

1 John 1 1John 1:1-4

- 1 That which was from the beginning, that which we have heard, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we saw, and our hands touched, concerning the Word of life 2 (and the life was revealed, and we have seen, and testify, and declare to you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was revealed to us); 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us. Yes, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ. 4 And we write these things to you, that our joy may be fulfilled.

Notes – Verse 1

- John’s opening makes a point which directly opposes the gnostic teaching (and the antichrist). John has heard Jesus, seen Jesus, touched Jesus, and even leaned on his breast at the last supper.
- He emphasizes the point in 1 John 2:22 and 1 John 4:3 as well as 2 John 1:7
- That which ...
 - Four times
 - That which was from the beginning ...
 - » John Identifies what he means by “the beginning” in John 1:1-2
 - » Very few people try to claim otherwise.
- That which was from the beginning ...
 - 1 John 2:13a I write to you, fathers, because you know **him** who is from the beginning.
 - John identifies “that which” as a person.
- Exodus 3:14 God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM,” and he said, “You

shall tell the children of Israel this: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” (When Moses asked God for a name)

- John 8:58 Jesus said to them, “Most certainly, I tell you, before Abraham came into existence, I AM. ” (When Jews questioned Him about Abraham)
- Jesus was pre-existent with God from the beginning.
- Eph. 1:4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and without defect before him in love;
- Col. 1:26 the mystery which has been hidden for ages and generations. But now it has been revealed to his saints,

- that which we have heard

- Acts 4:19-20 19 But Peter and John answered them, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you rather than to God, judge for yourselves, 20 for we can’t help telling the things which we saw and heard.”
- 2 Peter 1:16-18 16 For we didn’t follow cunningly devised fables ..., but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received from God the Father honor and glory when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” 18 We heard this voice come out of heaven when we were with him on the holy mountain.

- that which we have seen with our eyes

- 2 Peter 1:16b we were eyewitnesses of his majesty
- 1 John 4:14 We have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son as the Savior of the world.

- that which we saw, and our hands touched

- saw (*theaomai*) - may be translated looked upon, beheld, looked closely at.

- Luke 24:39 See my hands and my feet, that it is truly me. Touch me and see, for a spirit doesn't have flesh and bones, as you see that I have.
- John 20:27 Then he said to Thomas, "Reach here your finger, and see my hands. Reach here your hand, and put it into my side. Don't be unbelieving, but believing."
- concerning the Word of life
 - The "Word of life" means the Word in which life resided, or which was the source and fountain of life.
 - John 5:39-40 - "You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and these are they which testify about me. 40 Yet you will not come to me, that you may have life."
 - John 14:6 Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father, except through me."
 - John 20:30-31 30 Therefore Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written, that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name.
 - What John is going to write will not be based upon speculative philosophy but upon personal experience. A fact is a thing done; it cannot be undone. The incarnation is not a matter of opinion, it is a fact of history.

Notes – Verse 2

- 2 (and the life was revealed, and we have seen, and testify, and declare to you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was revealed to us);
 - Verse 2 is parenthetical, but it regards the very thing in John's mind from the first verse, namely, the Holy One, the same who in the beginning was "with God" and "was God" (John 1:1), called in the gospel "the Word" and here "the Word of life" (1 John 1:1).

Notes – Verse 2

- the life was manifested ...

- manifested (*phaneroō*) - to render apparent, reveal.
- Whether translated as “revealed” or “manifested”, the idea is that something was there all the time but not seen before it was made apparent.
- John 1:14 - The Word became flesh, and lived among us. We saw his glory, such glory as of the one and only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.
- And we have seen, and bear witness ...
 - Acts 1:8 - But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you. You will be witnesses to me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth.
 - Repetition for emphasis. John wants to be sure we know that Jesus did, in reality, come in the flesh.
 - Confronting falsehood to the core.
 - Because this epistle was occasioned by heresy and misconduct, argument and denunciation frequently appear. But John did not first engage in apologetics; he followed the principle that error is best met by confronting it with the truth it denies.
 - John 19:35 - He who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, that you may believe.
- and declare to you the life, the eternal life, which was with the Father, and was revealed to us);
 - eternal – Time and space as we know it are derived from the creation. In our human terms, we cannot ascribed a beginning to God, nor to the Holy One who was and always has been with the Father.
 - revealed – manifested or made manifest (op cit)

Notes – Verse 3

- 3 that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may

have fellowship with us. Yes, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

- declare - repeated from 1:2, apostolic witness - “we can’t help telling the things which we saw and heard” (Acts 4:20).
- Today, we declare from the written words of the apostles.
- fellowship (*koinōnia*) – sharing, partnership, commonality, [communion], harmony.
- One of the purposes John has for writing.
- Fellowship *can be broken!*
- John writes of a major thing that breaks fellowship.
- us – the eye witnesses, the apostles.
- John 17:20-21 - **20** Not for these only do I pray, but for those also who will believe in me through their word, **21** that they may all be one; even as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that you sent me.
- our – the eye witnesses, the apostles.
- Cohesion binds Christians first to God in Christ and then to each other.
- Without agreement on essential doctrine there can be no such fellowship with God or each other.
- Deny that Jesus came in the flesh
 - If Jesus did not come in the flesh, He did not suffer and did not die.
 - If Jesus did not die, He was not placed in a tomb.
 - If Jesus was not placed in a tomb, He did not rise on the 1st day of the week.
 - If Jesus did not rise, there is no gospel, and we have no hope.

Notes – Verse 4

- 4 And we write these things to you, that our joy may be fulfilled.
 - A 2nd stated purpose for John writing.
 - *our* joy or *your* joy - there are translations that use *your*, some that use *our*.
 - If they are in fellowship with God and each other, then John will rejoice, and they will have joy in being in such fellowship.

Notes on Eternal Life

- 1 John 2:25 This is the promise which he promised us, the eternal life.
- 1 John 5:13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may continue to believe in the name of the Son of God.
- In one sense, eternal life is a promise of the future. In another sense, John speaks of it as a present reality.
- In one sense, it is quantitative – everlasting.
- In another sense, it is qualitative – blessings and joy now, greater blessings and joy in the future.
- Those qualities of the Christian's present "eternal life" are evident in the declarations that he "has passed from death into life," that he is a "partaker of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4), and that he arises from baptism to walk "in newness of life."
- Paul uses the term *earnest*, *seal*, or *deposit* guaranteeing a future inheritance, which is a current blessing to know.
- Ephesians 1:13-14 - **13** In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, **14** who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

- Like children – a promise of the future and a blessing for today.

1 John 1:5-10

- 5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. 6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

Notes – Verse 5

- 5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.
 - message (*epaggelia*) - from *ep* (upon, to, in addition to, over) and *aggelia* (a message, announcement, thing announced; precept declared)
 - In 50 other verses, this word is translated as **promise**
 - 1 John 2:25 - This is the **promise** which he **promised** us, the eternal life.
 - message (*epaggelia*) –
 - In context, **message** makes sense but John may be making the point that it is a highly-exalted message.
 - (*I guarantee you that God is light*)
 - 1 John 3:11 – For this is the **message** which you heard ...;
 - message (*aggelia*) - an announcement, that is, (by implication) precept: - message.

Notes – Verse 5

- 5 This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that

God is light and in Him is no darkness at all.

- Light is a symbol of all that is lovely, beautiful, holy, good, desirable, righteous and lovable.
- Consider the dependence of life upon light in this creation.
- The philosophers may speak of intellectual enlightenment, but ...
- Not **a** light; not **the** light; absolute light.
- Darkness is the absence of light: the absence of holiness, purity, beauty, good, etc.
- John affirms that a thing is so, then ensures that no mistake could possibly be made as to what he meant.

Notes – Verse 6

- 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and don't tell the truth.
 - If we say
 - Darkness is the absence of light: the absence of holiness, purity, beauty, good, etc.
 - John affirms that a thing is so, then ensures that no mistake could possibly be made as to what he meant.
- Recall the doctrine of gnosticism that spirit is good and flesh is evil.
- An offshoot from that teaches that the spirit can be in fellowship with God without concern for what the flesh does.
- Also, since it is the flesh that sins but not the spirit, the claim for “no sin” is held.
- The Nicolaitans were among those who taught the unbridled indulgence of all human desires, saying the sins of the body were not in any sense the sins of the soul.

- Recall the message to the church in Pergamos John wrote in Rev. 2:15 – “So you also have some who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans likewise.”
 - Likewise refers to what Balaam did in teaching Israel to sin (Rev. 2:14: Num. 31:16)
 - The KJV and NKJV use “which thing I hate” instead of “likewise”.
- The notice “If we say” in 1 John 1:6, 8, 10.
- Some similarities that may be observed today:
 - Inclusion into fellowship without regard to manner of life or doctrine. (never easy to exclude anyone)
 - Calling various sins by something euphemistic, such as disease or antisocial behavior. (Hillsdale speaker)
 - Active persuasion to accept things contrary to scripture. (headline news from some denominations)
- 6 If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in the darkness, we lie, and don’t tell the truth.
 - If we say
 - Darkness is the absence of light: the absence of holiness, purity, beauty, good, etc.
 - John affirms that a thing is so, then ensures that no mistake could possibly be made as to what he meant.
- 6 ... and walk in the darkness, we lie, and don’t tell the truth.
 - Eph. 5:11 - And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.
 - 1 John 2:9 - He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now. (Read 10-11 also.)
 - See also Rom. 13:12; 2 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 5:11; Rev. 2:6, 15;

Notes – Verse 6

- 6 ... we lie, and don't tell the truth.
 - Walking in the light and having fellowship with God while doing the deeds of darkness are incredible. It is a lie to claim otherwise.

Notes – Verse 7

- 7 But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.
 - The sin, impurity, evil of darkness is so contrary to God's nature that fellowship with God is impossible.
 - If we abandon all the deeds of darkness, we then walk in the light and have fellowship not only with God but with others who also have fellowship with Him. How marvelous is that?

Notes – Verse 7

- 7 ... we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.
 - It is not by our own will that we walk in the light – the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all the deeds of darkness. It is not as though walking in the light grants immunity from temptation and sin – but there is a remedy for such occasions when we might have succumbed to temptation. *(Read on!)*

Notes – Verse 8

- 8 If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.
 - sin (hamartia)
 - 1) to be without a share in;
 - 2) to miss the mark;
 - 3) to err, be mistaken;
 - 4) to miss or wander from the path of uprightness and honor, to do or go wrong;
 - 5) to wander from the law of God, violate God's law, sin.
 - It is like the Nicolaitan/Gnostic heresy to say we have no sin (remember their teaching on the disconnect between spirit and flesh), but that is a

lie.

- To walk in darkness is to indulge the desires of the flesh.
- To say we can do that and still be walking in the light is self-deception, and devoid of truth.
- Epicurean – says that sin is of no consequence; therefore do whatever you wish.
- Stoic – tries to control and eliminate sin from their lives, placing trust in themselves rather than the blood of Jesus. Prone to withdraw from the world.
- To a growing list of what is involved in walking in the light, we have added (so far):
 - Fellowship with God (v. 6)
 - Fellowship with one another (v. 7)
 - Practicing the Truth (v. 6, 8)
- There will be more! Light will shed whatever abstraction may be perceived and become very practical.

Notes – Verse 9

- 9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - confess (*homologeō*) – a compound of *homou* (sameness, kinship) and *logos* (something said, thought). Literally, to speak as one. When our attitude toward ourselves is one of recognition of guilt, we are speaking as one, or agreeing with God about our sin.
 - We are to acknowledge our sin and need for forgiveness rather than to say we have no sin and, therefore, no need for forgiveness.
 - Since we have fellowship with one another, confession should be aimed toward restoring broken fellowship with one another as well as with

God, who will not renege on His promise to forgive.

- Some religious groups take an extreme view that every detail must be made public, no matter how sordid.
- Matt. 18:15-17 - **15** “If your brother sins against you, go, show him his fault between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained back your brother. **16** But if he doesn’t listen, take one or two more with you, that at the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. **17** If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the assembly. If he refuses to hear the assembly also, let him be to you as a Gentile or a tax collector.
- 9 ... He is **faithful** and righteous to forgive us the sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - Num. 23:19 God is not a man, that he should lie, nor a son of man, that he should repent. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not make it good?
 - Jer. 31:34b - “for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”
- 9 ... He is faithful and **righteous** to forgive us the sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.
 - Some translations have “just” which can be misconstrued in the sense of justice, and it would not be just to allow sin without penalty.
 - God may justly forgive us, because Christ paid the penalty that was due. (See Rom. 3:21-26)

Notes – Verse 10

- 10 If we say that we haven’t sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.
 - If we say ... for the 3rd time (1:6, 8, 10)
 - Rom. 3:21-26 – ... **23** for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; ... **26** to demonstrate his righteousness at this present time; that he

might himself be just, and the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus.

- Before leaving 1 John 1, let us review the things involved in walking in the light:

- Fellowship with God (v. 6)
- Fellowship with one another (v. 7)
- Practicing the Truth (v. 6, 8)
- His word (v. 10)

- Synonymous with “truth”

Notes – Verse 10

- His word (v. 10)
 - “The truth” or “the word” in John's view was not some indefinite and nebulous goal pursued by the Christians seeking to know it; it was something which they already knew, already had, already walked in, already obeyed.

Review Questions

1. How does John present himself in the first two verses of 1 John 1?
 - a. _____

2. What “beginning” is being spoken of in 1 John 1:1?
 - a. _____
3. What three areas of importance does John take up in 1 John 1:1-2?
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____

4. What is the two-fold description of God's nature stated in 1 John 1:5-6?
- a. _____
 - b. _____
5. What is the false claim made by the gnostic in 1 John 1:6, and what is the result of such a claim?
- a. _____
 - b. _____
6. What is the basis of our fellowship with God and the condition of our fellowship?
- a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
7. What is the two-fold claim of the man in 1 John 1:8 as to his claim to the right of fellowship with God?
- a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
8. What is the meaning of the Greek word *homologeō*?
- a. _____
9. What is the meaning of the Greek word *hamartia*?
- a. _____
10. Define the two words "faithful" and "righteous" as used in 1 John 1:9?
- a. _____
 - b. _____