible to a transcendent authority.
- Man is looked upon as a material being, without a soul.
- Religious training to instruct the human heart in moral uprightness is angrily and mockingly denounced in academia.
- The conviction once held that man has a fallen nature, is now rejected. Scripture has no authority, it is a book of myths
- Jesus Christ – is NOT God-man, only another religious figure.
- Secularism has no point of reference for rationality or truth. It has removed the possibility of an objective supernatural revelation but has no objective basis for right & wrong.

**Ravi Zecharias:** “The greater tragedy is not just that we live with a proliferation of lies, but that this is probably the first time, certainly in Western civilization, that society at large does not believe in **the existence of absolute truth.**” = (Search for historical Jesus.)  
 “Such a radical step toward moral & metaphysical skepticism, which asserts the very **impossibility of knowing** the laws by which our individual lives must be governed, is the single greatest indicator of our postmodern mind,” - *Deliver us from Evil*, 212

#### RAMIFICATIONS:

- 1- Truth is relative. Ultimate truth is unknowable.
- 2- Without truth = no basis for morality or meaning to life.
  - Values are transient, relative. **Every man is his own measure.**
- 3- Because truth does not exist, what is held to be true is said to be only a *belief* and is therefore not a rationally admissible fact.
- 4- “Reason” itself, becomes impossible. Dialogue or debate is not for truth but only for feeling. Meaninglessness & randomness & contradictions are exalted. Result = anarchy.

INTO THIS CULTURE: The Apostles come forward and state unequivocally: 1 John 1:1-4! **Jesus Christ is REAL, TRUE.** And He said: “**I AM the Way, the Truth, & the Life. No one comes to ...**”

Q: Is this true? Can we stake our lives on this as TRUTH?

Answer: Yes, it is true, a historical fact – not merely a *belief*.

#### **(1) Relativism (no absolute truths) as a theory cannot be true.**

- To say relativism is true, is to state an absolute. (Not relative!)
- To state a proposition is to believe it is true, the opposite is not

**(2) TRUTH** “**simply stated, is the judgment expressed when we use the word “is.”** The verb “is” asserts something about reality to which the statement conforms...It expresses a state of existence that is real and *not dependent on someone’s belief in it to make it true.* The reality being represented is objective, universal, and transcendent. This is precisely the logic by which we operate and ...by which we make statements about reality or denials.”

- *Deliver us from Evil*, 219

**Mortimer Adler:** “Any claims that are correctly judged to be true also imply that all judgments to the contrary are false. The proposition may be a theorem in

mathematics, a scientific generalization, a conclusions of historic research, a philosophical principle, or an article of faith." *Ibid*, 219

POINT: "Truth" does exist.

**The Law of Noncontradiction** affirms that no two contradictory statements can be both true & false at the same time in the same sense. – *Ibid*, 220

APPLY: Every religion has some foundational beliefs that are categorically nonnegotiable, and exclude everything to the contrary. **Truth by definition is exclusive.** –*Ibid*.221

Christianity, the Bible, states that Jesus Christ was/is God, who came from heaven, to reveal eternal life to mankind, to remove the barrier of sin so that you & I can have *real* fell'p with God today! And Jesus Christ is the ONLY WAY to have fell'p with God. **This is a truth, an Absolute, independent of one's faith!**

- Faith is required to experience this fellowship, but the facts are established in historical reality independent of one's faith.

1 John 1:5-10: John shares the message the Apostles heard in person, from Jesus Christ.

**Fellowship with God and with other Christians, is the theme that controls the rest of the book.** Everything John writes is about how to have fellowship – and what that fellowship looks like.

#### Five "IFS" of maintaining fellowship with God:

**Vs.6 – If we claim to be walking with God but we are living contrary to His Word/ will – we are liars!**

- No matter what we say...we are living a lie!
- Christians sometimes pretend spirituality! And live in sin.
- "Darkness" John uses 10 times. It refers to sin.

JOHN'S POINT: Any relationship depends upon honesty, truth. You can't have a real relationship with someone who is lying to you about who they are.

- Eph.4:25 **ILLUS**: Child – lies to his parent.
- **Lying about ourselves (our conduct) = 3 relationship killers:**
  - (1) We insult the other person by lying to him –V.6.
  - (2) We are only deceiving ourselves that we are OK,v.8
  - (3) We make the other person out to be a liar, when he challenges us about our false front – V.10.

**Vs.7- If we're walking/living according to God's Word (5:3), we'll enjoy rich relationship with Him and with others – 5:1-2.**

- Results: 1) Fellowship. 2) Constant cleansing by Christ's blood.
- Heb.9:14; Rom.4:7-8; Psalm 103; Isaiah 1:18 Purifies of **ALL** Sin!

**Vs.8 – If we ever think we've reached a state of sinless perfec- tion, we're self-deceived. Blinded to truth! No one doesn't sin!**

- As Christians, conscientious about acceptance with God, we may be tempted to think we can reach a state where all our sins are confessed, we are aware of none, = we're sinless.

NOTE:

- (1) God does not expect us to be sinless. Nor should we expect it
- (2) God's grace has provided for our fellowship with Him, while yet having both a sin nature, and dealing with daily sins.
- (3) Do not confuse salvation and our complete acceptance by God with sinlessness, or think that because you are aware of sin in you, God has not delivered you from its penalty & power.

**Vs.9 – If we'll admit our sin to God, whenever & as often as we commit sin, He applies His forgiveness & cleansing to our rela'p.**

- **Matt.6:11-12.** To confess our sin acknowledges our need of His Saving work on a regular basis, to maintain our fellowship.

**ILLUS:** **John 13:1-17**, esp.v.10. You are clean, just wash the dirty.

**Vs.10 – If you deny you're a sinner you are calling God a liar!**

- God can only help the honest sinner (Rom.4:5).

1 John 2:1-2: The preference is that we not sin, but reality is that we will. KNOW that Jesus is sufficient when we do.

**Vs.1 – “On the one hand” God does not want us to sin.**

- It destroys fellowship with Him and with others.
- None can say he “has” to sin. We are dead to sin – Rom.6:6.

“Δε:” – **If we do sin = we have a παρακλητος (Advocate**, helper, counsel for the defense) representing us before our Father.

- He is the One whom the Father said: “Listen to Him, My Son in whom I am well pleased!” Who laid down His life for us.

**Vs.2 – He is our “mercy seat.”** In fact, He has satisfied God's wrath against sin – for the whole world.

CONCLUSION;

**Colson:** “Now contrast Watergate with the Apostle's testimony about the **Resurrection**. For 40 years those men, who were powerless—without money, armies, or resources—proclaimed throughout Palestine and the Roman Empire that Jesus had been bodily raised from the dead. Every one of them went to jail and was persecuted. All but one died a martyr's death. **They could never have maintained their story that was so offensive to the powerful of their day unless it were true and they had seen the risen Christ.** The Apostle Peter would have been just like John Dean. There would have been a deathbed confession, a smoking-gun tape, something. But the evidence is overwhelming that not once in those 40 years did any of the apostles renounce Jesus. **They had seen Him!**”

Jesus Christ is God who became a man so you and I could have real fellowship with the Eternal God.

- This is the truth! Believing it will change your life.