

INTRODUCTION

1. This morning we are beginning a new study.
2. It is one which will take us some time to work through.
3. As we do this, I believe our faith will be both challenged and strengthened.
4. Challenged to see if it is real saving faith.
5. Strengthened if it is genuine.
6. Please take God's Word and turn with me to 1 John chapter 1.
7. For however long it takes, we will study together this wonderful book each week.
8. 1, 2, and 3 John were written by the Apostle John as was the Gospel of John and Revelation.
9. Even though John does not mention his name, the vocabulary and writing style is similar to the Gospel of John.
10. Also, the writings of the early church fathers, from Ignatius to Polycarp, identify John as the author of this letter.
11. 1 John was written in 90 A.D. from Ephesus to Christians living in Asia Minor.

12. The letter itself gives 4 reasons for its purpose:
 - a. "That your joy may be full" (1:4)
 - b. "That you may not sin" (2:1)
 - c. "Concerning those who try to deceive you" (2:26)
 - d. "That you may know you have eternal life" (5:13)
13. As we study this letter, you'll notice that it is straightforward.
14. It uses language that is certain and absolute.
15. The reason is because what John has to say to the Christians in Asia Minor is to counteract what false teachers, who had infiltrated the church, were saying. Therefore it had to be firm, persuasive, to the point.
16. That's why John doesn't waste any time.
17. He omits the common salutation that existed in letters during that time.
18. He also makes no mention of his name.
19. Since he was the last living apostle everyone would know who wrote this.
20. Notice how John counteracts the false teachers:
21. In chapter 1 reveals that these false teachers denied the gospel, so John begins with what? His eye-witness testimony to the gospel in 1:1.
22. They also denied the actual existence of Jesus, so what does John say? We have "seen with our eyes...looked upon....our hands have handled...and bear witness" (1:1-2) to Jesus.
23. They also denied sin. And John says, "If (you) walk in darkness, (you) lie and do not practice the truth" (1:6) and "If (you) say that (you) have no

sin, (you) deceive (yourselves), and the truth is not in (you)” (1:8) and “If (you) say that (you) have not sinned, (you) make Him a liar, and His word is not in (you)” (1:10).

24. On the other hand verse 9 says, “If (you) confess (your) sins, He is faithful and just to forgive (you) (your) sins and to cleanse (you) from all unrighteousness.”
25. History tells us that the false teachers John was confronting were known as the gnostics.
26. The word gnostic, which comes from the Greek word gnosis, which means, “to know” and was a group of people who believed they had a superior, private knowledge over and above that of the Bible (Wuest).
27. There were two groups of gnostics: The Docetic gnostics and the Cerinthian gnostics.
28. The Docetic gnostics denied the humanity of Christ while the Cerinthian gnostics made a distinction between the man Jesus and the aeon Christ that came on Him at His baptism and left Him when He was on the cross.
29. So throughout this letter John will challenge the gnostics against what the Word of God says.
30. And as he does that he will use his own personal account of Jesus.
31. John was an eyewitness to Jesus’ gospel and ministry.
32. John records his first account with Jesus in John 1:36-42.
33. John’s first witness to Jesus is hearing John state that Jesus is “the Lamb of God” (John 1:36).

34. His second is hearing Andrew tell his brother Peter that “We have found the Messiah (which is translated, the Christ)” (John 1:41).
35. Then he witnessed the calling of Philip (John 1:43) and Nathanael (John 1:47-51) to whom Jesus said that He “saw” him “under the fig tree” (John 1:50).
36. In his record of the life and ministry of Christ, John wrote that “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” (John 1:14; cf. Rom. 1:3; Gal. 4:4; Heb. 1:1–3; 1 Tim. 3:16; Rev. 19:13). Jesus Christ was the God-man (John 10:30), fully divine (Phil. 2:6; Col. 2:9); and fully human (Luke 1:31; Phil. 2:7–8; Heb. 2:14; 4:15). John had experienced that reality through his natural senses and was a true witness to the incarnation in its completeness” (MacArthur, John. 1, 2, 3 John. Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2007. Print. MacArthur New Testament Commentary).
37. So John begins his letter with his defense of the gospel and Jesus Christ.
38. He does that by giving us his eyewitness account.
39. First we see...
 - John’s Witness to the Gospel (v.1)
 - John’s Witness to the Life of Christ (v.2)
 - John’s Witness to the Fellowship of Christ (vv.3-4)

Notice first...

I. John's Witness to the Gospel (v.1)

1 John 1:1 (NKJV) 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, concerning the Word of life.

There are two elements in this verse. One speaks of the gospel itself. The other speaks of Jesus.

John begins his argument against the gnostics by first laying the foundation of what he and the rest of the disciples heard and seen.

A. What John Heard From the Beginning (v.1a)

John begins verse 1 with "That which." This is neuter not masculine. That is important.

If it was masculine it would have been translated "He who" and would be a direct reference to Jesus Christ.

But since it is neuter it's referring to something else. The end of the verse says, "That which was from the beginning, which we heard...concerning the word of life."

Though the phrase, "from the beginning" is similar to that of John 1:1 ("In the beginning") it is not referring to Jesus but to the message about Him.

We know that in two ways:

First, the phrase "the word of life" is better translated "the word of *the* life."

With the use of the definite article “the” it is talking about the “word” or “message” about the “life.”

What is the message about the life? The Gospel.

The second way that we know this is what John is talking about is his use of this phrase throughout the letter.

He uses to speak of their first hearing of the Gospel.

1 John 2:7 (NKJV) Brethren, I write no new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had **from the beginning**. The old commandment is the word which **you heard from the beginning**.

1 John 2:24-25 (NKJV) Therefore let that abide in you which **you heard from the beginning**. If what **you heard from the beginning** abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.²⁵ And this is the promise that He has promised us—eternal life.

1 John 3:11 (NKJV) For this is the message that **you heard from the beginning**, that we should love one another.

John now tells us...

B. How John Heard the Gospel From the Beginning

He says, “That which was from the beginning, which we have **heard**.”

“Heard” is the Greek word akouo which means “to hear.” It is used here in the perfect tense which means that what John heard in the past was having present results.

Even though it had been 66 years since he first heard the gospel from the lips of Jesus, it was still having an effect on his life today.

He adds more to this by saying Jesus embodied the gospel by the use of the words “seen” and “looked upon” and “our hands have handled.”

Seen, looked, handled are also used in the present tense.

The words used here point to the vivid recollection of the person of Jesus that John still had even in his old age.

For John, even 60 years later, those memories were permanently etched on his mind as if the events had just happened.

He uses terms that strongly affirm the physical reality of Jesus, for a spirit cannot be heard, gazed at for long periods (“looked upon”) or touched (“handled”) as Jesus was by John during His earthly ministry and even after His resurrection. (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible).

Now in verse 2, John gives...

II. John’s Witness to the Life of Christ (v.2)

A. The Life was Manifested (v.2a)

“Manifested” is the verb phaneroo which means “to appear (in sight), to come into sight or view” (Logos)

It is used in the aorist tense with the indicative mood.

Since it is used in this way it is referring to past time. The indicative would state that it is real.

John is saying, in time past Jesus appeared. He is real.

He states Jesus’ appearing several times in 1 John:

1 John 3:5 (NKJV) And you know that **He was manifested** to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin.

1 John 3:8 (NKJV) He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose **the Son of God was manifested**, that He might destroy the works of the devil.

Paul said in 1 John 3:16 (NKJV) 16 And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: **God was manifested in the flesh**, Justified in the Spirit, Seen by angels, Preached among the Gentiles, Believed on in the world, Received up in glory.

Peter said in 1 Peter 1:18-21 (NKJV) 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. 20 He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was **manifest** in these last times for you 21 who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

John states again that he and the disciples...

B. We Have Seen It (v.2b)

This reminds his readers that his personal testimony refutes the false teachers who boasted arrogantly and wrongly about the Christ they had never seen or known. (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible).

In fact John says...

1 John 3:6 (NKJV) Whoever abides in Him does not sin. **Whoever sins has neither seen Him nor known Him.**

This is a direct statement about the false teachers.

John continues...

1 John 4:14 (NKJV) And **we have seen** and testify that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world.

John heard Him, seen Him with his own eyes, gazed upon Him, handled Him and now he says...

C. We Bear Witness (v.2c)

“Bear witness” is martyreo, where we get our English word martyr. It means “to testify.”

John offers firsthand testimony of Jesus which is something the gnostic could not offer.

He said in John 21:24 (NKJV) This is the disciple who **testifies** of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his **testimony** is true.

Last he says...

D. We Declare to You (v.2d)

“Declare” is apangello, which means to “report, announce, tell.”

This is in the present tense which could be translated “we continue to report or tell you this about Jesus? Why? The indicative is used here too. What did we say the indicative meant to the author? It is REAL.

We’re telling you this over and over because it is REAL.

What is real?

“That eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us.”

That would be a direct reference to John 1:1 where it says that the “word was with God,” which in Greek means Jesus had a face-to-face relationship with God.

How could He have that? Because He came from the Father.

The use of “eternal life” with Jesus indicates the eternality of Christ in his pre-incarnate glory. (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible).

John now brings this to an evangelistic conclusion in verses 3-4 where he gives...

III. John’s Witness to the Fellowship of Christ (vv.3-4)

1 John 1:3-4 (NKJV) that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, ***that you also may have fellowship with us***; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.⁴ And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.

John says we are telling you these things so you too can have the fellowship of Christ.

By receiving and believing the eyewitness account of John, they too can have salvation and the joy that comes with it.

John writes not only to affirm the physical reality of Jesus (vv. 1, 2) but also to produce salvation in the readers. (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible).

A. To Have Fellowship is to Become a Partaker (v.3)

“Fellowship” is Koinonia which means partners or partakers.

Fellowship does not mean social relations, but that his readers were to be partakers (or, partners) with John in possessing eternal life. (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible).

Philippians 1:3-5 (NKJV) ³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, ⁵ for your ***fellowship in the gospel*** from the first day until now.

1 Peter 5:1 (NKJV) The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a ***partaker*** of the glory that will be revealed.

2 Peter 1:2-4 (NKJV) ² Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, ³ as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, ⁴ by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be ***partakers*** of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

B. To Have Full Joy is to Become a Partaker of Christ (v.4)

“And these things we write to you that your joy may be full.”

Joy is the result of salvation:

Paul said in Romans 15:13 (NKJV) 13 Now may the God of hope fill you with all ***joy and peace in believing***, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

He said when the Thessalonians received the word in much affliction, they received it “***with joy of the Holy Spirit***” (1 Thess.1:6).

He called it “***the joy of faith***” in Philippians 1:25.

The proclamation of the reality of the gospel (vv. 1, 2) produces a fellowship in eternal life (v. 3), and in turn, fellowship in eternal life produces joy (v. 4). (MacArthur, John, Jr., ed. The MacArthur Study Bible).

CONCLUSION

1. What about you?
2. Have you partaken of Christ?
3. Have you heard the Gospel and is it having lasting results in your life today?
4. John declared this to his readers for the same reason we are declaring it today “that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.
5. Let's pray.