

1 John 1:3

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

Analysis

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. John states the purpose of apostolic proclamation: to bring believers into fellowship (koinōnia, κοινωνία) with the apostles and, through them, with the Father and Son. This word denotes partnership, communion, sharing in common—used for the early church's communal life (Acts 2:42) and participation in Christ's body and blood (1 Corinthians 10:16).

The structure is significant: fellowship with the apostles leads to fellowship with God. This is not elitism but recognition that the apostolic witness to Christ is the divinely appointed means of entering relationship with God. We cannot have true fellowship with the Father except through the apostolically testified Christ.

"Jesus Christ" explicitly names the historical person who is the Son. Fellowship with God is mediated through the incarnate, crucified, and risen Jesus—not through mystical experiences, human philosophy, or religious rituals divorced from Him. The order "Father...Son" reflects the economic Trinity: the Father sends, the Son is sent and reveals the Father.

Historical Context

The concept of fellowship (koinōnia) was countercultural in the Roman Empire's hierarchical society. While Greek philosophical schools had exclusive fellowships and mystery religions promised participation in divine secrets, Christianity offered fellowship with God Himself through Christ—available not to intellectual or social elites but to all who believe the apostolic testimony.

The Gnostic teachers claimed superior fellowship with the divine through secret knowledge. They despised the apostolic testimony as elementary, suitable only for spiritual novices. John's response is devastating: there is no fellowship with God apart from the apostolically testified Jesus Christ. Those who reject this testimony, regardless of their claimed spiritual experiences, have no fellowship with the Father.

The early church understood this verse as establishing the authority of apostolic tradition. The Apostles' Creed and Nicene Creed echo this emphasis—faith must align with what "we have seen and heard." Heresy was defined as departure from apostolic teaching.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

Study Questions

1. How does understanding fellowship with God as the purpose of apostolic proclamation shape your view of Scripture's authority?
2. In what ways might you be tempted to seek fellowship with God apart from the apostolically testified Christ?
3. How should the connection between fellowship with God and fellowship with believers affect your church commitment?

Interlinear Text

ὃ	ἐωράκαμεν	καὶ	ἀκηκόαμεν	ἀπαγγέλλομεν	ὑμῖν			
That which	we have seen	also	heard	declare we	unto you			
G3739	G3708	G2532	G191	G518	G5213			
ἵνα	καὶ	ὕμεῖς	κοινωνία	ἔχητε	μετὰ	ἡμῶν	καὶ	ἡ
that	also	ye	fellowship	may have	is with	us	also	G3588
G2443	G2532	G5210	G2842	G2192	G3326	G2257	G2532	
κοινωνία	δὲ	ἡ	ἡμετέρα	μετὰ	τοῦ	πατρὸς	καὶ	μετὰ
fellowship	G1161	G3588	truly our	is with	G3588	the Father	also	is with
G2842			G2251	G3326		G3962	G2532	G3326
τοῦ	υἱοῦ	αὐτοῦ	Ἰησοῦ	Χριστοῦ				
G3588	Son	his	Jesus	Christ				
	G5207	G846	G2424	G5547				

Additional Cross-References

1 Corinthians 1:9 (References Jesus): God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.

John 17:3 (References Jesus): And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

Acts 4:20 (Parallel theme): For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

John 17:21 (Parallel theme): That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

Philippians 2:1 (References Christ): If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Corinthians 13:14 (References Jesus): The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.

1 John 1:7 (References Jesus): But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.

Hebrews 3:14 (References Christ): For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end;

1 John 1:1 (Parallel theme): That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;

Philippians 3:10 (Parallel theme): That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;