

03-01-The Beginning

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Our tumultuous world:

Slide #1

Open with the dog illustration about seeking rest and peace.

In an e-mail from my daughter in law, she told this story.

An older, tired-looking dog wandered into my yard; I could tell from his collar and well-fed belly that he had a home and was well taken care of.

He calmly came over to me, I gave him a few pats on his head; he then followed me into my house, slowly walked down the hall, curled up in the corner and fell asleep.

An hour later, he went to the door, and I let him out.

The next day he was back, greeted me in my yard, walked inside and resumed his spot in the hall and again slept for about an hour. This continued off and on for several weeks.

Curious I pinned a note to his collar: 'I would like to find out who the owner of this wonderful sweet dog is and ask if you are aware that almost every afternoon your dog comes to my house for a nap.'

The next day he arrived for his nap, with a different note pinned to his collar: 'He lives in a home with 6 children, 2 under the age of 3 - he's trying to catch up on his sleep. Can I come with him tomorrow?'

This is a simple, even humorous illustration about how hectic life can become. I shared this illustration with a friend of mine who is a dog lover. And he said, "This could be a true story." We truly live in a day when our world even sometimes our personal lives can be described as tumultuous. I don't know about you but one of the things I try to find on a regular basis are moments of peace and quiet, but it is becoming more and more difficult to find the time for peace and quiet. One of the things we discover as we get older is that while it is almost impossible to find very many moments of peace and quiet, it is possible to have inner peace all the time. So, how can we have inner peace in our tumultuous world? In my personal life I found that the inner peace that I now have only came about when I came to know and believe in Jesus Christ. After my life changing encounter with Him it does not matter what comes in my life, it does not matter what storm rages around me, He gives me an inner peace and calm that I never had before.

The Bible quotes Jesus as saying we can have peace.

Slide #2

John 14:27 (NIV)

[27] Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

But how can we know that this is a reliable statement? I mean there are a lot of questions being asked today that would seem to question the reliability or even the reality of the sayings of Jesus. How can we know that His words are real and that we can really have peace? There are many good books available today that deal with the challenges to the reliability of Jesus life. In the book, *A Case For Christ*, Lee Strobel talks about some of the proofs for the reliability of what we know from the Bible about the life of Jesus. Lee Strobel was a journalist and covered many criminal trials, trials of people accused of very serious crimes. In the years he worked as a journalist he learned some important things about what can be considered reliable information. One of the strongest tests for the reliability of an event is eyewitness testimony.

The Eye Witness:

"...eyewitness testimony can be compelling and convincing. When a witness has had ample opportunity to observe a crime, when there's no bias or ulterior motives, when the witness is truthful and fair, the climactic act of pointing out a defendant in a courtroom can be enough to doom that person to prison or worse."

"And eyewitness testimony is just as crucial in investigating historical matters — even the issue of whether Jesus Christ is the unique Son of God."

"But what eyewitness accounts do we possess? Do we have the testimony of anyone who personally interacted with Jesus, who listened to his teachings, who saw his miracles, who witnessed his death, and who perhaps even encountered him after his alleged resurrection?", [Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ*]

He goes on in his book to show that we indeed do have eyewitness accounts of Jesus. Let's look at some examples of eyewitness testimonies that we have about the reality of Jesus. Matthew the tax collector is one example. He became a follower of Jesus and wrote the Gospel of Matthew, the first book of the New Testament. John was not just one of the twelve disciples of Jesus, he was one of the inner circle of Jesus' closest disciples. Mark was written by John Mark, a companion of Peter who was also one of the inner circle of Jesus closest disciples. So we do have eyewitness accounts of Jesus life, death, burial, and resurrection. We have eyewitness accounts, men who heard Jesus say He was the Son of God, He even said He was God. But, not only did they hear Jesus say He was God who has come in the flesh, they were eyewitnesses to His death, burial, and resurrection. They saw Jesus ascend into heaven. They were in the upper room when the Holy Spirit came, and they gave their lives for their eyewitness testimonies about Jesus.

Slide #'s 3-6

Listen to John's words in 1 John 1:1-4

1 John 1:1-4 (NIV)

[1] 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. [2] 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. [3] **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. [4] We write this to make our joy complete.

This is John's proclamation about who this Jesus was. His testimony is emphatic.

- I have heard
You can almost hear John say, "I have heard Jesus say..."

Slide #7

John 14:27 (NIV)

[27] Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

- I have seen with my eyes
- I have touched with my hands
Jesus knew how powerful it was for His disciples to see and touch Him after the resurrection. Look at his comment to Thomas after the resurrection.

Slide #8

John 20:26-28 (NIV)

[26] A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "**Peace be with you!**" [27] Then he said to Thomas, "**Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe.**" [28] Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

It was the eyewitness encounter with the risen Lord that convinced Thomas that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead. All that Jesus had said about being the Son of God, the long awaited Messiah, all of this was finally proven beyond a shadow of a doubt. Jesus had come out of the grave and it was Jesus' encounters with the disciples after the resurrection that convinced them. They were eyewitnesses to all these things.

All of his senses were aware of the risen Jesus, he was an eyewitness. His eyewitness account gives authority to the claims that Jesus made, even Jesus' claim that we can have peace. Can you imagine the experience the disciples had on that day Jesus came into that locked room to reveal Himself after His resurrection. You and I will one day stand in the presence of the risen Lord. We will have that same experience the disciples had. We will all be eyewitnesses of His resurrection.

Authority Established:

So John, an eyewitness to Jesus' life and actions on earth, tells us that Jesus proclaimed that He would give us peace. But what authority does Jesus have to say that He can give us peace? I mean a lot of people make claims to incredible things these days but how do we find out if they are true or not? If you get e-mail on a regular basis you are well aware of the scams that are floating around in cyberspace. But John establishes Jesus authority by revealing and confirming who Jesus is. John did this in a day when, like today, People did not believe that the human Jesus, was the incarnate creator God. (gnosticism)

Philosophy tries to answer questions like; "Where do we come from?" "Why are we here?" "Where are we going?" These kinds of questions seemed to be prevalent in John's day. When John writes he always starts by clarifying the answer to the question about where it all started. He wants His readers to understand who Jesus is. Look at the start of his first letter.

Slide #9

1 John 1:1 (NIV)

[1] That which was from **the beginning**...

When John uses the phrase, "the beginning", he is talking about creation, the beginning of everything. I know you are familiar with the start of his gospel but let's read it.

Slide #10

John 1:1-5 (NIV)

[1] 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. [5] The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

John wants us to know that Jesus is the creator, He is Almighty God. That is important because there is no higher authority than God. And when God says He will give peace, it is a reliable statement because it is given with the authority of the Creator who is the source of all things. This argument for the authority of Jesus is based on the fact that He is Creator God. This is not a unique argument with John. Paul used the same argument.

Slide #11

Colossians 1:18 (NIV)

[18] And he is the head of the body, the church; he is **the beginning** and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

Paul says that Jesus is first place in everything.

- Over all creation (Col 1:15-17)

[15] He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. [16] For

by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. [17] He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

- Over all the body, the church, death and the grave (Col 1:18)

[18] And he is the head of the body, the church; he is **the beginning** and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.

- Over all wisdom and Knowledge (Col 2:1-3)

[1] I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. [2] My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, [3] in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

- Over all rule and authority (Col 2:10)

[10] and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority.

The eyewitness of John and other disciples of Jesus establish powerful testimony that Jesus is who He said He was, that He has authority to back what He said while He was here on earth, specifically when He promises us peace, He can deliver peace. Not a peace like the world gives but an inner peace that can overcome any earthly circumstance no matter how devastating it might be.

Peace Given:

Slide #12

1 John 1:1-4 (NIV)

[1] 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. [2] 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. [3] **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. [4] We write this to make our joy complete.

I can't think of anything on this earth that can give complete joy like inner peace can. But the eyewitness John, heard Jesus say that He could give peace.

Slide #13

John 14:27 (NIV)

[27] Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

You and I can have this inner peace through belief in Jesus Christ.