

The First Epistle of John

(Week 2)

- I. **Week 1 Quiz**
 - A. **Have the disciples do the quiz before class starts**
 - B. **Go over the answers by way of asking. Don't spend too much time on this.**

- II. **A Brief Overview of 1John: Identifying those who are truly born again**
 1. **Prologue (1:1-4)**
 - a. Revealing the biblical Christ
 2. **The Test of Fellowship (1:5-2:27)**
 - a. Walking in the light
 - i. Taking sin seriously
 - ii. Walking in obedience
 - iii. Walking in love
 - iv. Being an encourager
 - v. Being separate from the world
 - vi. Living in truth
 3. **The Test of Son-ship (2:28-3:23)**
 - a. Practicing righteousness
 4. **The Test of Abiding Faith (3:23-5:12)**
 - a. Loving God
 - b. Testing the spirits
 - c. Confidence on the day of judgment
 - d. The assurance of victory over the world
 5. **Conclusion (5:13ff)**
 - a. Christian certainties
 - i. The assurance of salvation
 - b. Instructions on prayer
 - c. Keep away from any form of idolatry

III. 1John 1:1-4 – Prologue

ESV: (1) That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life— (2) the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us— (3) that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. (4) And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

A. “(1) That which was from the beginning... concerning the word of life”

1. Some believe that the term “*word of life*” refers to the gospel message, not Christ
 - a. **Question: Why would some think the “*word of life*” is referring to the gospel message?**
 - b. Reasons:
 - i. The pronoun “*That*” is neuter
 - ii. Neuter pronouns are genderless and are often used for inanimate objects
 - iii. Since Jesus is a “*he*” and not a “*that*,” therefore, this must be referring to the gospel message itself, that is, the word of life (small letters).
2. Others believe that the term “*word of life*” refers to Christ, thus capitalizing the “w” in “*Word of life*” (KJV, NIV, etc.)
 - a. **Question: Why would others think the “*Word of life*” is referring to Christ?**
 - b. Reasons:
 - i. Sometimes neuter pronouns are used for persons:
 - Example: “*That girl*” or “*That man over there.*”
 - ii. In 1John 1:1, John says, “*...we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands*”
 - This makes it necessary to believe that the “word of life” was referring to Jesus
 - John heard, saw, looked upon (perhaps this is referring to the glory he saw at the transfiguration— Matthew 18:1-9) and touched Jesus
 - i. In the *Gospel of John*:
 - 1John 1:1(ESV) says “*that which was from the beginning...*”
 - This is similar to what John said in his gospel, “*In the beginning was the Word...*” (John 1:1)
 - 1John 1:2 says “*the life was made manifest... which was with the Father and was made manifest to us*”
 - Similar language is found in the gospel of John:
 - a. John called Jesus “*life*” (John 1:4)
 - b. This “*life*” was with the Father (John 1:1 says the Word was with the Father)
 - c. This “*life*” was made manifest
 - i. John’s Gospel says the Word became flesh (John 1:14)
 - ii. The term “*manifest*” -- Greek word, “*phaneroo*”-- is used to denote Christ appearing in the flesh
 - iii. 1Timothy 3:16 (KJV) says Christ was manifest in the flesh

B. *“(3) that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us. And indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.* In verses 1-3, John repeats his human experience concerning the word of life.

- a. **Question: Why is John stressing these experiences: the hearing, the seeing, and the touching?**
 - i. He was establishing the truth that Jesus came in the flesh: A truth that Gnosticism denied.
 - ii. John, along with the other apostles, have seen, heard and touched Jesus.
 - iii. John’s emphasis of being an eye-witness gives him the authority to say what he is about say in this epistle.
- b. John’s goal is for the true believer to have fellowship with him, along with the other apostles, who heard and saw it all!
 - i. False teachings threaten true Christian fellowship!
 - ii. Therefore, it is important to note that Christian fellowship must be based on the doctrine and ethics of Christ, since true fellowship begins with the Father and His Son, Jesus!

C. *(4) And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.”*

1. In other words, having a clear view of the truth of Jesus, and being in fellowship with Him and those who witnessed Him is the source of joy!
2. True happiness is found in the true Christ, who came in the flesh, and who calls all men to believe on Him!

IV. Fellowship

A. Question: How do you define the term “fellowship?”

B. The Greek:

1. “*Koinonia*” – partnership, participation, sharing in common
 - a. Derived from “*koinos*” – common; belonging to several
 - i. Acts 2:44; 4:32 – uses this term to denote how the disciples shared things
 - ii. Titus 1:4 – uses this term to denote a shared faith
 - iii. Jude 1:3 – uses this term to denote a shared salvation
 - iv. Sometimes it’s used in a negative light, that is, ‘unclean,’ like a common shower stall
 - Acts 10:14 – common or unclean foods
 - Acts 10:28 – common men (Gentiles)
 - b. The usage of “*koinonia*” in the New Testament
 - i. Contribution – Romans 15:26
 - Have you ever thought of contribution as a form of fellowship?
 - ii. Sharing – Philemon 1:6
 - Have you ever thought of evangelism as a form of fellowship?
 - iii. Participation – 1Cor. 10:16
 - Have you ever thought of the Lord’s Supper as a form of fellowship?
 - iv. The usage of this Greek term denotes an action
 - Fellowship is not just “being together,” but it is a “doing together”
 - Fellowship is not just “doing together” but is a “doing with Christ” – it is a partnership with Christ in fulfilling the will of God on earth.
 - Fellowship is not hanging out, eating food, watching a game or playing a sport with other disciples.
 - You can basically say that fellowship is defined as an inner partnership with Christ, expressing itself in actions that accomplish God’s will in this world – whether it be a sharing of your faith, home, food, clothing, money, time, etc.

The following gives us a glimpse into the fellowship of the early Christians as told by the 2nd century historian, Aristides:

But the Christians, O King, while they went about and made search, have found the truth; and as we learned from their writings, they have come nearer to truth and genuine knowledge than the rest of the nations. For they know and trust in God, the Creator of heaven and of earth, in whom and from whom are all things, to whom there is no other god as companion, from whom they received commandments which they engraved upon their minds and observe in hope and expectation of the world which is to come. Wherefore they do not commit adultery nor fornication, nor bear false witness, nor embezzle what is held in pledge, nor covet what is not theirs. They honour father and mother, and show kindness to those near to them; and whenever they are judges, they judge uprightly. They do not worship idols (made) in the image of man; and whatsoever they would not that others should do unto them, they do not to others; and of the food which is consecrated to idols they do not eat, for they are pure. And their oppressors they appease (literally, comfort) and make them their friends; they do good to their enemies; and their women, O King, are pure as virgins, and their daughters are modest; and their men keep themselves from every unlawful union and from all uncleanness, in the hope of a recompense to come in the other world. Further, if one or other of them have bondmen and bondwomen or children, through love towards them they persuade them to become Christians, and when they have done so, they call them brethren without distinction. They do not worship strange gods, and they go their way in all modesty and cheerfulness. Falsehood is not found among them; and they love one another, and from widows they do not turn away their esteem; and they deliver the orphan from him who treats him harshly. And he, who has, gives to him who has not, without boasting. And when they see a stranger, they take him in to their homes and rejoice over him as a very brother; for they do not call them brethren after the flesh, but brethren after the spirit and in God. And whenever one of their poor passes from the world, each one of them according to his ability gives heed to him and carefully sees to his burial. And if they hear that one of their number is imprisoned or afflicted on account of the name of their Messiah, all of them anxiously minister to his necessity, and if it is possible to redeem him they set him free. And if there is among them any that is poor and needy, and if they have no spare food, they fast two or three days in order to supply to the needy their lack of food. They observe the precepts of their Messiah with much care, living justly and soberly as the Lord their God commanded them. Every morning and every hour they give thanks and praise to God for His loving-kindnesses toward them; and for their food and their drink they offer thanksgiving to Him. And if any righteous man among them passes from the world, they rejoice and offer thanks to God; and they escort his body as if he were setting out from one place to another near. And when a child has been born to one of them, they give thanks to God; and if moreover it happen to die in childhood, they give thanks to God the more, as for one who has passed through the world without sins. And further if they see that any one of them dies in his ungodliness or in his sins, for him they grieve bitterly, and sorrow as for one who goes to meet his doom. (XVI) Such, O King, is the commandment of the law of the Christians, and such is their manner of life.

(Apology of Aristides, "On Christianity," Section XV, XVI)