

1 John

Chapter 1

Outline

1 John 1:1 NKJV That which was from the beginning,(1) which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled,(2) concerning the Word(3) of Life,(4)

Verse 1 Notes:

(1) John began this letter exactly as he did his Gospel, acknowledging Jesus as “from the beginning”. Compare this to Genesis 1:1 as well as to John 1:1. This clause has the same sense in the passages of 1 John 2:13-14 and 1 John 3:8. However John also used this clause in reference to baptism, which is the beginning of his or her Christian walk (See 1 John 2:7, 24; 1 John 3:11; 2 John 1:5-6).

(2) John made sure to overturn two opposite Gnostic heresies: 1. that Jesus only appeared human but was actually a divine ghost, yet the Apostles saw, heard, closely examined, and handled Him; 2. that Jesus was just a man, yet John says He was “from the beginning.”

(3) cf. John 1:1-2; Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 19:13. Also “the Word” is “the Logos” (John 1:1) and is referred to as the Word because He was always the “Angel of the Lord,” the communicator, between mankind and God the Father (cf. Exodus 3:2-14; John 8:58; John 1:18).

(4) cf. **John 1:4 NKJV** - *In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.* This might be better understood if rendered more precisely as, “What has originated in Him [*the Word, the Logos*] was life, and the life was the light of men.” The word “light” is a metaphor for the divine knowledge passed on by God to mankind. From the earliest days of Christianity, the “Word” (Λόγος - Logos) in the prologue of John’s Gospel was universally understood as a proper name or title for the Son of God prior to His becoming the Son of Man.

Following the Interlinear Greek New Testament, the Nestle-Aland 26th and 28th Editions, as well as United Bible Society’s 3rd and 4th Editions of the Greek text, a new sentence begins with John 1:4. The change here from *διὰ αὐτοῦ* (through Him) in verse 3 of John 1 to *ἐν αὐτῷ* (in Him) in verse 4 is of significant import. Jesus is not the agent through whom “life” originated, but rather the first recipient of “life” from the one who “gives life to all things” (cf. 1 Timothy 6:13-16). “Life” originated in His very person which is why He is called “Word (Gk. Logos) of life” in 1 John 1:1. This is in agreement with Colossians 1:15, which refers to the Son as “the firstborn (or first-produced, *πρωτότοκος*) of all creation.” The Son was the first to be produced in relation to all creation. See Proverbs 8:22-31. This passage metaphorically speaks of the begetting of the Son as “Wisdom”, having been begotten from the Father as His first work of creation. Jesus Himself referred to this passage in John 8:42. At the end of the book of Proverbs, Solomon posed a riddle concerning the identity of the One who was begotten from the Father as Wisdom. See Proverbs 30:4. This riddle is answered in John 3:13.

1 John 1:2 NKJV the life was manifested,(1) and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father(2) and was manifested to us.

Verse 2 Notes:

(1) John 1:14; 1 John 3:5, 8. Cf. 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 9:26; 1 Peter 1:20.

(2) Note that John did not say that “life” was IN the Father. Rather that life was WITH the Father because the Word of Life was WITH the Father (John 1:1). John 5:26 reveals the reason the life was in the Son: “*For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself,*” Consequently, the everlasting life that was with the Father was in the Son from the Son’s beginning. This shows the Son’s preexistence with the Father from the beginning of creation (cf. Colossians 1:15, 18 & Revelation 3:14).

1 John 1:3 NKJV - that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us;(1) and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.(2)

Verse 3 Notes:

(1) The use of the first-person-plural pronouns includes John among the twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ. Yet, most (if not all) of the other Apostles were dead when John wrote his books. “Fellowship” of believers with the Apostles is not a mystic communion with the ghosts of the saints as taught by Roman Catholicism. That is actually necromancy. Rather, it is being of one mind and one heart with the Apostles, holding true to the Apostolic witness and teaching, holding fast to the same hope of the Kingdom through resurrection.

(2) John’s point is that fellowship with the Apostles is the mechanism for fellowship with the Father and the Son. Note that the third Person of the Catholic Trinity is missing from this fellowship. (See John 17:3, 20-23).

1 John 1:4 NKJV And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

1 John 1:5 NKJV 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.

1 John 1:6 NKJV If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth.

1 John 1:7 NKJV - But if we walk(1) in the light(2) as He is in the light,(3) we have fellowship with one another,(4) and the blood of Jesus Christ(5) His Son(6) cleanses(7) us from all sin.(8)

Verse 7 Notes:

(1) Present tense, continuous action “But if we should be walking...”

(2) John’s Gospel repeatedly uses “light” as a metaphor for the revealed knowledge of God, especially through Jesus Christ (John 3:19-21; John 8:12; John 9:5; John 11:9-10; John 12:35-36,46). “Walking in the light” means striving to live according to the revealed light of God through Jesus the Anointed. (See 1 John 2:8-11 for the characteristics of those walking in the light vs. those walking in darkness).

(3) God is light (v. 5), and Jesus is seated at His right hand “in the light.”

(4) That is, fellowship between believers walking in the light and the Apostles.

(5) Psalm 2:2

(6) Psalm 2:7

(7) Greek: Present tense, continuous action. “is cleansing...”

(8) Obviously, “walking in the light” is not sinless perfection; otherwise there would be no need for a continual cleansing from every sin. “Walking in the light” therefore is growing in the knowledge of Christ, and actively striving to keep Jesus’ commandments, even though we occasionally fail due to our human weaknesses. Here John reinforced Paul’s earlier teaching concerning Jesus’

current role as the Melchizedek High Priest. See the book of Hebrews 2:17-18; 4:14-16; 5:6-10; 6:19-20; 7:15-28; 8:1-7; 9:11-15, 23-28; 10:1-23.

1 John 1:8 NKJV - If we(1) say that we have(2) no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Verse 8 Notes:

(1) The first-person-plural pronouns, “we” here and “us” at the end of the sentence, necessarily include John himself. John did not dare pronounce himself sinless.

(2) Present tense, continuous state

1 John 1:9 NKJV - If we confess our sins,(1) He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins(2) and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Verse 9 Notes:

(1) If we admit that we still sin, a sign of humility before God and our fellow man because “God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble” (cf. Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5). This does not refer to “confessing” each and every sin to God, nor to any priest or other person, as a prerequisite to forgiveness.

(2) because “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (cf. Proverbs 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5)

1 John 1:10 NKJV - If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word(1) is not in us.

Verse 10 Notes:

(1) cf. Galatians 2:20; Romans 8:10*

* God (Jesus) told Adam that the penalty for sin was death (Genesis 2:17). As descendants of Adam, we all suffer the **consequence** of his sin, death. We do not inherit Adams “guilt”. We are not “born sinners” as Calvinists (including most Baptists) teach and preach, destined to be destroyed by God in the Lake of Fire even as infants, which may die for a multitude of reasons. God does not punish someone for something someone else does.