

Study Notes For First John

(Chapter One)

I John 1:1 *“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, of the Word of life;”*

- From the beginning of what exactly? This language is used later in this epistle (**I John 2:7; 2:24; 3:11**). **II John** references this too (**II John 1:5-6**). Is the “beginning” in those passages the same as what we have here? We shall see that is not the case.
 - Is this in reference to the Creation (**Genesis 1:1** and **II Peter 3:4**; cf. **Matthew 19:4** and **John 1:1**)?
 - Is this in reference to the person of Christ (**John 8:58**, **Colossians 1:12-18**, **I John 2:13-14**, and **Revelation 1:8**)?
 - Is this in reference to the beginning of a person(s) walk of faith (**Hebrews 3:14**)?
 - Is this in reference to the beginning of the preaching of the Apostles after the death of Christ (**Acts 11:15**; cf. **Acts 2:1-4**)?
 - Is this about the teachings of Christ, the beginning of the Gospel (**Philippians 4:15**); the time the Apostles were with Jesus (**John 6:60-64**, **John 8:23-25**, and **John 15:26-16:4**)?
 - The beginning of the time with the Apostles would, to a degree, even go a little bit further than just when Jesus taught (**Acts 1:12-26**). *Note vs. 22 especially.
 - Is this in reference to what Luke said: *“Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them unto us, **which from the beginning were eyewitnesses**, and ministers of the word; It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things **from the very first**, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed” (**Luke 1:1-4**). Luke then proceeded with teaching about the births of John and Jesus.*
- “That which” is translated from the Greek word “ὅς, ἧ, ὅ.” Note the definition: “Who, which, what, that: - one, (an-, the) other, some, that, what, which, who (-m, -se), etc.” (Strong’s # 3739). Not just translated “that”, but also “whom” (**Matthew 1:16**), “whose” (**Matthew 3:11**), etc.
- As we look at the first 5 verses we are talking about “the Word of Life” whom was “with the Father and was manifested unto us”, “which we have heard of him.” So, we are talking about the person whom is “the Word of Life” (**John 1:1-15** and **I John 5:7**).
- The Apostles saw Him and were witnesses (**Acts 1:1-8**, **Acts 4:33**, **Acts 5:29-32**, and **Acts 10:39-41**).

- They were not the only witnesses though (**Acts 2:32, Acts 3:13-15, Acts 13:31, and I Corinthians 15:1-11**).
- Later in this letter, we will read “we have seen and do testify” (**I John 4:14**). “Seen” there is translated “looked upon” here (Strong’s # 2300).
- Those in reference here that have “handled” the “Word of life” are those that literally, physically handled Jesus (**Luke 24:39**).

I John 1:2 *“(For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)”*

- The life was manifested [appeared; or shewed (**Mark 16:12-14 and John 21:1; 21:14**)] (**I Timothy 3:16 and I Peter 1:18-21**).
- His life was manifested with a purpose (**I John 3:1-8**).
- The manifestation of the life of Christ, after He was on earth, continues to be done by the faithful teaching of the truth (**II Corinthians 4:1-10**; cf. **Titus 1:1-3**).
- As the notes on verse one stated, the eyewitnesses of Christ did bear witness of Him (**Hebrews 2:1-4 and I Peter 5:1**) as Jesus wanted them too (**Luke 24:38-48**).
- It is through Jesus Christ that one may have eternal life (**John 10:22-30, John 17:1-3, Romans 5:21, Romans 6:23, I John 2:23-25, I John 5:11, I John 5:13, I John 5:20, and Jude 1:21**).
- Jesus was with the Father and left Heaven to come to earth (**John 3:13, John 7:28-29, John 8:42, John 16:28, Romans 8:3, and Galatians 4:4**).

I John 1:3 *“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”*

- One of the points in verse one is revisited (that which we have seen and heard). Again, “That which” is translated from the Greek word “ὅς, ἡ, ὅ.” Note the definition: “Who, which, what, that: - one, (an-, the) other, some, that, what, which, who (-m, -se), etc.” (Strong’s # 3739). That word can be translated as “whoso” (**I John 3:17**), “whatsoever” (**I John 3:22**), and others. Again, a broad word. As we concluded in verse 1, we are talking about Jesus. As we considered in verse 1, the Apostles are among those that had seen Christ (cf. **I Corinthians 9:1**).
- Again, as witnesses, they declared what they saw and heard. That is, they testified as witnesses (**Acts 18:5; 23:11**).
- The Apostles taught what they witnessed to establish fellowship (cf. **Acts 2:37-42 and I Corinthians 1:9**). The Greek word “κοινωνία” that is translated “fellowship” is defined as: “partnership, that is, (literally) participation, or (social) intercourse, or (pecuniary) benefaction: - (to) communicate (-ation), communion, (contri-), distribution, fellowship” (Strong’s # 2842).

- Later in this context we will explore how that fellowship with God means you cannot be in darkness (**I John 1:6-7**; cf. **II Corinthians 6:14-7:1**).
- The conclusion is to have fellowship with God (**John 14:5-23**, **John 17:20-23**, **I John 2:22-23**, **I John 5:20**, and **II John 1:9**).

I John 1:4 *“And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.”*

- Part of teaching is to bring joy to the saints (**II Corinthians 1:23-24**).
- Jesus taught the twelve about obedience and that connection to fellowship with Him to the extent that their joy might have been made full (**John 15:1-11**).
- Of course, our looking forward to eternal life is the source of our unspeakable and full joy (**I Peter 1:3-9**).
- David was full of joy when He saw what was to come in Christ (**Acts 2:25-28**; cf. **Psalms 16:7-11**).
- Even good news about others is a source for joy for the faithful (**Acts 15:3**; cf. **Proverbs 15:30**).
- Writing is a limited manner in which to teach and bring joy. Face to face is the superior method for such (**II John 1:12** and **III John 1:13-14**).

I John 1:5 *“This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.”*

- The message they heard of Christ is what they were to declare (**Matthew 28:16-20**).
- They were able to do so, not just from their memories, but from the aid of the Holy Spirit (**John 14:25-31**, **John 15:26**, and **John 16:1-13**).
- God is light (**Psalms 27:1**, **Psalms 36:7-9**, **Isaiah 2:1-5**, **John 1:1-9**, **John 3:16-21**, **John 8:12**, **John 12:27-35**, **II Corinthians 4:1-6**, and **James 1:17**).
- No darkness [wickedness or such] (**Deuteronomy 32:4**, **Psalms 116:5**, **Psalms 119:137**, **Psalms 119:142**, **Psalms 145:17**, **Matthew 5:48**, **John 17:25**, **Hebrews 4:14-16**, **I John 3:5**, **Revelation 4:8**, etc.).
- Light and darkness are opposite figures indicating the separation from good and evil (**Luke 1:78-79**, **Luke 2:25-32**, **Acts 26:18-20**, **Colossians 1:12-13**, and **I Peter 2:9**).
- Think about being in the dark (**Ecclesiastes 2:14**, **John 11:10**, and **John 12:35**).

I John 1:6 *“If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth:”*

- “If we say...” brings to mind that a person can say one thing and yet do another of the opposite (**Psalms 12:1-2**, **Psalms 28:3**, **Psalms 55:21**, **Proverbs 26:22-28**, **Isaiah 29:13**, **Ezekiel 33:30-33**, **Matthew 15:7-9**, **Luke 20:20-21**, and **Titus 1:16**).

- A child of God must not walk in darkness (**John 12:46, Romans 13:12, Ephesians 5:8-11**, and **I Thessalonians 5:4-5**).
- For a child of God to be in the dark, that would mean he or she has left the right path (**Proverbs 2:12-13**).
- Later in this letter a specific subject matter will be tied to walking in darkness (**I John 2:9-11**).
- We will talk more of this principle in the next chapter, but how can a person proclaim to know the Lord and not be obedient to Him (**I John 2:4**; cf. **Hosea 8:1-9**)?
- Proclaiming fellowship with the Lord while walking in darkness makes one a liar (cf. **Proverbs 30:5-6, John 8:44-45; 8:55**, and **Romans 2:17-29**). Think about where that puts such a person (**Proverbs 19:9** and **Revelation 21:8**).
- Those in darkness do not the truth (**John 3:21**).
- On the other hand, how about those that do nothing against, but rather for the truth (**II Corinthians 13:8**).
- It comes down to doing what the word of God [the truth; John 17:17 and Colossians 1:5] reveals (**Luke 6:46-49, Luke 11:28, Romans 2:13, James 1:18-27**, and **III John 1:11**).

I John 1:7 *“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.”*

- This passage of Scripture is clearly a condition for fellowship and for the blood of Christ cleansing one from his or her sins. The condition is “walk in the light.” In darkness, the blood of Christ does not benefit you. How is that confusing?
- Think through the Scriptures about “walking” (**Genesis 5:22-24** [cf. **Hebrews 11:5**], **II Corinthians 4:2, Galatians 2:14, Galatians 5:16-17, Ephesians 2:10, Ephesians 4:1-6, Colossians 2:6-7, I Thessalonians 2:11-12, I Thessalonians 4:1-2**, and **II John 1:4**).
- As we discussed when looking at verse 5: Isaiah said: *“O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the LORD”* (**Isaiah 2:5**).
- We considered walking in darkness in our discussion of verse six. What about walking in the light (**John 11:9**)?
- The second and third epistles of John refer to walking in the truth (**II John 1:4** and **III John 1:4**).
- As He is in the light... Or rather, as shall be stated in the next chapter, walk as He walked (**I John 2:3-6**).
- Now, herein is a huge point that is most often ignored. Our fellowship must be with those in the light as He is in the light. This is certainly a point of unity (**Psalms 1:1-6, Psalms 26:4-5, Psalms 119:63, Psalms 133:1, Psalms 119:115, Proverbs 13:20, Jeremiah 15:17, Amos 3:3, Matthew 12:30, Matthew 12:46-50, Mark 3:24, Luke 11:23, John 17:20-23, Acts 2:46, Romans 12:16, Romans 15:6, Romans 16:17-18, I Corinthians 1:10, I Corinthians 5:1-13, I Corinthians 15:33, II Corinthians 6:14-7:1, II Corinthians 13:11, Ephesians 4:1-6, Philippians 1:27, Philippians 2:2**,

Philippians 3:16, II Thessalonians 3:6, Jude 1:3-4, Revelation 2:1-3, Revelation 2:14-16, and Revelation 2:20).

- Then there is a huge point made connecting fellowship with the effect of the blood of Christ. Understand this, fellowship with the ungodly removes you from Christ (**II John 1:9-11**).
- Christians initially know that the blood of Christ is how we have forgiveness of sins (**Matthew 26:28, Hebrews 9:14, Hebrews 10:1-23, I Peter 1:18-19, and Revelation 1:5**).
- In the verses to come we will discuss how to receive forgiveness IF a Christian were to sin. We [Christians] still do have Jesus working for us in such a case wherein one might err (**I John 2:1**).
- Somehow, there are those that teach that this verse is saying that Christians continue to sin and the blood of Christ continues to wash away those continual sins. That is false to the core. Verses five and six have proven that. This letter will show such again later (**I John 3:1-10**). Other Scriptures show us clearly that a Christian is expected NOT to sin (**John 8:1-11, Romans 6:1-2, I Corinthians 15:34, II Corinthians 6:14-7:1, Galatians 5:17-24, Ephesians 4:21-5:2, Colossians 3:1-17, Titus 2:11-14, II Timothy 2:19, and James 1:13-16**).

I John 1:8-10 *"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."*

- Really simple point here. It has been taught since long ago. Rather than denying one's sins (past or present), confess them (**Leviticus 5:5, Psalms 32:5, Proverbs 28:13, Nehemiah 9:1-3, and Matthew 3:1-6**).
- Think about the sinner who deceives his or herself (**Proverbs 30:20, Galatians 6:3-8, II Timothy 3:13, and James 1:21-27**).
- Christians ought to have the truth dwelling and working in us (**Colossians 3:16, I Thessalonians 2:13, I John 2:14, and II John 1:2**).
- For a Christian who has sinned in his or her past to act as though he or she has never sinned is dishonest. We had to repent and be converted for a reason (**Acts 3:19**). So, regarding our pasts, be honest and acknowledge that you were once a sinner (**I Corinthians 6:9-11, Ephesians 2:1-3, Colossians 1:21, Titus 3:3, and I Peter 4:1-6**).
- We have discussed forgiveness of sins through Christ. For a moment, just consider how blessed Christians are for this gift (**Romans 4:7**).
- The Lord is faithful so you can know you can depend on Him to keep His word (**Deuteronomy 7:9, I Corinthians 1:9, and Hebrews 10:23**).
- Confessing our sins is not sufficient alone. We must also repent to have those sins forgiven (**Luke 13:1-5, Acts 8:13-24, Romans 2:1-4, II Corinthians 7:8-10, Revelation 2:1-5, Revelation 2:14-16, Revelation 3:1-3, and Revelation 3:19-20**).

- As we addressed in this context, Jesus blood is still effective to cleanse a Christian from sin (**I John 1:7**). You cannot take care of your sins yourself (**Proverbs 20:9**). That is one of the roles of Jesus (**John 1:29** and **I John 3:5**).
- Are these three passages teaching that Christians always sin? Are these passages teaching that Christians are sinners? No! Those conclusions would contradict things taught in this letter (**I John 1:5-7**, **I John 2:1**, and **I John 3:1-10**). Those conclusions would also contradict many other Scriptures that were referenced in the notes on verse 7 (**John 8:1-11**, **Romans 6:1-2**, **I Corinthians 15:34**, **II Corinthians 6:14-7:1**, **Galatians 5:17-24**, **Ephesians 4:21-5:2**, **Colossians 3:1-17**, **Titus 2:11-14**, **II Timothy 2:19**, and **James 1:13-16**).
- So, how does a sinner who claims not to have sinned make the Lord a liar? Consider the principle in **I John 5:10**. If God says something and you deny it, you are saying He lied. We know God is not a liar (**Titus 1:2**).
- As we read forward, we see who the liar really is once the truth is not found in such a person (**I John 2:4**).