

Notes on the Greek New Testament
Day 334 – November 30th – 1 John 1:1-10

Introduction to John's First Epistle

Relationship between the Johannine Writings

Most authors regard the three Johannine Epistles as stemming from a single author, though some ancient and modern authors have suggested that 2 and 3 John are not from the same hand as the Gospel and first Epistle. There is no certainty over the chronological ordering of the three letters – their ordering in the New Testament being by length. Marshall treats 2 and 3 John before 1 John.

Westcott draws attention to the many parallels between 1 John and the Gospel of John, in particular:

1 John 1:2,3 ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἐώρακάμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν ... ὁ ἐώρακάμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπαγγέλλομεν καὶ ὑμῖν	John 3:11 ὁ ἐώρακάμεν μαρτυροῦμεν
1 John 1:4 ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη.	John 16:24 αἰτεῖτε καὶ λήμψεσθε, ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη.
1 John 2:11 ὁ δὲ μισῶν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ ... ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ περιπατεῖ, καὶ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει	John 12:35 ὁ περιπατῶν ἐν τῇ σκοτίᾳ οὐκ οἶδεν ποῦ ὑπάγει.
1 John 2:14 ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν ὑμῖν μένει	John 5:38 τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔχετε ἐν ὑμῖν μένοντα,
1 John 2:17 ὁ δὲ ποιῶν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.	John 8:35 ὁ υἱὸς μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα.
1 John 3:5 ἁμαρτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν.	John 8:46 τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἐλέγχει με περὶ ἁμαρτίας;
1 John 3:8 ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὁ διάβολος ἁμαρτάνει.	John 8:44 ἐκεῖνος ἀνθρωποκτόνος ᾗ ἀπ' ἀρχῆς.
1 John 3:13 μὴ θαυμάζετε, ἀδελφοί, εἰ μισεῖ ὑμᾶς ὁ κόσμος.	John 15:18 Εἰ ὁ κόσμος ὑμᾶς μισεῖ, γινώσκετε ὅτι ἐμὲ πρῶτον ὑμῶν μεμίσηκεν.
1 John 3:14 οἶδαμεν ὅτι μεταβέβηκαμεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν, ὅτι ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς·	John 5:24 ὁ τὸν λόγον μου ἀκούων ... μεταβέβηκεν ἐκ τοῦ θανάτου εἰς τὴν ζωὴν.
1 John 3:16 ἐκεῖνος ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν τὴν ψυχὴν αὐτοῦ ἔθηκεν·	John 10:15 τὴν ψυχὴν μου τίθημι ὑπὲρ τῶν προβάτων.
1 John 3:22 ὁ ἐὰν αἰτῶμεν λαμβάνομεν ... ὅτι ... τὰ ἀρεστὰ ἐνωπίον αὐτοῦ ποιοῦμεν.	John 8:29 οὐκ ἀφήκεν με μόνον, ὅτι ἐγὼ τὰ ἀρεστὰ αὐτῷ ποιῶ πάντοτε.
1 John 3:23 αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ ἐντολὴ αὐτοῦ, ἵνα ... ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, καθὼς ἔδωκεν ἐντολὴν ἡμῖν.	John 13:34 ἐντολὴν καινὴν δίδωμι ὑμῖν, ἵνα ἀγαπᾶτε ἀλλήλους· καθὼς ἠγάπησα ὑμᾶς ἵνα
1 John 4:6 ἡμεῖς ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐσμεν· ὁ γινώσκων τὸν θεὸν ἀκούει ἡμῶν, ὃς οὐκ ἔστιν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἀκούει ἡμῶν.	John 8:47 ὁ ὢν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ τὰ ῥήματα τοῦ θεοῦ ἀκούει· διὰ τοῦτο ὑμεῖς οὐκ ἀκούετε, ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ οὐκ ἐστέ.
1 John 4:15 ὃς ἐὰν ὁμολογήσῃ ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ, ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτῷ μένει καὶ αὐτὸς ἐν τῷ θεῷ.	John 6:56 ὁ τρώγων μου τὴν σάρκα καὶ πίνων μου τὸ αἶμα ἐν ἐμοὶ μένει καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ.

1 John 4:16 ἐγνωκαμεν καὶ πεπιστεύκαμεν	John 6:69 πεπιστεύκαμεν καὶ ἐγνωκαμεν
1 John 4:16 ὁ μένων ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ ἐν τῷ θεῷ μένει	John 15:10 ἐὰν τὰς ἐντολάς μου τηρήσητε, μενεῖτε ἐν τῇ ἀγάπῃ μου,
1 John 5:4 αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ νίκη ἡ νικήσασα τὸν κόσμον, ἡ πίστις ἡμῶν. τίς δὲ ἐστὶν ὁ νικῶν τὸν κόσμον	John 16:33 θαρσεῖτε, ἐγὼ νενίκηκα τὸν κόσμον.
1 John 5:9 ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ μείζων ἐστίν, ὅτι αὕτη ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία τοῦ θεοῦ, ὅτι μεμαρτύρηκεν περὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ.	John 5:32 ἄλλος ἐστὶν ὁ μαρτυρῶν περὶ ἐμοῦ, καὶ οἶδα ὅτι ἀληθὴς ἐστὶν ἡ μαρτυρία ἣν μαρτυρεῖ περὶ ἐμοῦ.
1 John 5:20 δέδωκεν ἡμῖν διάνοιαν ἵνα γνωσκῶμεν τὸν ἀληθινόν· καὶ ἐσμὲν ἐν τῷ ἀληθινῷ, ἐν τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ. οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ ἀληθινὸς θεὸς καὶ ζωὴ αἰώνιος.	John 17:3 αὕτη δὲ ἐστὶν ἡ αἰώνιος ζωὴ, ἵνα γνωσκῶσιν σὲ τὸν μόνον ἀληθινὸν θεὸν καὶ ὃν ἀπέστειλας Ἰησοῦν Χριστόν.

Smalley also draws attention particularly to parallels between 1 John and the *Farewell Discourse* of John 13-17. Westcott suggests that this close relationship with the Fourth Gospel argues for common authorship; he says that both were written by the Apostle John.

Fewer scholars today defend a common authorship of the Gospel and Epistles. Marshall, however, having surveyed the various arguments for disparate authorship concludes, "These considerations show that there is little reason to attribute the outlook found in 1 John to an author of different outlook from that of the main body of the Gospel. It is, therefore, possible that both works come from the same author. In any case, however, the Gospel and Epistles stand so close together in terms of theological outlook that they must at least have been written by authors who stood very close to each other... On the whole it is improbable that the author of the Epistles also composed Revelation"

Smalley, on the other hand, writes, "The relationship between the writing of these letters and the composition of the Fourth Gospel is complex. But it is not unreasonable to suppose that the inspiration behind the tradition and distinctive theology of the Fourth Gospel came from John the apostle, the beloved disciple, himself; that some followers of John published the final version of his Gospel at Ephesus after his death (around A.D. 85); and that these Christians were not directly involved in the production of 1, 2, and 3 John."

The Situation prompting this Letter

Westcott points out that 1 John is not really a letter: it lacks opening salutation and closing subscription. He considers it to be more of a pastoral address.

John writes to a church disturbed by false teachers. By the time John writes they seem to have left the church (2:19) but still have contacts with members causing them to question whether they could truly regard themselves as Christians. John writes to provide "a careful statement of the apostolic understanding of Christianity for the benefit of his friends so that they might see where it was distorted by the seceders and confirm their own understanding of it and their place in the company of God's people." (Marshall).

The false teachers were forerunners of those who developed the Gnostic sects of the second century, though it would be anachronistic to call them Gnostics.

"It seems likely that the claims which John denies at the beginning of the Epistle represent those of the false teachers. They were people who claimed to have fellowship with God and to be sinless (1:6, 8, 10). They said that they knew God (2:4). Very possibly they believed that God was light and said that they lived in the light (2:9). What lies beyond any doubt is that they held unorthodox views about Jesus. They did not believe that Jesus was the Christ or the Son of God (2:22; 5:1, 5); they denied that Jesus had come in the flesh (4:2; cf. 2 Jn. 7)...

They did not accept the validity of any commands given by Jesus (2:4)... [though] there is no evidence that they lived in a conspicuously immoral manner." (Marshall).

Marshall comments that a "view which no longer finds favour is that two or three different heresies were being confronted by John." Nevertheless, this is the view held by Smalley who argues that the church to which the letter was written there were Jews who had, with difficulty, accepted Jesus as Messiah but who denied his deity and gave an exalted place to the Jewish law. Other Hellenistic Christians had adopted proto-gnostic views and found it difficult to accept the full humanity of Jesus. Both groups used elements from the Gospel of John to their own ends. The writer of the epistle treads a fine line between the two extremes in asserting the reality of the Incarnation, Jesus God come in the flesh.

Marshall argues that, "there is considerable difference of opinion regarding the identity of John's opponents. Links can be found with Paul's opponents at Corinth, with Cerinthus, and with Ignatius's opponents. It seems most likely that the opponents were Christians who felt that they had moved beyond the elementary stages of orthodox theology to a new position which called orthodox affirmations into question. They were like men kicking away the ladder on which they had climbed to the heights and leaving themselves without any visible means of support. Relying on their belief that they were inspired by the Spirit and claiming a direct knowledge of God, they thought that they no longer needed Jesus or his teaching. Under the influence of Docetism they argued against a real incarnation of the Son of God in Jesus, and probably adopted a view like that of Cerinthus or Basilides, that the Christ or Son of God inhabited Jesus only for a temporary period."

Emphases of this letter

- Faith is linked with orthodoxy – particularly a right view of Christ.
- Faith cannot be separated from love.
- Faith expresses itself in righteousness, obedience and avoidance of sin.
- Faith is linked with assurance.

Smalley writes, "The purpose of 1 John may therefore be summarized as *primarily* an appeal to the faithful: to strengthen the faith and resolve of true believers in the Johannine community by encouraging them to maintain the apostolic gospel. To this end the writer appeals to his readers to adopt a proper estimate of the person of Jesus, and to act with Christian morality. As believers, that is to say, John exhorts his readers to live in the light as children of God (the paramount and complementary themes in the two main divisions of 1 John, 1:5–2:29 and 3:1–5:13). Belief *and* behaviour, christology *and* ethics, are together a consistent concern of the writer; and his insistence on the practice of Christian love and unity, as derived from the love of God (e.g. 1:3; 4:19), flows directly from the evident stresses and divisions within the Johannine circle..."

"A *secondary* intention behind the composition of 1 John may be regarded as a refutation and correction of the inadequate views (both christological and ethical) which were being espoused by other, heretically disposed members in the Johannine community, of a Jewish or non-Jewish background. For such adherents, John's balanced teaching about Christian belief and behaviour was entirely appropriate, and provided its own appeal. It was no doubt aimed, in particular, at the prevention of further error and secession, and thus at the preservation of unity in the church."

Marshall concludes, "Such teaching is clearly vital for the church and the world today. Despite all the differences between the first century and ours it may be urged that the fundamental similarities make it possible to apply Johannine teaching to our situation without much difficulty. The church today needs to learn the lessons that faith must rest on God's revelation of himself in his Son, Jesus Christ, that faith and love cannot be separated from one

another, that Christians are called to a life of perfect love, and that they can enjoy assurance and certainty in their knowledge of God."

The Greek of 1 John

Westcott considers that the text of 1 John does not present many difficult problems, having been "exposed to far fewer disturbing influences than ... the Gospels."

Of the three Epistles of John Marshall writes, "Their Greek is the easiest to read in the whole of the New Testament. The total vocabulary of the New Testament is 5437 words; the number of different words used in 1-3 John is merely 303, and the majority of these are common words. To read a text with such a small vocabulary is a light undertaking. The general style and syntax of the Epistles is also simple and straightforward, and there are not many tricky passages to retard the beginner. Students who have not yet worked their way fully through an elementary Greek grammar can cut their teeth on these Epistles, and will have the rewarding experience of finding that they can actually read the New Testament itself without too much difficulty."

Works frequently referenced in these notes on John's Epistles

Marshall, I Howard	<i>The Epistles of John</i> , The New International Commentary on the New Testament, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1978
Smalley, Stephen S	<i>1, 2, 3 John</i> , Word Biblical Commentary, Vol 51, Word Books, Dallas, 1984
Stott, John R.W.	<i>Epistles of John</i> , Tyndale Commentary, IVF, London, 1964
Westcott, B.F	<i>The Epistles of St John</i> , MacMillan & Co, Cambridge & London, 1886

1 John 1:1-4

"This writing begins without any of the formal features characteristic of a letter, such as are found in 2 John and 3 John. Since the conclusion also lacks any typical features of a letter, we must conclude that the writing is not so much a letter as a written sermon or address." Marshall.

The first four verses form one long and complex sentence. The delay in coming to the main verb, 'we proclaim' places the emphasis on the nature of the object which is proclaimed rather than the activity of proclaiming it. Smalley writes, "In our view, the key to understanding these vv of the preface, and indeed 1 John in its entirety, lies in the suggestion that the believers in question were in danger of succumbing to heterodox tendencies; they were leaning in the direction of a christology which was either too strong or too weak in character."

Verse 1

Ὁ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς, ὃ ἀκηκόαμεν, ὃ ἐωράκαμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὃ ἐθεασάμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἐψηλάφησαν, περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς –

There are close parallels with the beginning of John's Gospel, cf. John 1:1,9,14. Marshall comments, "If the readers were familiar with the Gospel of John and with the book of Genesis, it is highly likely that they would recognise the echo of John 1:1, which in its turn echoes Genesis 1:1. If so, they would equate 'that which was from the beginning' with the 'Word' which was with God from the beginning."

There is some debate among commentators as to whether John's subject in this verse is the person, Jesus Christ, or whether it is the gospel message. The reference to seeing and touching suggests the former while proclaiming suggests the latter. In fact the echo of John 1:1 points us to the fact that we do not need to choose between the two. John is speaking of Revelation which has been made concrete in, and which now has its focus in, the person of Jesus Christ. "Our writer here wants to emphasise that the Christian message is identical with Jesus; it took personal form in a person who could be heard, seen, and even touched." Marshall.

Smalley writes, "In a typically Johannine manner, the writer speaks of the Christian revelation as a unique conjunction of the timeless and the historical."

ἀρχη, ης f beginning

ἀκηκόαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl ἄκουω

"It embraces the whole divine preparation for the Advent provided by the teaching of the Lawgiver and Prophets (comp. Heb 1:1) fulfilled at last by Christ." Westcott.

ὄραω see, observe

θεαομαι see, look at, observe

"Generally the first two verbs (*heard, seen*) expresses the fact, and the second two (*beheld, handled*) the definitive investigation by the observer." Westcott.

χειρ, χειρος f hand

ψηλαφαω touch, feel

Westcott thinks that this refers particularly to the resurrection appearances (cf. Lk 24:39). Hence there is both "succession of time in the sequence of the clauses" and also "a climax of personal experience."

Smalley writes, "The use of the first person plural ('we') in the verbs which appear in the middle four clauses of this verse may indicate the presence of eyewitnesses (cf. Stott, 61–63; Marshall, 106–107). Equally, here and in the preface generally, 'we' may be interpreted to mean the Church in solidarity with eyewitnesses (so Dodd, 9–16). Without excluding the possibility that eyewitnesses were associated with John's testimony, and were thus able to support it, the writer is more likely to be taking the 'mantle of orthodoxy' (Houlden, 53), and speaking for *all* those, including members of the Johannine community, who were champions of the apostolic gospel. Against the heretics in his community who were espousing false or inadequate views of the person of Jesus (he was not fully God, or he was not really a human being...), John is recalling his readers to the fundamentals of the Christian faith (in terms of christology, Jesus is both divine *and* human), and identifying himself with those who believe as he does ('we have really witnessed the historical origins of the apostolic message of life in Christ'). Cf. John 21:24."

ζωη, ης f life

"Hence *the word of life* is the whole message from God to man, which tells of life, or, perhaps, out of which life springs, which beginning to be spoken by the prophets, was at last fully proclaimed by one who was His Son (Heb 1:1,2)." Westcott. The message is not just *about* Jesus, it *is* Jesus. Marshall writes, "The 'Word of life' can mean the message which conveys this life to men or which tells them about it (Acts 5:20; Phil 2:16). The phrase would then be a description of the Christian message preached by the writer and his colleagues. But if we glance back at John 1:4 we find that 'in him [sc. the Word] was life,' and in John 11:25; 14:6 Jesus says that he is life. Here, therefore, Jesus himself may be meant as the Word who is the source and substance of eternal life. Probably the phrase is again deliberately ambiguous, although the writer is perhaps thinking more of the Christian message."

Verse 2

καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη, καὶ ἐωράκαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἣτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν –

This verse is parenthetical (so UBS punctuation, Westcott, Marshall, Smalley etc.), verse 3 taking up the themes of verse 1.

ἐφανερωθη Verb, aor pass indic, 3 s

φανερωω make known, reveal

Corresponding to 'The Word became flesh' of John 1.

"The word [φανερωω] is used of the revelation of the Lord at His first coming (3:5,8; John 1:31; cf. 4:9; John 7:4; 1 Peter 1:20; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 9:26); of His revelation after the Resurrection (John 21:14,1; Mark 16:12,14); and of the future revelation (2:28; cf. 1 Peter 5:4; Col 3:4). In all these ways the Word Incarnate and glorified is made known as 'the Life'." Westcott.

μαρτυρωω bear witness, testify, affirm

Cf. John 21:24

ἀπαγγελλω announce, proclaim

"The three verbs give in due sequence the ideas of personal experience, responsible affirmation, authoritative announcement, which are combined in the apostolic message." Westcott. Smalley goes further in writing that the verbs, "express in order the three ideas of experience, attestation and evangelism which form part of any genuine and lasting response to the gospel."

αἰώνιος, ον eternal, everlasting

ὅστις, ἣτις, ὅτι who, which

Cf. Jn 1:2.

Verse 3

ὁ ἑώρακαμεν καὶ ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπαγγέλλομεν καὶ ὑμῖν, ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ' ἡμῶν· καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δὲ ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ·

κοινωνία, ας f fellowship, sharing in, participation

Smalley writes, "Fellowship' (κοινωνία) is a richly significant theological term. The Gr. word literally means 'joint ownership,' or 'partnership.' In the NT this 'mutual sharing' may refer to participation in either material goods, as when Christians in Macedonia and Achaia 'raised a common fund' (κοινωνίαν τινα ποιήσασθαι) for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem (Rom 15:26); or in spiritual benefits, as when Paul speaks of 'sharing' (being συγκοινωνός) in the blessings of the gospel (1 Cor 9:23), or enjoying – in the words of 'the Grace' – the 'fellowship of the Spirit' (2 Cor 13:14; cf. also Rom 15:27)." On the meaning of this term, see also, Peter J. Leithart, *Against Christianity*, pp 25-27.

Life is manifested in fellowship: the life of God in the fellowship of the Trinity, the life of the people of God in their fellowship with each other (cf. Acts 2:42) *and with God himself*. This fellowship *is* shared life. Smalley comments, "The particular 'sharing' of Christians, who relate to each other as branches to the true Vine (John 15:1–6), derives from a common faith in Jesus: 'we are in him who is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ' (1 John 5:20). Christian fellowship is not the sentimental and superficial attachment of a random collection of individuals, but the profoundly mutual relationship of those who remain 'in Christ,' and therefore belong to each other (cf. 3:23–24)." Cf. Jn. 17:21.

ἡμετερος, α, ον our

Verse 4

καὶ ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν ᾗ πεπληρωμένη.

ταῦτα probably refers to the letter as a whole.

γραφο write

"The plural (γράφομεν) which belongs to the form of the apostolic message stands in contrast with the personal address (γράφο) which immediately follows in 2:1." Westcott.

Instead of ἡμεῖς (read by κ A* B, et al.), some MSS (including A^c C K) have ὑμῖν. This variation may be discounted, since it probably represents a subsequent desire on the part of a scribe to supply a missing personal object for the verb γράφομεν. As it stands, however, the phrase ταῦτα γράφομεν ἡμεῖς is deliberately emphatic.

χαρά, ας f joy, gladness, cause of joy

"Some witnesses (AC² vid K, et al.) read ὑμῶν ('your [joy]') instead of ἡμῶν ('our [joy]'), which is the version of κ B Ψ, et al. The variant (ὑμῶν) is well-attested, and versions of this variation occur in other texts of 1 John (cf. 2:25). The reading ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν ('your joy') may also have been influenced by the Gr. of John 15:11 and 16:24. The words ἡμῶν and ὑμῶν are written almost identically in the original, and it is easy to see how the confusion may have arisen. Both readings make sense in the context ... but the writer's identification with his readers in terms of 'fellowship' suggests that a mutual 'joy' (ἡ χαρὰ ἡμῶν, 'our joy') is in view at this point also." Smalley.

ἦ Verb, pres subj, 3s εἶμι

πεπληρωμένη Verb, perf pass ptc, f nom s πληρω fill, make full

Cf. John 15:11. Marshall writes, "He has the heart of a pastor which cannot be completely happy so long as some of those for whom he feels responsible are not experiencing the full blessing of the gospel." Smalley adds, "An eschatological dimension may also belong to the desire for 'complete' joy mentioned in this... 'Fullness of joy' is a familiar idea in the Johannine literature (cf. John 3:29; 4:36; 15:11; 16:24; 17:13; see also 2 John 12), where it is regularly associated with the notion of fellowship with God or with other believers. And since 'perfect' fellowship is impossible outside heaven (as perhaps the 'resolved' perfect passive πεπληρωμένη, literally, 'completed,' indicates; cf. John 16:24), the thought in this verse probably looks beyond this life to the 'eternal life' (v 2) of heaven, when 'consummated fellowship will bring completed joy' (Stott, 66). In this case John's preface has, in four verses, brought us from eternity (v 1) to eternity (v 4)."

Postscript

These verses present us with a Biblical model of spirituality which contrasts both with mysticism and rationalism – it is rooted in the historical reality of God's self-disclosure in Jesus Christ.

Marshall comments, "John's prologue highlights two dangers which still confront the church. The one is the assumption that Christian fellowship is possible other than on the basis of common belief in Christ... The other danger is the assumption that it is possible to have a true relationship with God while rejecting Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life."

Verse 5

Καὶ ἔστιν αὕτη ἡ ἀγγελία ἣν ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἀναγγέλλομεν ὑμῖν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἔστιν καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία.

ἀγγελια, ας f message, news

This word occurs elsewhere in the NT only at 3:11. The uncommon noun has led to a few MSS reading ἐπαγγελία, which is clearly secondary.

ἀκηκόαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl ἀκουω

ἀκηκόαμεν ἀπ' αὐτοῦ underlines the reality of the Incarnation. Jesus has revealed the character of God.

ἀναγγελλω tell, report, proclaim, preach

Means to bring a message to someone, cf. 1 Peter 1:12. The verb here echoes the earlier use of ἀπαγγέλλομεν in vv. 2 and 3.

φως, φωτος n light

Compare 'God is spirit' John 4:24, and 'God is love' 4:8,16. God is light in himself and his self-revelation in Christ is light to humankind or to the world, cf. John 1:4f.,9, 8:12; 9:5, see also Matt 5:14.

Smalley writes, "In the OT 'light' is used in an intellectual sense to symbolize truth (where 'darkness' is error), and in a moral sense to represent righteousness (where 'darkness' is evil). So, for example, Ps 119:130; Isa 5:20; Mic 7:8b; see also Ps 27:1. (In the NT cf. Rom 13:11–14; 2 Pet 1:19.) ... See further the association between Jesus and light in the Fourth Gospel (he is the carrier of divine illumination), and the contrast between 'light' (symbolizing life) and 'darkness' which characterizes its teaching (John 1:4; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35–36 and 11:9–10; in the last text a moral element emerges, while in the other passages the stress is on light as the revelation of truth). "The declaration, 'God is light' (ὁ θεὸς φῶς ἔστιν), is a penetrating description of the being and nature of God: it means that he is absolute in his glory (the physical connotation of light), in his truth (the intellectual) and in his holiness (the moral)."

σκοτια, ας f darkness

οὐδεις, οὐδεμια, οὐδεν no one, nothing

καὶ σκοτία ἐν αὐτῷ οὐκ ἔστιν οὐδεμία "Living in darkness is incompatible with fellowship with God." Marshall.

Marshall thinks that this now becomes the foundation for John's response to slogans used by the false teachers:

1. We have fellowship with him, v. 6.
2. We are without sin, v. 8.
3. We have not sinned, v. 10.

"In each case, the writer's reply is to compare the statement with the actual way of life of persons who made it and hence to show that the claims were false. Then he goes on to indicate in each case how people who wished to have fellowship with God could really have it."

Verse 6

ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ σκότει περιπατοῦμεν, ψευδομεθα καὶ οὐ ποιοῦμεν τὴν ἀλήθειαν·

εἴπωμεν Verb, aor act subj, 1 pl λεγω

John unites himself with those he addresses.

κοινωνια, ας f see v.3.

περιπατεω walk, live

"The compatibility of indifference to moral action with the possession of true faith has been maintained by enthusiasts in all times of religious excitement." Westcott.

'Walking', used of the general pattern of life and conduct, is common in Paul and John.

ψευδομαι lie, speak untruth

ἀληθεια, ας f truth, reality

"Truth is not only in thought and word, but also in action." Westcott. Smalley similarly writes, "There is a strong emphasis in 1 John on 'lying,' as the opposite of 'doing the truth' (cf. 2:4; 4:20)."

Verse 7

ἐὰν δὲ ἐν τῷ φωτὶ περιπατοῦμεν ὡς αὐτός ἐστιν ἐν τῷ φωτὶ, κοινωνίαν ἔχομεν μετ' ἀλλήλων καὶ τὸ αἷμα Ἰησοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ καθαρίζει ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἁμαρτίας.

"The present tense of the verb, περιπατοῦμεν (literally, 'we are walking'), denotes a continuous attitude of mind (for the verb and its use here cf. the comment on 'living in darkness,' v 6). 'Living in the light' thus implies a 'conscious and sustained endeavour to live a life in conformity with the revelation of God.' (Brooke, 15)." Smalley.

ἀλλήλων, ος, ους reciprocal pronoun one another

Some MSS, including A*, read μετ' αὐτοῦ rather than μετ' ἀλλήλων.

Smalley comments, "Perhaps the secessionists had claimed to have a relationship with God while at the same time neglecting to love their fellow-Christians."

αἷμα, ατος f blood
καθαρίζω cleanse, make clean, purify
ἁμαρτία, ας f sin

"Walking in the light' brings two main results in regard to our relation to men and to God. We realise fellowship with one another, and in the vision of God's holiness we become conscious of our own sin. That fellowship is the pledge of a divine fellowship: that consciousness calls out the application of the virtue of Christ's life given for us and to us." Westcott.

Smalley comments, "The term αἷμα ('blood') is a symbol for the crucifixion of Christ, and its background is to be located in Jewish sacrifice... above all against the specific background of the cultic observances on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16; but cf. also the Passover story and ritual, Exod 12)."

Verse 8

ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι ἁμαρτίαν οὐκ ἔχομεν, ἑαυτοὺς πλανῶμεν καὶ ἡ ἀλήθεια οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.

John's opponents probably claimed that they did not need cleansing from sin since they were sinless.

ἑαυτος, ἑαυτη, ἑαυτον him/herself, itself
πλαναω lead astray, mislead, deceive

To walk in the light is not the same as being sinless.

Verse 9

ἐὰν ὁμολογῶμεν τὰς ἁμαρτίας ἡμῶν, πιστός ἐστιν καὶ δίκαιος ἵνα ἀφῆ ἡμῖν τὰς ἁμαρτίας καὶ καθάριση ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ πάσης ἀδικίας.

As in verse 7, John now presents the balancing remedy to the condition he has just outlined.

ὁμολογεω confess, declare

Though having the form of a conditional statement, the force is that of a command (so Marshall, Smalley).

πιστος, η, ον faithful, trustworthy

We can be certain of God's response – he is not fickle and unpredictable. He will be faithful to his promises to forgive, e.g. Mic 7:18-20.

δικαιος, α, ον righteous, just

Cf. Rom 3:26.

ἀφῆ Verb, aor act subj, 3 s ἀφημι cancel, forgive

καθαρίση Verb, aor act subj, 3 s καθαρίζω
ἀδικια, ας f wrongdoing, evil, sin

"The blessing connected with the confession of sins is twofold. It includes (i) the remission of sins, the remission of the consequences which they entail, and (ii) the cleansing of the sinner from the moral imperfection which separates him from God: 1 Cor 6:9; Luke 13:27." Westcott.

Verse 10

ἐὰν εἴπωμεν ὅτι οὐχ ἡμαρτήκαμεν, ψεύστην ποιῶμεν αὐτὸν καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν.

ἡμαρτήκαμεν Verb, perf act indic, 1 pl
ἁμαρτανω sin, commit sin
ψευστης, ου m liar

"Revelation is directed in the first instance to making clear the position of man towards God. Such an office St Paul assigns to the Law particularly. And generally all the communications of God to men presuppose that the normal relations between earth and heaven have been interrupted. To deny this is not only to question God's truth in one particular point, but to question it altogether; to say not only 'He lieth' in the specific declaration, but 'He is a liar' in His whole dealing with mankind. Comp 5:10." Westcott. Smalley similarly writes, "The claim to be without sin suggests falsehood on God's part; it 'makes him out to be a liar.' The universality of human sin is a common biblical doctrine (cf. Ps 14:3; Isa 53:6; John 2:24–25; Rom 3:22–24); and so also is the theme of the mercy of God, who forgives the sinner (Jer 31:34; Eph 4:32...). Thus, to deny the fact of sin in one's own life is to deny the holy and forgiving nature of God; it is to impute falsehood to him, and to challenge his own verdict on man's guilt as a sinner (see John 16:8–9; Rom 8:1f...)." Westcott.

The phrase καὶ ὁ λόγος αὐτοῦ οὐκ ἔστιν ἐν ἡμῖν may be deliberately ambiguous, alluding (cf. 1:1) to The λόγος.