

1 John – Part One

Chapter One

The Word of Life

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1 John 1:1

“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” ~Jesus

Background of 1 John

- 1 John does not appear to be a letter. It neither opens nor closes like a letter
 - It does not have a sender or a recipient. It appears to be a theological treatise or tract
- 1 John 5:13 indicates that the author writes in order that the readers might know the certainty of **God’s love and His promise of eternal life**
- He calls Christians by the tender Greek word “teknia” which means “born ones” or “bairns”, therefore, God is addressing His very own born-again children
- Eternal life - John told us why he wrote his Gospel: so “that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:31)
- **John wrote to the believers for four reasons:**
 - 1) So that they might be happy (1 John 1:4)
 - 2) So that they will not sin (1 John 2:1)
 - 3) So that they will be on guard against error (1 John 2:26)
 - 4) So that they will know (1 John 5:13)
- **John exalts God in his epistles:**
 - God is light (1 John 1:5)
 - God is love (1 John 4:8,16)
 - God is righteous (1 John 2:29)
 - God is life (1 John 5:11-12)
 - God is truth (2 John)
 - God is good (3 John)
- **John gives us seven tests of Godly behaviour**
 - Walk in the light
 - Admit you are a sinner
 - Obey God’s will
 - Imitate Christ
 - Love others
 - Keep away from the world
 - Prove that Christ is righteous by how you live.

The Author – The Apostle John

- The works came to be ascribed to the apostle John, a disciple of Jesus.

Two considerations:

- 1) The language, style, and outlook of the three letters are similar to that of our fourth Gospel
 - The author of that Gospel had come to be identified with the apostle John on the basis of this verse - “the disciple whom Jesus loved” (John 21:24)
 - Written – 90 AD
- The occasion for the letters is because conflict and schism had broken out
- John was the disciple whom Jesus loved
 - He stood close to Him on the cross at Calvary
 - He looked into the empty tomb on the morning of the Resurrection
 - On Patmos, he was lifted by the Spirit and saw an opened door into heaven.

Quotes About 1 John

John Wesley: “How plain, how full, and how deep a compendium of genuine Christianity!”

Augustine: “This book is very sweet to every healthy Christian heart that savors the bread of God, and it should constantly be in the mind of God’s holy church.”

Martin Luther: “This is an outstanding epistle. It can buoy up afflicted hearts . . . so beautifully and gently does it picture Christ to us.”

“Love is not just one of God’s behaviors or characteristics; love is a defining attribute of God, an ultimate quality that must always be taken into account”.

The Major Themes

The Johannine Letters emphasize the reality and significance of Jesus’s humanity.

- A man who could be heard and seen and touched (1 John 1:1–3; cf. 2:7, 24; 3:11).
- “Jesus Christ has come in the flesh” are from God (1 John 4:2–3)
- The two natures of Christ: fully divine and fully human.

Major Themes

- Humanity of Christ
- Atonement
- Sin
- Love
- Gnosticism.

Chapter 1

John shows us how to receive eternal life. He wrote this epistle so that those who believe in Christ would know, and be confident, that they have eternal life.

The Word of Life

1 John 1:1-4

¹We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we have **heard** and seen. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life. ²This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us. ³We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually seen and **heard** so that you may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.

Walking in the Light

1 John 1:5-10

⁵This is the message we **heard** from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. ⁶So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. ⁷But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. ⁹But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. ¹⁰If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts. (NKJV)

Text breakdown and notes

1 John 1:1 We proclaim to you the one who existed from the beginning, whom we **have heard and seen**. We saw him with our own eyes and touched him with our own hands. He is the Word of life.

1 John 1:2 This one who is life itself was revealed to us, and we have seen him. And now we testify and proclaim to you that he is the one who is eternal life. He was with the Father, and then he was revealed to us.

1 John 1:3 We proclaim to you what we ourselves have actually **seen and heard** so that you may **have fellowship** with us. And **our fellowship** is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:4 We are writing these things so that you may fully share our joy.

Walking in the Light

1 John 1:5 This is the message **we heard from Jesus** and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all.

1 John 1:6 So we are lying if we say **we have fellowship with God** but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth.

1 John 1:7 But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then **we have fellowship** with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

1 John 1:8 If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth.

1 John 1:9 But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness.

1 John 1:10 If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts. (NKJV)

Main Points

The Word of Life

1. Who have we heard?

- a. John declares that Jesus is the one that they had heard and also seen. He identifies Him as the source of life, the eternal one, and the one who was from the beginning. That He was with the Father and that He came from the Father and was revealed to us who believe.
 - i. Jesus – John said we have heard His message directly, that he was an eyewitness and present – this was not heresy or second-hand information
 - They had direct contact with the, “Word of Life” – they touched Him, handled Him
 - ii. *QUOTE : “The reality of His Incarnation is indicated by the fact that the Apostles **heard** Him, saw Him **with their eyes**, gazed upon Him with deep meditation, and actually **handled** Him. The **Word of Life** was not a mere passing illusion but was a real Person in a body of flesh. – The Believers Bible*
 - iii. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

2. What message have we heard?

- a. John declares that the message of Jesus was regarding the nature and attributes of God Himself. He indicates that God is light and that no darkness abides in Him whatsoever. In other words, God is pure and whole and there is no mixture within Him whatsoever; there is no fault there is no blemish and certainly there is no sin.
 - i. The message that we hear shapes our very lives – they impact our thoughts and beliefs
 - ii. God is light and in Him there is no darkness
 - Light and truth are connected
- b. Those that see walk in the light and therefore in truth
- c. There is such a thing as spiritual darkness and people walk in that as well
 - i. Just because you are “spiritual” does not mean that you are in the light or that you are walking in truth
 - ii. People place a focus on being “spiritual”, but John indicates that to be truly spiritual means to be “in Christ”

- d. Darkness is always attributed to things like evil, wickedness, that which is veiled, that which is shattered, that which is lacking.
- i. What does darkness represent? All that is evil, dark, and lacking light and goodness.
 - People stumble in the dark and cannot find their way
 - The dark is overwhelming, it is described as being *thick* and *gross* and *ugly*
 - Ephesian 5:11 – “have nothing to do with unfruitful works of darkness”.

3. Who have we seen?

- a. To “see” means that there is vision and an awareness of where we are going. John wrote that they had seen Jesus Christ, a very real person who was also the source of life. Therefore, Jesus was not a figment of their imagination or an individual that they had made up or created for their own agenda. It is interesting to note that by quantity Jesus healed people from blindness more than any other healing. In other words, God wants us to see both naturally and spiritually.
 - i. The Word of Life – John indicates that they had seen the very **source of Life** and the life is the living Word
 - ii. He who was from the beginning – the Gospel of John starts from the very start – the one who was from the beginning
 - iii. That our eyes are open and walking in truth
 - Spiritual vision being opened to the revelation of Christ.

4. Are we living in the light?

- a. In the Bible “light” speaks of God Himself – “God is light.” Therefore, this is a very attribute of God. He is the one who dispels darkness and shines the brilliance of His countenance upon all creation. Light is to be preferred over the darkness because the darkness is evil and that which is done in the shadows. John contrasts between light and darkness.
 - i. John speaks of Jesus being the light. The light represents illumination, truth and revelation.
 - The light shines and dispels the darkness
 - ii. Living in the light means walking in the knowing/revelation of Christ
 - iii. God said, “Let there be light”. In other words, light had to be created
 - iv. God is light – Jesus the light says of the believer, “You are the light”.

5. **Who is our fellowship with?**

- a. Fellowship communicates the concept of intimate relationship and friendship—the idea of community and unity. To have fellowship means agreement. God wants us to have fellowship with Him, and in Him to have fellowship with one another (1 John 1:3)
 - i. Who you fellowship with is important!
 - Who you fellowship with determines who you are and where you are going
 - ii. Fellowship – love, conveys strength, identity and belonging – you are NOT alone!
 - iii. Our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ
 - We have fellowship with one another
 - iv. The devil hates fellowship, unity and community – he loves discord, fighting and chaos, he is the author of confusion, the father of lies and a murder.

Group Questions & Discussion

- 1) Explain the difference between light and darkness.
- 2) Why is fellowship important?
- 3) Discuss the major themes of 1 John.
- 4) Who is the Apostle John?
- 5) Discuss the seven tests of the book. How do we apply it in our lives?
- 6) What four things does John exalt about God?
- 7) What were the four reasons that John wrote the book? How does it apply to the church and our fellowship?
- 8) How are we the light?