

1. From His conception into all eternity Jesus is true God and true man in one indivisible person. It can be said that Mary gave birth to God, in the person of Jesus. It can be said that man walked on the water, in the person of Jesus. It can be said that God died and man rose from the dead, in the person of Jesus. From birth until He was buried Jesus humbled Himself. He did not always and fully use His divine attributes, though He was true God. He proved His divinity by His miracles, His transfiguration, and by His testimony about Himself. From His revivification in the tomb into all eternity God has exalted Jesus. His human nature constantly uses all the qualities of the divine nature. From resurrection to ascension He appeared and disappeared but His human nature was everywhere. He has ascended to God's right hand which is everywhere. His human nature knows all things. At His second coming His human nature will appear on the whole face of the earth.
2. The Jews denied Jesus' divinity. They still do and so do the Muslims. Arius, who died in 336 A.D., denied Jesus' divinity. Many people today are Arians. They deny Jesus' divinity. In the early church a false teaching called Docetism arose. It teaches that Jesus was not a true man, but only appeared to be so. Our text for today stresses both natures in Christ, the human and the divine. The Athanasian Creed stresses the twofold natures in Christ. Luther's explanation of the second article of the creed also makes this stress and its purpose. (See Russian Catechism, pp. 15-16).
3. In Greek our text is three sentences. The first sentence runs to the middle of vs. 3. The second is the last part of vs. 3. The third is vs. 4. All of vs. 2 is a parenthesis. It looks back to vs. 1 and also ahead to vs. 3. This is followed very carefully in the KJ and NKJV versions. But both of these versions combine sentences #1 and #2. The Russian translations follow the Greek very carefully. Other modern English versions have recast these sentences in an attempt to make things clearer but, in our opinion, they have failed.
4. Three times in vs. 1 and once in vs. 3 we read "that which." This refers to "the Word of Life". This means both the person and the Word of Jesus. The Word reveals His person. This usage of "the Word" is found also in Jn. 1. The apostles saw, heard, beheld and actually touched the Word of Life. They came into contact with eternal life in the person of Jesus. Twice vs. 2 says that this Word of Life has appeared. Twice vs. 2 and 3 say that we announce to you. They were witnesses of the God-man Who is eternal life. He said "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life." He also said to the Father "Thy Word is Truth." In the God-man, Jesus Christ, we have the true revelation of God and His everlasting life.
5. The purpose of the apostles was like that of John the Baptist. They were sent out to testify about this eternal life. The book of Acts is about the testimony of Peter, Paul, Barnabas and others. They went out to tell people about the Word of Life. And that is our task, to testify about the Word of Life, Jesus Christ, the God-man.
6. Vs. 3 speaks about two kinds of fellowship. Because of the Word of Life the Apostles had fellowship with their hearers. They were united in faith, life and destiny. And then John adds that the fellowship of apostles and hearers is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus. This reminds us immediately of Jn. 17:20-21: "I do not pray only for these (apostles) but also for those who will believe through their (the apostles') Word in Me, so that all (apostles and believers) might be one, just as you, Father are in Me, and I in You, in order that they may be one in us (Father and Son), in order that the world might believe that You sent Me."
7. The better ancient manuscripts at the end of vs. 4 read "Our joy" meaning that of apostles and all Christians. See Jn. 3:29; 15:11; 16:24 and 17:13.

Theme: JESUS, THE WORD OF LIFE

Introduction: In three days we shall celebrate Christmas. Our text anticipates Christmas by speaking twice about Jesus' appearance, both of them in vs. 2. Jesus, true God, has been with the Father from all eternity. In Eden God gave Adam and Eve eternal life but they lost it by their sin. This eternal life is restored in Christ Jesus. He is the Word of Life.

I-How the Apostles knew the Word of Life

A-They knew Him in His state of humiliation. Throughout the ages Christian scholars have studied the Bible, searching especially for what is said about Jesus Christ. The early church fathers and the Reformation fathers formed this definition: "The humiliation of Christ is that state of Christ, from conception til burial, in which although He was truly God and truly man He did not always and fully use the attributes of the divine nature." The disciples and people of Jesus' day did know that He was divine. He proved it by His miracles, His transfiguration and by what He said of Himself. Peter said "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." Mk. 8:29. And Thomas said: "My Lord and my God." Jn. 20:28.

B-They knew Him on very familiar terms. Our text says that they heard, saw, beheld, and even touched not only a person but the Word of Life. They realized that in this very person God was revealing His very life to them. Twice John says that in this person eternal life appeared. Because of their sinful nature they sometimes slipped backwards. Peter denied Jesus. Thomas doubted. They all fled when He was taken in the garden of Gethsemane. They knew what it was like to be a sinner. But they also were acquainted with the Word of Life. They had direct fellowship with God Himself in the person of Jesus.

II-How we know the Word of Life

A-The Apostles testify about Jesus and announce to us. The NT contains the testimony and announcements of the twelve apostles and of Paul, the one who was born out of due time, as he himself said. Not all of these have left us written witness. The main ones are Paul, Peter, John and James. That is what Jesus was talking about when He prayed: "I pray also for those who will believe in Me through their (the apostles') Word so that all might be one, just as you, Father, are in Me and I in you, so that they might be one in us (Father and Son)." The Word of Life, which is always about Jesus Christ, is the means whereby we were reborn in baptism, whereby we are kept in the one true faith, whereby we partake of the Lord's Supper. There we hear the very testimony about Jesus Himself.

B-This results in our fellowship and our joy. The word "our" occurs twice, once in vs. 3 and once in vs. 4. The first reads: "And indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ." The second reads: "These things we write in order that our joy might be complete." Whenever Jesus or the apostles speak of this joy they speak of it as being complete. It has no flaws. It transcends death. It transcends earthly sorrows and joys. In fact we can be joyful in very sorrowful conditions. See Mt. 5:12 and Hebr. 10:34. It is the joy that lay before Jesus when He faced the cross. Hebr. 12:2. Nothing in all creation can separate us from the Triune God, His fellowship and His love.

Conclusion: By faith in the Word of Life we have fellowship with all the saints in heaven, yes, even with the Triune God. By faith in Jesus our joy is complete. It's not just a passing emotion but rather an eternal condition. A well-known Christmas hymn ends with the words: "Oh, that we were there!!" Yes, let us endure to eternal life.