

1 Jn 1:4, Verbal Plenary Inspiration & Revelation; Canonicity: the Written Record of Scripture Is Preserved So Every Believer Can Have Complete Happiness

X. 1 John, Chapter 1:4 (Characteristics of the Spiritual Life, vv. 4-7):

1 John 1:4 - [NASB] These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

1. Verse 4 is John's introduction to the next paragraph which will take up the essentials for executing the spiritual life. He begins by emphasizing the fact that divine revelation provided by inspiration that is studied and applied by the believer results in the development of true happiness in the soul.
2. The verse begins with the intensive use of the conjunction **καί, kai** translated, "In fact." It is followed by the demonstrative pronoun **οὗτος, houtos**: "these things."
3. The antecedent of "these things" is explained by the subject of the verb. The subject is the nominative masculine plural pronoun **ἐγώ, egō**, translated "we."
4. The verb is the present active indicative of **γράφω, graphō**, which means "to write." Literally we have, "In fact, these things write we ..."
5. The "things" refer back to John's description of what he and other apostles have experienced with reference to the humanity of Christ, e.g., hearing Him speak, perceiving Him in His Person and glory, and observing Him analytically as noted in verse 1.
6. These "things" are reiterated in verses 2 and 3 as proclamations to John's students in the churches of Asia Minor about the advance to true happiness.
7. The pronoun "we" is John indicating that what he has communicated has also been communicated by other apostles, such as Peter, Matthew, Jude, and also by Luke.
8. This is divine revelation under the principle of inspiration which is defined as follows:

Inspiration. God the Holy Spirit so supernaturally directed the human writers of Scripture, that without waving their human intelligence, vocabulary, individuality, literary style, personality, personal feelings, or any other human factor, His complete and coherent message to mankind was recorded with perfect accuracy in the original languages of Scripture, the very words bearing the authority of divine authorship.

This is called "verbal plenary inspiration." "Verbal" means that the Bible in its original words, from first to last, is the exact record of the mind and will of God as He intended it to be.

"Plenary" means the entire text is equally from God but not necessarily equally important or equally indispensable; for the Bible quotes human and satanic lies, and erroneous views of false prophets. Therefore, inspiration guarantees the accuracy of what is there, but it does not condone or sponsor errors, evil, or falsehood; it merely explains them in detail.

Certain men are the instruments but not the authors of the Bible, e.g., in the New Testament: Matthew, Peter, Luke, John, Paul, Jude, and the writer of the book of Hebrews. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

9. Revelation refers to the writings of those who have received divine inspiration all of which are now contained in the canon of the Old and New Testaments:

Thieme, R. B., Jr. *Canonicity*. (Houston: R. B. Thieme, Jr., Bible Ministries, 1973), 6:

Precanon revelation from God occurred through the Holy Spirit (2 Sam. 23:2; Ezk. 2:2; 8:3; 11:1, 24; Micah 3:8; Heb. 3:7). There was no written Scripture until the time of Moses. Prior to that time God the Holy Spirit revealed doctrine to members of the human race.

There were four categories of revelation given to Old Testament prophets and others before the existence of Scripture. God revealed Himself and His plan through the spoken Word (Isa. 6:8-10); dreams (Gen. 15:12; 31:10-13, 24; Num. 12:6; Dan. 10:9); visions (1 Kings 22:19; Isa. 1:1; 6:1); angelic teaching (Deut. 33:2; Ps. 68:17; Acts 7:53; Gal. 3:19).

10. God reveals Himself with the Bible as the written Word. With the completed canon of Scripture in this dispensation, we have available in the New Testament epistles theology, doctrine, principles, and concepts which were never revealed before.
11. So when John writes, "In fact, we write these things," he is referring to the revelation that has resulted from divine inspiration to him and other human authors of the New Testament canon.
12. These men have taken an oral tradition of which they were eyewitnesses, and reduced them to writing by means of divine inspiration.
13. The oral method of communication by eyewitness testimony can only endure through one generation. For the revelation of God to endure permanently there had to be the transfer of this knowledge to the written page.
14. Taken as a unit, the doctrines and principles of the New Testament reveal a system in which believers of the Church Age are to function.
15. Taken advantage of, this system leads the believer to the sophisticated level of spiritual maturity where he shares the happiness of God. This is John's objective in his writing of First John.

1 John 1:4a - In fact, we write these things ...

16. This is followed by the conjunction **ἵνα, hina** which introduces a purpose clause denoting the purpose of the action of the main verb, that is, the "writing" of the New Testament canon. We translate "so that."
17. This is followed by the singular subject **χαρά, chara** and refers to the status quo of true happiness.
18. This is the purpose for which the human authors wrote and it is the objective that John desires for those who study First John. This is indicated by two verbs that conclude the verse: **ἦ πληρωμένη, ēi peplērōmenē**.
19. The verb **ēi** is the present active subjunctive of **εἰμί, eimi**, the verb "to be," translated "might be":

present:	Futuristic: denotes an event which has not yet occurred, but which is regarded as so certain that in thought it may be contemplated as already coming to pass.
active:	The attainment of perfect happiness—the ninth problem-solving device—produces the action.
subj:	Contingency: emphasizes the necessity of volitional decisions that consistently utilize rebound in order to maintain the momentum of the advance.
20. Finally we have the verb **peplērōmenē**, the perfect passive participle of **πληρόω, plēroō**, translated "completed":

- perfect: Intensive: places emphasis upon the existing results, or the tense of the “finished product.” When special attention is thus directed to the results of the action, stress upon the existing fact is intensified. This is the emphatic method in Greek of presenting a fact or condition. It is the strong way of saying that a thing *is*.
- passive: True happiness receives the action of being fulfilled. It is developed in the soul of the believer as the ninth problem-solving device.
- participle: Emphasizes purpose.

21. When the believer comprehends the details of Who and what Jesus Christ is then he can have consistent fellowship with other believers.
22. This status quo is the environment for rapid spiritual growth which advances the believer into the sophisticated function of the Christian way of life.
23. Therefore, when the believer shares the happiness of God he enters into the rarified atmosphere of spiritual maturity: (1) he has a completed edification complex of the soul [(1) The filling of the Holy Spirit, (2) objective thinking from Bible doctrine, (3) genuine humility producing teachability, (4) personal love for God as a motivational virtue, (5) unconditional love for mankind as a functional virtue, and (6) sharing the happiness of God.], (2) he is qualified for evidence testing, and (3) he has the doctrinal inventory to be spiritually self-sustaining and cognitively invincible.