

1Jn 1:1-4

Introduction

Nov 13, 2016

1Jn 1:1-4 What was from the 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-- 2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us-- 3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. 4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

I. Theological Background:

This passage is related to John's Gospel (Jn 1:1-18), which is related to Gen 1:1.

A. The emphasis is on:

The **humanity** of Jesus Christ

Words - related to the human senses: sight, sound, touch (v. 1, 3).
Jesus was truly human and physical.

The **titles** of Jesus

Word of Life (v. 1)
His Son, Jesus Christ (v. 3)

Deity of Jesus

He is/was preexistent (v. 1-2)
He became man (the incarnation v. 2)
These truths are directed against the false teachers' world-view.

B. Verses 1–3a form one sentence in Greek.

The main verb is "**proclaim**" (v. 3) "we proclaim to you"

The emphasis is on the content of Apostolic preaching.

There are 4 clauses in verse 1;

- "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"

1Jn 1:3-4 define the **purposes** of John's letter:
fellowship and joy.

C. The heretics:

The heretics' false claims can be seen in: (1Jn 1:6, 8, 10; 2:4, 6, 9)

	To say that	Walks in	The truth is
1Jn 1:6	we have fellowship with Him	yet walk in the darkness	we lie and do not practice the truth
1Jn 1:8	we (I) have no sin	we are deceiving ourselves	the truth is not in us
1Jn 1:10	we have not sinned	we make Him a liar	His word is not in us
1Jn 2:4	I have come to know Him	does not keep His commandments	is a liar, the truth is not in him
1Jn 2:6	he abides in Him	ought himself to walk	in the same manner as He walked
1Jn 2:9	he is in the Light	yet hates his brother	is in the darkness until now

1Jn 1:5-10 relate to the theological attempt to separate knowing God (theology) from following God (ethics).
It represents an undue gnostic overemphasis on knowledge.
Those who know God will reveal His characteristics in their lifestyle.

1Jn 1:8 - 2:2 must be held in balance with 1Jn 3:6-9. They are two sides of one coin. They possibly refute two different errors:

- theological error (no sin)
- moral error (sin does not matter)

1Jn 2:1-2 is an attempted balance between taking sin too lightly (antinomianism) and the recurrent problem of Christian judgmentalism, cultural legalism, or asceticism.

D. John 1 compared to 1 John 1

John 1	1 John 1
1. In the beginning (1:1, 2)	1. From the beginning (1:1)
2. Word (logos) (1:1)	2. Word (logos) (1:1)
3. Life (zōē) (1:4)	3. Life (zōē) (1:1, 2)
4. Light in Jesus (1:4)	4. Light in God (1:5)
5. Light revealed (1:4)	5. Light revealed (1:4)
6. Darkness (1:5)	6. Darkness (1:5)
7. Witness to light (1:6–8)	7. Witness to light (1:3, 5)
8. Humans brought to God	8. Humans brought to God (1:3)
9. Beheld His glory (1:14)	9. Beheld His glory (1:1–3)

II. Word and phrase study of 1Jn 1:1-4

1Jn 1:1 What was from the 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

“What”

The book begins with a pronoun.

Refers to God's message:

1. The message about Jesus; and
2. The person of Jesus Himself (cf. 1:8, 10; 2:20, 24; 3:11, 14).
The gospel is a message, a person, and a lifestyle.

“was”

This asserts Jesus' pre-existence (this is a recurrent theme in John's writings).

1Jn 1:1 What was from the beginning, ... concerning the Word of Life

Jn 1:15 John testified about Him and cried out, saying, “This was He of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me has a higher rank than I, for He existed before me.’”

Jn 3:13 “No one has ascended into heaven, but He who descended from heaven: the Son of Man.

Jn 8:57 So the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”

Jn 8:58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”

Jn 17:5 “Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.

This was one way of asserting His deity. Jesus reveals the Father because He has been with the Father from the beginning.

“from the beginning”

This is an obvious reference to Gen 1 and Jn 1.

The gospel was always God's plan of redemption, it was not “plan B.”

Gen 3:15 And I will put enmity Between you and the woman, And between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel.”

Ac 2:23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.

Ac 3:18 "But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.

Ac 4:28 to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose predestined to occur.

Ac 13:29 "When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb.

John uses the concept of "beginning" often, most of the occurrences can be divided into basically two categories:

1. From the time of creation (or at least from Gen 1-11):

Jn 1:1-2 (Jesus in the beginning)

Jn 8:44; 1Jn 1:1 (Jesus from the beginning)

Jn 8:44; 1Ki 3:8 (Satan murderer and liar from the beginning)

Rev 3:14; 21:6, 12 (Jesus the beginning and the end)

2. From the time of the birth and ministry of Jesus:

John 8:25; 16:4; 1 John 2:7 [twice]; 3:11; 2 John 5, 6 (Jesus' teachings)

John 15:27 (with Jesus)

1 John 2:13, 24 [twice] (from their trust in Jesus)

John 6:64 (from their rejection of Jesus)

"we"

Implies the collective yet personal witness of the apostles.

This collective testimony ("we") is a characteristic of I John.

It is used over 50 times.

"have heard ... have seen" (emphasizes the five senses, 1Jn 1:1-3)

He thereby claims to be an eye-witness to the life and teaching of Jesus of Nazareth.

John was asserting Jesus' humanity

"have looked ... and touched" (emphasizes specific events.)

"looked" means "closely observed" (Jn 1:14);

"touched" means "closely examined by feel" (Jn 20:20, 27; Lk 24:39).

The Greek term for "touched" or "handled" is found in only two verses in the NT: 1Jn 1:2 and Lk 24:39.

In Luke it is used of a post-resurrection encounter with Jesus. Possibly I John uses it in the same sense.

"Word of Life"

The use of the term "Word" (logos) served to catch the attention of the Greek false teachers;

This word was widely used in Greek philosophy. It also had a specific background in Hebrew life.

This phrase refers to both the content of the gospel and the person of the gospel.

Jn 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jn 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Rev 19:13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

1 Jn 1:2 and the life was manifested, and we have seen and testify and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--

"life" ("Zōē") is used consistently in John's writings for

1. spiritual life,

Jn 10:10 ... I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.

Jn 14:6 "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

(Jn 1:4; 5:39; 6:33, 35, 48, 51, 53, 63; 8:12)

2. resurrection life,

Jn 11:25 ... "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies,

(Jn 3:36; 5:24, 29, 40)

3. eternal life,

Jn 3:15-16 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. 16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.
(Jn 3:36; 4:14, 36; 5:24; 6:27, 40, 47, 54, 68; 10:25-28, 50; 17:2-3)

4. God's life

Jn 5:26 "For just as the Father has life in Himself, even so He gave to the Son also to have life in Himself;
(Jn 1:4;)

“manifested” This term implies “to bring to light that which was already present.”

This was a favorite term with John; it means:

1. "to manifest, manifested"

Jn 1:31 "I did not recognize Him, but so that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water."
(Jn 2:11; 3:21; 9:3; 17:6; 21:1, 14; 1Jn 1:2; 4:9)

2. "to show, be shown"

Jn 7:4 ... If You do these things, show Yourself to the world." (1Jn 2:19)

3. "to appear (s), appeared"

1Jn 3:8 ... The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil.(1Jn 2:28; 3:2, 5)

The false teachers denied the incarnation (God becomes man) of Jesus

Jn 1:14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.

“testify”

This refers to John's personal experience.

This term was often used of testimony in a court case.

“proclaim”

"Proclaim" refers to John's authoritative testimony revealed and recorded in his preaching and writing.

"Proclaim" is the main verb of verses 1-3. It is repeated twice.

“was with the Father”

This is an assertion of Jesus' pre-existence.

The phrasing is like Jn 1:1. Deity has been incarnated as a man (Jn 1:14).

To know Jesus is to know God.

1 Jn 1:3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

“what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also”

This resumes the thought of verse 1.

It repeats the verbs of perception ("what") found in verse 1.

“so that you too may have fellowship with us”

The term **“fellowship”** (*koinōnia*) means:

1. close association with a person

a. With the Son

1Jn 1:6 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness ...

1Cor 1:9 God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

b. With the Spirit

2Cor 13:14 ... the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with you all.

Phil 2:1 ... if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion,

c. With the Father and the Son

1Jn 1:3 ... and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

d. With other brothers/sisters

1Jn 1:7 ... we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

Ac 2:42 They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, ...

Gal 2:9 ... gave to me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, ...

Phm 17 If then you regard me a partner, accept him as you would me.

2. Close association with things or groups

a. With the Gospel

Phil 1:5 in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

Phm 6 and I pray that the fellowship of your faith may become effective ...

b. With the blood of Christ

1Cor 10:16 Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?

c. Not with darkness

2Cor 6:14 ... or what fellowship has light with darkness?

d. With suffering

Phil 3:10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, ...

Phil 4:15, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

1Pt 4:13 but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, ...

3. Gift or contribution done in generous fashion

Rom 12:13 contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality.

Rom 15:26 ... have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

2Cor 8:4 begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,

2Cor 9:13 ... and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,

Phil 4:15 ... no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

Heb 13:16 And do not neglect doing good and sharing, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

4. God's gift of grace through Christ, restores mankind's fellowship with God and also between people.

This asserts the horizontal relationship (human to human) that is brought about by the vertical relationship (human to Creator). It also emphasizes the need for and joy of Christian community. The verb tense stresses the start and continuance of this experience of community.

1Jn 1:3 what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.

1Jn 1:6-7 If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth; 7 but if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.

5. Christianity is corporate! Together, we the Church of Jesus Christ are:

Body

Rom 12:4-5 For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

(1Cor 12:12, 27; Eph 4:15-16)

Field

1Cor 3:6-9 I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth. 7 So then neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but God who causes the growth. 8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one; but each will receive his own reward according to his own labor. 9 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field,

Building

1Cor 3:9-11 For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, God's building. 10 According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. 11 For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1Cor 3:9-15)

Temple

1Cor 3:16-17 Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are. (2Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21-22)

Saint

Paul calls believers saints; the term "saint" is always used in the plural except Phil. 4:21, but even there it is also corporate.

Phil 4:21-22 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. 22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

Priest (Ex 19:6; 1 Pt 2:5, 9; Rev 1:6)

The Reformation emphasis of Martin Luther on the "priesthood of the believer" is not truly biblical. It is the priesthood of believers.

1Pt 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

"with the Father ... with His Son"

This affirms the equality and deity of Jesus

Jn 5:18 ... He was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.

Jn 10:33 ... You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God."

Jn 19:7 ... by that law He ought to die because He made Himself out to be the Son of God."

It is impossible to have the Father (High God) without the Son (Incarnate God) as the false teachers implied.

1Jn 2:23 Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.

1Jn 5:10-11 The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the testimony that God has given concerning His Son. 11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.

This fellowship with the Father and the Son is very similar to the mutual "indwelling" passage of Jn 14:23.

Jn 14:23 Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

1Jn 1:4 These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.

"These things we write" - one of the purposes of 1Jn.

John's purposes in writing this book are:

1. That they would have fellowship; - personally with God and corporately with other believers;
2. That they would have joy;
3. That they would have assurance of salvation
4. his purpose (on the negative side) was to equip believers against the false theology of the gnostic teachers.

"so that our joy may be made complete"

Jn 15:11 "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

Jn 16:20 "Truly, truly, I say to you, that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; you will grieve, but your grief will be turned into joy.

Jn 16:22 "Therefore you too have grief now; but I will see you again, and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy away from you.

Jn 16:24 "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.

Jn 17:13 "But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.

2Jn 12 Though I have many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, so that your joy may be made full.

3Jn 4 I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.