

1 John 1:1-4

Prologue: Apostolic Declaration

1. An introductory phrase used as a title.
 - a) Given John's writing style displayed in the gospel and Revelation, we can understand verse one as an introductory title to the treatise.
 - b) This use of an introductory phrase for a title is a convention well established in the Hebrew and Greek Old Testament and elsewhere in the New Testament. Cf. Revelation 1:1; Matthew 1:1; Mark 1:1; Ecclesiastes 1:1; Song of Solomon 1:1; Isaiah 1:1; Hosea 1:1; Joel 1:1; Amos 1:1...
2. The Greek Pronoun ὃ
 - a) The neuter does not require an impersonal interpretation. We can understand this use as abstract AND personal. The obvious parallel to the prologue of John's gospel strongly indicates the personal view but poetry is not always concrete in its meaning. Grammatical rules don't always apply either.
 - b) John uses this neuter of abstraction elsewhere (John 17:24).
 - c) A collective encompassing all that Jesus is. His Deity, humanity, eternal life, voice, physical body and message.
 - d) The Beginning (ἀρχῆς) refers to Eternity past and/ or the beginning of God's creation (Rev 3:14).
 - e) Four times in this verse John refers to "What" and identifies a Specific "Him" in 1 John 2:13-14 who has been from the beginning (John 1:1).
 - f) "What was from the beginning" is not to be taken as pointer to a specific timeframe but an identification of the Word of Life in His eternality. "Was" in the imperfect tense (ἦν) expresses continuous action in the past—reflecting the eternal nature of God the Son. This is the same in John's gospel.
 - 1) John 1:1 - Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος
 - 2) 1 John 1:1 - Ὁ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς
 - g) In this one phrase, John is having us look back to the firstborn of all creation (Col 1:15-20).
 - h) John wrote his Gospel to prove the deity of our Lord, assuming His humanity, whereas he wrote his first epistle to prove His humanity, assuming His deity.
 - i) All other [beginnings](#) in 1 John must be understood in their own context.

3. John establishes the testimony of the Word to the apostles, all that they heard, the power of His work in their sight and the genuineness of His humanity, being the incarnation of the eternal Word.
 - a) Chronologically speaking, Genesis 1:1 would not come next, rather, that phrase from Revelation 3:14, “The Beginning of the creation of God.” We have the Trinity in eternity past in view in John 1:1-2, The Hypostatic union of the deity and humanity of Christ in Proverbs 8:22-26 and 1 John 1:1 followed by creation and restoration in Genesis 1:1 and Proverbs 8:27-31.
 - b) Proverbs 8:22-26
 - 1) Perhaps we could question a Christological interpretation here, that wisdom is personified, perhaps even objectified as an attribute of God, or even as some would take it, of creation. We could even hear arguments about the noun wisdom (חֵכֶמָה) and its corresponding verbs being feminine. The nature of this noun is feminine, not necessarily what it refers to and the verbs must correspond to the nouns grammatically (cf. 1 Cor 1:24).
 - 2) Perhaps we may questions here whether Paul is speaking of Christ as the wisdom of God and meaning that He is such functionally. Christ refers to Himself as the Wisdom of God (Luke 11:49; Matt 23:34).
 - 3) The idea that John borrowed the Greek understanding of Logos is both unbiblical and unacceptable. The Word of the Lord (דְּבַר־יְהוָה) was not a new concept in Jewish theology, but it was one that was labeled as heretical early in the second century. The “Word of the Lord” is a Biblical, Old Testament phrase. Not one that always identifies a personal manifestation of God, but does in some instances.
 - a. Genesis 15: 1- 6 - What’s interesting to note here is that after the return from captivity in Babylon, the Hebrew language had fallen out of use and the people spoke Aramaic. There was a need, as there always is for the scriptures to be in the language of the people. The Targums were produced during this time and the interpretation of such passages is striking. Genesis 15:6 of the Targum Onkelos reads, “He believed in the word of the Lord (בְּמִימְרָא דִּיּוֹי) (B^eMaimra da Yahyeh)...”
 - b. 1 Samuel 3:1-21 and Jeremiah 1:1-9 - דְּבַר־יְהוָה
 - c. Jesus Christ is the דְּבַר־יְהוָה, בְּמִימְרָא דִּיּוֹי and identifies Himself as יְהוָה (John 8:18, 24, 28; 13:19; 18:5, 6, 8 compare with Mark 13:6; Luke 21:8 cf. John 1:1; John 17:5, 24; John 1:10; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2; Rev 19:13 as well as the 7 “I am” Statements John 6:35 – The Bread of Life; John 8:12 – The Light of the World; John 10:9 – The Door; John 10:11 – the Good Shepherd; John 11:25-26 - The Resurrection and the Life; John 14:6 – The Way the Truth and the Life; John 15:5 – The Vine).
4. 5 relative clauses (1 John 1:1-3) focused on the verb ἀπαγγέλλω

- a) What was from the beginning –
 - 1) Not to be taken as pointer to a specific timeframe but an identification of the Word of Life in His eternality.
 - 2) “Was” in the imperfect tense (ἦν) expresses continuous action in the past—reflecting the eternal nature of God the Son. This is the same in John’s gospel. John 1:1 - Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος - 1 John 1:1 - Ὁ ἦν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς
 - b) What we have heard - ἀκηκόαμεν (ἀκούω)
 - 1) First person plural – Indicating all apostolic witnesses especially writers of the New Testament.
 - 2) Perfect active indicative – Indicating the ongoing effects of hearing Jesus.
 - c) What we have seen with our eyes - ἐώρακάμεν (ὁράω)
 - 1) Occurs 3 times (verses 1, 2, 3).
 - 2) The perfect tense emphasizes the ongoing effects of having seen Christ and the effects of His ministry.
 - 3) The phrase “with our eyes” (τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν) clarifies the visual perception or [eyewitnessing](#) (1 John 1:2 seen and testify).
 - d) What we have looked at and touched with our hands
 - 1) ἐθεασάμεθα (θεάομαι) - Examine, reconnoiter
Note: Related to θέατρον (1 Cor 4:9; Heb 10:33)
 - 2) ἐψηλάφησαν (ψηλαφάω) - Touching establishes the corporeality of Jesus earthly life and resurrection (Luke 24:39). Acts 17:27 uses ψηλαφάω figuratively.
 - e) All these things “concerning the Word of Life” are reflected upon in verses 2 and 3. What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also
 - 1) The Word of Life, Life [manifested](#), the eternal Life which was with the Father – cf. 1 John 5:11, 13, 20; John 1:14; Rev 19:13
 - 2) The phrase “Word of Life” is a title for Christ incorporating two key words from John’s Gospel (John 1:1, 4).
 - 3) Both the person of Christ and the message about Him are in view (cf. Jer 23:18)
 - 4) φανερώω - Existed previously and becomes visible.
 - 5) The eyewitnesses heard, saw, and touched the Word of life. The eternal Son of God, Jesus the Christ, had come in the flesh (cf. John 1:14).
 - 6) The Life that was manifested to us is also manifested through us and in us (2 Cor 2:14; 2 Cor 4:10-11).
5. The principles and practical application of 1 John 1:1.
- a) Understand the entire revealed nature of Jesus Christ.
 - 1) Humanity (John 1:14; 1 John 1:2; 1 John 4:2; 2 John 7).
 - 2) Deity (John 1:1ff; 1 John 1:1; 1 John 2:13-14).

- 3) Eternality (John 8:58; John 17:5; 1 John 1:2).
- 4) Life (1 John 1:2; 2:25; 4:9; 5:11-13, 20; John 3:15-16, 36)
- b) Understand the power of the eyewitness testimony from John and those with him (John 15:27; John 19:35; 2 Pet 1:16; 1 John 1:2; 1 John 4:14; Luke 24:39; John 20:27).
- c) Understand the power of our own testimony, both seen and heard.
 - 1) Let your light shine (Matthew 5:16 cf. Philippians 2:14-15).
 - 2) Keep your behavior excellent (1 Peter 2:12).
 - 3) Protect the ministry of the word (2 Cor 6:3).
 - 4) Exalt Christ in your body (Philippians 1:20).
 - 5) Adorn the doctrine of God our Savior in every respect (Titus 2).
 - a. No condition and no period of life is to remain unaffected by the sanctifying influence of the gospel.
 - b. The Christian's faith, both *subjectively* as experience and *objectively* as a body of doctrine, must result in a life that consistently demonstrates appropriate behavior. Such behavior must be blameless and be complimentary to the gospel of Jesus Christ, which Christians publicly profess as the source of their salvation.
 - c. Even a slave has the ability to make the gospel attractive by his behavior. The Christian slave's devotion to the gospel and resulting godly attitudes and actions serve to make attractive in an unparalleled way the ultimate freedom that is only realized in Christ. (Titus 2:9).
 - d. The repeated use of the Greek conjunction "so that" (ὅτι) in Titus 2:4, 5, 8, 10 clearly demonstrates the missionary aspects of everyday Christian behavior within a hostile and lost world.
 - e. The effect of individual Christian behavior on unbelievers cannot be underestimated. Inevitably, unbelievers judge the gospel message by the lives of those who embrace it. As we live and identify ourselves as Christians, we can make the gospel message attractive and credible by our godly attitudes and behavior. However, if we are perceived as unloving and hypocritical, we provide unbelievers with good reason to be skeptical about the power of the gospel (1 Tim 6:1; 1 Tim 4:12; 1 Pet 2:12; 1 Cor 11:32).
 - 6) Do your best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men (Acts 24:16).
6. 1 John 1:2 parenthetical explanation of "life" mentioned in the phrase, "the Word of life."
 - a) And the life was manifested
 - 1) The "life" is a reference back to the "Word of Life" from v 1, and a reference forward to the eternal life which was with the Father.
 - 2) The word for life is ζωή, not the word for physical life: βίος or soul life: ψυχή.
 - 3) John's use of ζωή consistently refers to the life we have in Christ.

- 4) The verb ἐφανερώθη (φανερώω) signifies that something already in existence, but not previously seen, was made manifest.
- b) We have seen and testify and proclaim to you
 - 1) ἐώρακάμεν - The perfect tense of ὀράω which was used in verse 1 is repeated here and again in verse 3. This repetition forms a connection between clauses in this long sentence.
 - 2) μαρτυροῦμεν and ἀπαγγέλλομεν - The present active indicative of both verbs (μαρτυρέω and ἀπαγγέλλω) indicate the ongoing gospel ministry of the eyewitnesses, most of which at this point were ongoing in the ministry of the New Testament written word.
- c) The eternal life which was with the Father
 - 1) ἥτις (feminine relative pronoun) points to ζωὴν (feminine singular accusative).
 - 2) πρὸς - to or toward / facing. Indicates fellowship with the Father in eternity past referring back to “What was from the beginning” and “In the beginning was the Word...”
- d) And was manifested to us
 - 1) ἐφανερώθη is repeated in a continued emphasizing of the Physical (human) nature of the revelation of the Word.
7. The principles and practical application of 1 John 1:2
 - a) The One who was manifested to them, the eternal Son of God, the Word, whom they had personally witnessed, was with the Father in heaven before He became flesh (John 1:14) and was sent from heaven by the Father (Hebrews 3:1).
 - b) Jesus is the Christ; He did not become the Christ.
 - c) Jesus Christ is God and reality of that fact can have powerful applications in evangelism (1 John 5:20; John 20:28; Acts 20:28; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8; 2 Peter 1:1).
8. The purpose of the proclamation 1 John 1:3
 - a) Verses 1 and 2 are summed up in order link it all to the purpose clause.
 - b) The goal of the apostolic writings, “so that you too may have fellowship with us.”
 - 1) [Κοινωνία](#) – Strong's #2842 20x close association involving mutual interests and sharing, *association, communion, fellowship, close relationship*.
 - 2) You, Us, Our - ἡμέτερος, a possessive adjective emphasizing that the recipients of this writing were included in this complete fellowship.
9. The Principles and Practical application of 1 John 1:3
 - a) The testimony of the apostles is intended to bring about the saints fellowship with God and with each other (regardless if they have anything else in common). Departure from apostolic teaching and practice is a departure from familial relationship. 1 John 1:7; 1 John 2:23-24; John 14:20-23; John 17:3; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 1:9
 - b) "Fellowship" renders a Greek word which literally means "having in common." two or more persons can be said to have fellowship with one another when they have something in common.

- 1) James and John were sharers with Simon in their common pursuit of fishing (Lk. 5:10).
 - 2) Paul and Titus shared in a common faith (Tit. 1:4; cf. Jude 3).
 - 3) Believers share in the grace of God (Phil. 1:7), in Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:9), and in spiritual gifts generally (Rom. 15:27).
 - 4) Fellowship has two aspects.
 - a. Participation - in some spiritual gift or in Christian service. Rom 12:13; Rom 15:26; 2 Cor 8:4; 2 Cor 9:13; Phil 1:5; Phil 3:10; Heb 13:16
 - b. Communion - with other believers as a result of common enjoyment of some spiritual privilege or common sharing in some Christian activity. Acts 20:7; 1 Cor 10:16
 - 5) Here in this verse the writer clearly wants to make known his message to his readers so that by their acceptance of it they may become and remain his partners and thus be joined together in that Christian love which unites those who have a common faith in Jesus Christ. But the fellowship which the writer enjoys includes the Father and the Son. Here the thought of union with God is uppermost, and the thought of participation in some common object has dwindled to the point of vanishing.
 - 6) Believers of every tribe, tongue, people and nation saved by the same grace, indwelt by the same Holy Spirit, are brought into fellowship with one another. Rev 5:9; 2 Cor 13:14
 - 7) This fellowship is acquired by hearing with faith the eyewitness testimony concerning the Word of Life, Jesus Christ, and entering into familial relationship through the second birth which is only accomplished by faith in the Son of God. 2 Thes 2:13-17; John 3:16; John 5:24; John 20:31; 1 Tim 1:16
 - 8) This kind of fellowship can only be maintained with believers who are walking in the light. 1 John 1:6-7; 2 John 9-11; 1 Cor 5:11; 2 Cor 6:14
10. Purpose: Complete Joy 1 John 1:4
- a) ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη
 - 1) χαρὰ - Strongs #5479 59x experiential state of joy
 - 2) πληρῶω – Strongs 4137 90x Perfect passive participle in a state of having been made full
 - 3) εἰμί - Present active subjunctive = Intention and expectation
 - 4) These things we write with the intention and expectation that the direct result will be achieved of all of us being in an experiential state of joy which is having been made full.
11. Principles and Practical Application of 1 John 1:4
- a) Your spiritual leaders care about your joy (Rom 15:13; 2 Cor 1:24; Phil 1:25).
 - b) Your spiritual leaders derive joy from your walk with God (Phil 2:1-4; Phil 4:1; 1 Thes 2:19-20; 1 Thes 3:9; 2 John 4; 3 John 4).
 - c) True Christian joy is possible only when in fellowship with God.
 - d) When we are enjoying fellowship with God (and with one another) we will grow in our capacity for joy.
 - e) God desires for us to be filled up (and even overflowing) with His joy.

- f) Experiencing God's joy is not based on circumstances of life (Phil 4:11-13 cf. Phil 3:8; 1 Tim 6:6-9; Heb 10:34; Heb 13:5-6; Matt 6:31-34; 2 Cor 8:1-2).
- g) Experiencing God's joy is not based on emotions or even feeling well.
- h) Experiencing God's joy is based on our relationship with Him and spending as much time as possible in fellowship with Him. Delight comes from much beholding.
- i) Cultivating our Communion
 1. Love one another with the same compassion that Christ displayed to his own (John 13:34-35; John 15:12-13; Phil 2:1-11).
 2. The law of the fellowship should be the rule of love (Heb 13:1).
 3. Cultivate that spirit of humility that seeks the other person's honor (Rom 12:10 cf. Phil 2:3-5).
 4. Lighten fellow believers' load by bearing one another's burdens (Rom 15:1-3; Gal 6:2).
 5. Share material blessings with brothers and sisters in need (Rom 12:13; 2 Cor 9:13 Heb 13:16).
 6. Tenderly correct a sinner while helping to find solutions to the problems (2 Cor 2:7; Gal 6:1 ; 2 Thess 3:15; Heb 12:13; James 5:19f).
 7. Minister to a fellow believer in times of suffering (1 Cor 12:26; James 2:15-16; 1 John 3:17).
 8. Pray for one another in the Spirit without ceasing (Eph 6:18; Col 4:2-4; 1 Thes 5:25; 2 Thess 3:1; Heb 13:18).