

1 John Chapter One

The Prologue (vv. 1-4)

VERSE 1 What was from the [a] beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life – (“Ὁ ἦν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς, [rel.pro.nom.nt.s. hos + impf.act.ind.3s. eimi be, exist + prep apo from + noun abl.f.s. arche beginning] ὃ ἀκηκόαμεν, [rel.pro.acc.nt.s. hos which, what + perf.act.ind.1p. akouo hear] ὃ ἐώρακάμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν [rel.pro.acc.nt.s. hos + perf.act.ind.1p. horao see + noun dat.m.p. ophthalmos eye + pro.gen.m.p. ego “our”], ὃ ἐθεασάμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν [rel.pro.acc.nt.s. hos + aor.mid.ind.1p. theomai look at + conj kai + noun nom.f.p. cheir hand + pro.gen.p. ego + aor.act.ind.3p. pselaphao touch] περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς [prep peri concerning + d.a. + noun gen.m.s. logos word + d.a. + noun gen.f.s. zoe life]

ANALYSIS: VERSE 1

1. This epistle is absent an opening salutation or the customary benediction.
2. It does not specify who it was sent to.
3. There are no proper names (except God) or geographical places in this letter.
4. It is therefore concluded that this letter was intended for a group of local churches.
5. It is classified as a general epistle.
6. Even the author remains anonymous indicating that he was so well known that he did not deem it necessary to identify himself.
7. The similarity in vocabulary and literary style with the Gospel of John points to the apostle John as the author.
8. It is obvious that the recipients of this epistle had been Christians for quite some time (2:7, 18, 29, 24, 27; 3:11).
9. The occasion for 1 John was the presence of false teachers who misrepresented Who and What Jesus Christ is.
10. The Gnostics of the 2nd century prided themselves as having special inside information regarding the Christian faith.
11. They were advocates of the extremes of asceticism and antinomianism.
12. This letter was designed to counter the heretical views regarding person of Christ.

13. The dating of the letter is c. 80 AD and the recipients were the churches of Asia Minor, the same as the book of Revelation.
14. The prologue (vv. 1-4) and have a lot in common with the prologue to the Gospel of John (Jn. 1:1-14).
15. The first three verses form one long sentence in the Greek.
16. This prologue features the eternal Son of God becoming manifest in the flesh (compare Jn. 1:1 with Jn. 1:14).
17. In verse 1 the author refers to the eternal logos/God the Son using a neuter relative pronoun four times (“what”).
18. The first clause, “What was from (the) beginning” refers to the deity of the 2nd person of the Godhead.
19. The difference between verse 1 and Jn. 1:1 is the preposition (‘from’ versus ‘in a beginning’).
20. Otherwise the form of the verb is the same (imperfect linear action of *eimi*) and in both instances there is no definite article with the noun ‘beginning.’
21. The ‘beginning’ is a reference to eternity past.
22. In Jn. 1:1 the eternal logos is introduced first and here in v. 1 the logos is mentioned at the end of the verse.
23. “What was from a beginning” refers to the pre-incarnate Christ here referred to as “the Word of life.”
24. This “beginning” is not a beginning in the usual sense as it refers to that which does not have a start-up point.
25. The next three “what” clauses in verse 1 relate to the 1st Advent with emphasis on John and his companions’ interaction with Jesus.
26. “What we have heard” refers to the voice of Jesus during His time on earth both before and after His resurrection.
27. The disciples heard Jesus speak with the voice of a normal human being under a variety of circumstances.
28. The second sensory involvement with the eternal logos taking on human form is visual contact.
29. And again, this refers to the humanity of Christ as an adult when they individually first met Him.
30. John and his companions saw Jesus under a wide variety of situations.
31. The author uses two verbs for seeing.
32. The first is ordinary seeing (*horaō* to see, notice).
33. For an exceptional example see 2 Pet. 1:16-19.
34. In the 4th and final “what” clause two senses are presented.
35. Again, the sense of sight is featured but this time the verb *theaomai* which is a more contemplative viewing of something or someone (as in Matt. 6:1; 11:7; 22:11; Mk. 16:11; Lk. 5:27; Lk. 23:55; Acts 1:11).
36. John features the verb in Jn. 1:14 and 1 Jn. 4:12, 14.
37. In this fourth what-clause seeing is combined with touch or physical contact.
38. This verb only occurs 4x but two are especially significant here (verse 1 and Lk. 24:39).
39. Eyewitness accounts are especially valuable when trying to establish factual details.
40. Luke appeals to this in his prologue (Lk. 1:1-2) as a 2nd generation believer who never laid eyes on Jesus.

41. John's audience received a letter from an eyewitness of the 1st Advent.
42. The mysterious "what" has a history that extends from eternity past (divine nature) to a manifestation that could be heard, seen, and touched (God-Man).
43. That which could be heard (audio), seen (visual), and touched (tactical) is confined to Christ's humanity (cf. Jn. 1:18 "No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God (Father-Son relationship) who is in the bosom of the Father, He has revealed Him."; 1 Jn. 4:12 "No one has seen God at any time...").
44. The phrase "concerning the Word of Life" identifies the "what."
45. For a definition see Jn. 1:1 and 1:14.
46. The word is used of the truth (1 Jn. 2:14).
47. "Life" here refers to that which the logos imparts, that is, eternal life.
48. John picks up on this word in verse 2.

VERSE 2 and the life was manifested (καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, [*conj kai + d.a.w/noun nom.f.s. zoe life + aor.pass.ind.3s. phaneroo manifest, reveal*], **and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life** [καὶ ἐωράκαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον [*conj kai + perf.act.ind.1p. horao see + conj kai + pers.act.ind.1p. apangello tell, inform, testify + pro.dat.p. su + d.a.w/noun acc.f.s. zoe life + d.a.w/adj.acc.f.s. aionios eternal*], **which was with the Father and was manifested to us** — [ἣτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν [*pro.nom.f.s. hostis which + impf.act.ind.3s. eimi + d.a.w/noun acc.m.s. pater father + conj kai + aor.pass.ind.3s. phaneroo manifest + pro.dat.p. ego*]

ANALYSIS: VERSE 2

1. "And the life was manifested" refers to the virgin birth when the union of deity and humanity was consummated.
2. "The life" refers to Jesus' birth.
3. Gnostics denied the virgin birth.
4. John returns to the eyewitness factor as it applied to the early disciples.
5. "And we have seen" refers to literal eye contact with Jesus as set forth in the four Gospels.
6. Two verbs of communication are used to demonstrate what these eyewitnesses did with what they had experienced.

7. To testify is to bear faithful witness to all they heard and saw for those who did not witness the 1st advent.
8. The Greek verb *martureo* means to be a witness and occurs 78x in the NT. (46 of those times in John, 1 John, 3 John and Revelation).
9. John 21:24 “This is the disciple who is testifying these things and wrote these things, and we know that his testimony is true.”
10. To proclaim (*apangello* 45x) is to communicate the things related to the one who was manifested in time.
11. That which was manifested in time (birth of Christ forward) John refers to as “the eternal life.”
12. Jesus referred to Himself as such in Jn. 14:6 “I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father but through Me.”
13. “Which was with the Father” refers to Christ’s pre-existence (cf. Jn. 1:1).
14. “Which was manifested to us” refers to the witness of those who were with Jesus while on earth.
15. What this long sentence is designed to do is to counter all false teachings that were afoot so that his little children could sustain a healthy and viable CWL.

VERSE 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also (ὃ ἐωράκαμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν, ἀπαγγέλλομεν καὶ ὑμῖν [*rel.pro.nt.s. hos what + perf.act.ind.1p. horao see + conj kai + perf.act.ind.1p. akouo hear + pres.act.ind.1p. apangello proclaim + conj. kai also + pro.dat.p. su*], **so that you too may have fellowship with us** [ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ’ ἡμῶν [*conj of result hina so that + conj kai “too” + pro.nom.p. su + noun acc.f.s. koinonia fellowship + pres.act.subj.2p. eimi “may have” + prep meta w/pro.inst.p. ego*]; **and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ** [καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [*conj kai + d.a.w/noun nom.f.s. koinonia fellowship + conj de + d.a.w/adj.f.s. hetereros our + prep meta with + d.a.w/noun instr.m.s. pater father + conj kai + d.a.w/noun instr.m.s. huios son + pro.gen.m.s. autos his + noun gen.m.s. Iesus Jesus + noun gen.m.s. christos*]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 3

1. Verse 3 concludes the opening long Greek sentence, but not the prologue.

2. As honest reporters John and others were commissioned to proclaim to others this eternal life.
3. He repeats “have seen and heard” as an obligation to communicate the facts concerning the God-Man or as He is also know as the eternal logos and eternal life.
4. But here in v. 3 John sets forth the purpose as it relates to his readers.
5. Somewhat surprisingly he gives the purpose as: “so that you may have fellowship with us.”
6. Fellowship (*koinonia* a close mutual relationship) occurs 19x and is used of fellowship with like-minded believers (Acts 2:42; 2 Cor. 13:13; Gal. 2:9; 1Jn. 1:3, 7; Phil. 2:1; Phm. 1:6), being in fellowship with God (1 Cor. 1:9; 1Jn. 1:3, 6); participating in good works (Rom. 15:26; 1 Cor. 10:16; 2 Cor. 6:14; 8:4; 9:13; Phil. 1:5; 3:10; Heb. 13:16).
7. Fellowship with those who have proclaimed the truth is to have fellowship with God the Father and with His Son.
8. That means that believers who have fellowship with the Father and the Son must subscribe to the true doctrine of Christology (doctrine of the hypostatic union).
9. What we have as a guide is the written witness of the earliest Christians (1st century).
10. At minimum believers must accept the biblical record regarding the Person and work of Christ.
11. Other factors as will be seen must be in place for true fellowship to take place as will be discussed in the verses that follow.

VERSE 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete (καὶ ταῦτα

γράφομεν ἡμεῖς, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη. [*conj kai + pro.demonstr.acc.nt.p. houtos*

“These things” + *pres.act.ind.1p. grapho write + pro.nom.p. ego + conj. of purpose hina so that*

+ *d.a./noun f.s. chara joy + pro.gen.p. ego + pres.act.subj.3s. eimi + perf.pass.part.nom.f.s.*

pleroo be complete]).

ANALYSIS: VERSE 4

1. Having stated the primary purpose for this letter (v. 3), John goes on in the prologue to state an ancillary (subordinate) motivation for the letter.
2. It is a self-serving motivation which in this case is totally legitimate.
3. “These things we write” refers to the contents of this letter.
4. John, of course, penned this letter and like all writers of Scripture were under verbal inspiration.
5. The “we” here refers to those who had a vested interest in the spiritual well-being of those that were geographically isolated from John and his associates.
6. He includes them in the same way Paul does from time to time when he is writing to a local church (cf. Col. 1:3-4, 9; 1 Thess. 1:2).

7. This “we” is different than the eyewitness “we.”
8. “So that” introduces a result clause (*hina*), that is, something that has the potential if the recipients are in agreement with the letter’s contents.
9. Until such time as a favorable report comes from the readers the joy John speaks of is not “made complete” (perf.pass.part. *pleroo*).
10. They have +H but they will wait in anticipation to hear a positive report.
11. Example: 2 Cor. 2:3 compared to 7:13; also Phil. 2:2.