

The First Epistle of John

...so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ (1John 1:3)

1John 1:1-4

The Prologue

Someone read 1John 1:1-4

This passage has been termed the Prologue of this Epistle. What other book of the Bible has a Prologue? What verses does it contain?

Read John 1:1-18

What similarities do you see?

Beginning, Word, Life

We've already spent some time discussing "beginning."

We lean towards the beginning in both Prologues being the same, although good arguments have been made that "from the beginning" refers to the Incarnation or the beginning of Jesus' public ministry.

Word [of life].

Does this phrase refer to the personal Word (The Word which bring eternal life) or to the Christian message?

Translations favoring the former: NASB, NIV, KJV, NKJV, ASV, YLT

Translations favoring the latter: NET, ESV

Do we have to choose?

"The revelation proclaims what it includes; it has, announces, gives life" (Westcott).

Which term is emphasized "Word" or "Life"?

Someone read v.2.

Life ... eternal life

"word" is clearly emphasized in the Gospel.

What differences?

John the Baptist

Why do you think the Baptizer is not mentioned?

Not important for John to refer to him in this letter

Gospel of John is primarily biographical and polemical in nature; the Epistle is primarily concerned with the assurance of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

Why do you think John repeats “seen” three times and the word “heard” twice in the first 3 verses?

Who is “we?”

The original disciples

The elders at Ephesus

A literary device (a figure of speech)

“We” may either be inclusive (we and you) or exclusive (we and not you). That the original disciples were in view makes the most sense in my mind.

John writes, “we had this experience, you did not have it, but we are sharing it with you in order that you may share it with us – in order that you may have fellowship with us.”

Akouō = to hear

3b) to get by hearing learn

3c) a thing comes to one’s ears, to find out, learn

3d) to give ear to a teaching or a teacher

horaō = To see

Properly to *stare* at, that is, (by implication) to *discern* clearly (physically or mentally);

theaomai = To behold, look at closely, to perceive

To behold a play or theatrical performance

“a spectacle which broke on our astonished vision” (D. Smith).

psēlaphaō = to verify by physical contact

See Luke 29:39

John establishes the reality of Christ by including 3 of the 5 senses (hearing, seeing, and touching).

Someone read v.2.

This is a verse-long parenthesis – this is indicated in the NIV, ESV, and NASB by a dash, and is indicated by a literal in the NET and the KJV (interestingly, the NKJV opts for a dash).

The Greek behind “manifested” (*phaneroō*) = to make known what already exists).

The life God gives to men was revealed in the historically in Jesus – this is a key point for John and why he chooses to include it in this slightly awkward parenthesis – it’s awkwardness calls it to our attention.

Indeed, it is identical with Jesus, so that John can say he has actually seen it.

His proclamation thus consists of an act of testimony. But still his emphasis is not on the act of proclamation but on the historical reality of that to which he bears witness.

It is the eternal life which was with the Father and then appeared to us.
Compare Jn 1:1-2.

It is equally important for John AND his readers.

Someone read v. 3.

Having concluded his parenthesis, John returns to his theme with the repeated words “seen and heard, we proclaim.” But he adds a purpose phrase: So that you may have fellowship with us.

Does anyone know the Greek for “fellowship?”

It literally means “having in common.”

Two or more persons may be said to be in fellowship when they have something in common.

See Lk 5:10 = fishing

Tit 1:4 = common faith

Phil 1:7 = share in the grace of God

Here in this verse, John clearly wants to make known his message so that by their acceptance they may become and remain his partners and thus be joined together in that Christian love which unites those with a common faith in Jesus Christ.

Read v 3 again:

Notice that the fellowship is not only with other believers, but also – more importantly – with the Father and Son. Here, the thought of union with God is uppermost.

John 10:38; John 17:21-23

John, perhaps more than any other Apostle, really understood the mutual indwelling of Father and Son, and it is this indwelling that makes possible our fellowship with God and Jesus.

There is nothing vague or sentimental about this fellowship. It involves obedience to the Commandments of Christ and faithfulness to His teaching communicated through the Apostles (this theme – one the most important in 1John – will be developed more in the coming weeks).

What is important at this point is to apprehend the wonder of having an intimate fellowship with the Father and Jesus, of His desire for fellowship with us, and to realize what those false teachers had lost by choosing to sever that intimacy and abandon their faith.