



1 JOHN

The Prologue: Faith and Fellowship (1 John 1:1-4)

1 John 1:1-4 (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 your joy may be complete.

Introduction: (Spiritual) Church Growth

The importance of a good foundation



I. Background information for the Letter of 1 John

A. Who is John?

- Likely the writer of the Gospel of John
- With his brother James, fishermen called by Jesus (Mark 1:19-20)
- Appointed by Jesus as one of the twelve “apostles” (“messengers”): “James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name **Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder**)” (Mark 3:17)
- “The one whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23)
- An “Elder” of several churches in Ephesus

I. Background information for the Letter of 1 John

B. What is the historical background?

--Ephesus: capital and economic center of Roman province of Asia Minor

--Likely written in 80s-90s A.D.

--Written in response to a theological threat posed by “**Docetism**” (May have caused a church split): “The teaching that Jesus was fully God but only *appeared* to be human (taken from the Greek *dokeo*, ‘to seem or appear.’”) . . . **Sprung from “dualism”: a belief that *spirit* is essentially good and *matter* is essentially evil.** . . . Thus, creation of the universe was by an inferior power . . . Rejected the bodily resurrection of Jesus . . . Redemption is liberation from ‘bodily shackles’ . . .

--John defends the doctrine of the **incarnation of Jesus Christ** based upon his first-hand experience of being with Jesus

II. Right doctrine as necessary for establishing the Church

A. The pre-existence of the Word (Jesus) (1 John 1:1a)

- “That which was from the beginning”
- “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1)
- “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” . .
. ³ All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1,3)

II. Right doctrine as necessary for establishing the Church

B. The importance of John's eyewitness report (1:1b-2)

- “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— ”
- Defends the Church against Docetism
- John defends the doctrine of the **incarnation of Jesus Christ** based upon his first-hand experience of being with Jesus.
- Establishes his credentials based upon “apostolic authority”

II. Right doctrine as necessary for establishing the Church

C. Historical biases against Christian doctrine

- **1. Ancient times: disbelief that divinity would take on human form**
- “Dualism”: the spiritual is good, the physical is bad
- **2. Modern times: disbelief that Jesus is divine**
- Jesus as merely a good example to follow
- Jesus as possibly a prophet or mystic
- **3. Both eras: “Syncretism”**—The blending of various beliefs from different religions to form a new configuration of beliefs

II. Right doctrine as necessary for establishing the Church

- **Jesus is God**
- Jesus is both fully God and fully human (God “incarnate”)
- Humans are sinful
- God is just: Jesus paid the price (debt) of our sins by dying on the cross
- **Salvation is by God’s grace alone through faith in Jesus alone as Savior and Lord of our lives**

III. Right doctrine as necessary for deep fellowship

(Analogy of siblings—brothers and sisters—with the same parent)

A. Between us and others (1:3a)

- ³ that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have **fellowship** with us

B. Between us and God (1:3b)

- “and, indeed, our **fellowship** is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.”

C. Between others and God (1:4)

- ⁴ And we are writing these things so that **your joy** may be complete.

III. Right doctrine as necessary for deep fellowship

- “In our desire for visible unity among Christians, however, we must not forget that it is fellowship with God that comes first; fellowship with one another is derived from it. . . . The truth of the Scriptures is the only adequate foundation for fellowship. The basis of all lasting *koinonia* must be the theological realities of what God has done in and through his Son, Jesus Christ, which John is about to reaffirm in this letter.”

--David Jackman, *The Message of John's Letters*

Takeaway:

Right doctrine as expressed in the Nicene Creed

- **Jesus as fully God:**
- And in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
- begotten from the Father before all ages,
God from God,
Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made;
of the same essence as the Father.
Through him all things were made.

Takeaway:

Right doctrine as expressed in the Nicene Creed

- **Jesus as fully human:**
- For us and for our salvation
he came down from heaven;
he **became incarnate** by the Holy Spirit and the virgin Mary,
and was **made human**.
He was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate;
he **suffered and was buried**.

Takeaway:

Fellowship (Greek: *Koinonia*)

- Our deep fellowship with other believers is based upon a shared knowledge and experience of God's love for us. Because of—and by means of—God's love for us, we love each other.



Let Us Pray

