

First John

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Author

John is most certainly the author, however, the author's identification is not found anywhere in the letter. History and tradition holds that John was the author. The writing style is uniquely John's. The apostle John's understudy, Polycarp (AD 70-156) who later became bishop of Smyrna gives a quote from 1 John 4:2-3 in his Epistle to the Philippians (ch. vii):

For every one who shall not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is antichrist: and whosoever shall not confess the testimony of the Cross, is of the devil; and whosoever shall pervert the oracles of the Lord to his own lusts and say that there is neither resurrection nor judgment, that man is the firstborn of Satan.

Another understudy of John, Ignatius (AD 35 or 50-117), who became bishop of Antioch gives allusions that John was the author. The volume of evidence that John is the author is enormous, while detractors are few. In fact the only reason the letter had any detractors was the fact that Gnostic writers had used the letter as a proof text for their hieratical teachings which moved the orthodox Church to ignore it, until some authors pointed out that the letter taught against Gnostic beliefs. Clement (AD 150-215) frequently quoted 1 John and attributed it to John.

A look at the history of declaring First John authentic is identified as follows:

1. Citation or allusion by Polycarp (c. 110-150), Herms (c. 115-140), and Tertullian (c. 150-220).
2. Called authentic by Irenaeus (c. 130-202), Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-215), Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-386), Eusebius (c. 325-340), Jerome (c. 340-420), and Augustine (c. 400).
3. Declared authentic at the following Canons: Muratorian (c. 170), Apostolic (c. 300), Cheltenham (c. 360), and Athanasius (c. 367).
4. Declared authentic at the following Councils: Nicea (c. 235-340), Hippo (c. 393), Carthage (c. 397), and Carthage (c. 419).

Internal evidence

The author presents himself as an eye-witness of Christ (1:1-4; 4:14). Like the Gospel of John, there are many similarities in style, both in the sense of personal style as well as Hebrew style. The use of "high and lofty words" are uniquely characteristic of John's Gospel and letters. Words like "Word, light, eternal life, love, abide, take away sins, begotten of God, Savior of the world." These words in and of themselves do not prove John is the author, but due to their unique use tightly relate the Gospel with the letter.

Both the Gospel and the letter have the same Hebraistic style, the same use of parallelism, simplicity of sentence structure, and character. John makes it a habit of repetition. The author keeps returning to chief concepts as light, truth, belief, love and righteousness. The author uses bluntness and severity in his language.¹ He places his prepositions in sharp antithetical fashion, allowing no middle ground with subjects like light and darkness, rightness and sin.

The author had a personal relationship with the Lord. He had seen the Lord in the flesh.

Date of Writing

There is nothing in the text to point to a particular date. While some have argued for an early date, most hold to the late date. John was in Jerusalem until sometime around AD 70 when the fall of Jerusalem brought the Jews to flee the city. According to tradition, John, Philip and Andrew were among those who fled with the church. John moved to Asia Minor and except for his exile in Patmos, remained in Ephesus until his death. Irenaeus claims John to have lived until the time of Trajan (98-117).

It seems reasonable to say that John labored in the Churches writing his Gospel (around AD 90) and general epistles, until about AD 95, when he was exiled to the island of Patmos during the Domitianic persecution where he wrote Revelation. He returning to Ephesus about AD 97, and died around the turn of the century.

Place of Writing

There is no clear evidence in the letter to identify the place of writing or the intended audience other than the subject address involved the problems of Asia Minor. Most historians associate the letter with John in his late years in Ephesus. Ephesus is the traditional place of John's residence. Irenaeus, bishop of Lyons, in his work "Against Heresies" writes, "Then, again, the Church in Ephesus, founded by Paul, and having John remaining among them permanently until the time of Trajan, is a true witness of the tradition of the apostles."² And Dr. Thiessen echoes the majority belief among scholars when he says, "It seems as if John had taken over, not only the church of Ephesus, but also all the Churches of the surrounding country, as the Churches of Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea (Rev. 2 and 3). John would visit the neighboring districts of the Gentiles, appoint overseers, and organize new Churches. What is more natural than to suppose that the First Epistle is directed to these believers?"³

F.F. Bruce notes, "Christianity may have been introduced to the province of Asia by individuals before the middle of the first century AD, but it was effectively established in the province during Paul's Ephesian ministry, to be dated probably from the late summer of AD 52 to the spring of 55. So thoroughly did Paul and his colleagues prosecute the work of evangelization during those years that not only the people of Ephesus but 'all the residents of Asia heard the word of the Lord, both Jews and Greeks' (Acts 19.10)."⁴

¹ Everett Harrison, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), p. 442

² Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III.4

³ Henry Clarence, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishing, 2002), p. 308

⁴ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 2004), p. 13

Ephesus was the capital of the proconsul of Asia and the center of Grecian culture, commerce, and religion. It was famous for the songs of Homer, Anacreon and Mimnermus. Prominate was the philosophy of Thales, Anaximenes and Anaximander; the center of worship in the cities magnificent temple of Diana. Paul had labored there for three years (54-57) establishing several churches in the area and who are characterized as influential and beacon's of light surrounded by dark heathenism. With the downfall of Jerusalem, Ephesus became the chief theater of church history in the second half of the first century. But how far the churches in that region had fallen, for by AD 95 John describes them as fallen, having left their first love (Rev. 2:1-6).

Major theme

The major themes of First John are theology proper, Christology, anthropology, harmotology, esctology, and the Christian life as it applies specifically to Gnosticism of the area. As Dr. Lenski points out it was occasioned by the antichristian teachings of Cerinthus and his following:⁵

“Cerinthus was active in Ephesus during this time. He taught that Jesus was the physical son of Joseph; that the “eon Christ” was united with Jesus at his baptism but left Jesus before his passion and his death. He rejected all the Gospels, all of Paul’s letters, and accepted only parts of Matthew and of Mark. He was a former Jew from Egypt and combined Jewish ideas with what we may call the beginnings of Gnosticism and sought to produce a spiritualized Mosaism, which was to be a universal religion. He retained circumcison and the Sabbath....According to Eusebius, Iranaeus quotes Polycarp, his teacher and pupil of the Apostle John: ‘That John, the disciple of the Lord, having gone to take a bath in Ephesus and having seen Cerinthus inside, left the baths, refusing to bathe, and said: Let us flee lest also the baths fall in since Cerintus is inside, the enemy of the truth.’”

It is clear that there are problems related to some heretics within the Church called “aintchrists” who had withdrawn from the Church (2:18-19), that is, the spiritual battle was actively alive and well. Believers knew the truth but loved the world thus causing problems (2:15, 21, 3:15). Their actions are untrue and uncharacteristic of a correct knowledge of God (2:3). The world hates the things of God and hence, hates them, so understand the true character of the world (3:13; 5:19).

Gnosticism was a continuous problem within the early church. The historian Sheldon, points out the following New Testament allusions addressing Gnosticism: Col. 2:8, 18; 1 Tim. 1; 4; 6:20; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; Jude 17-19; Rev. 2:6, 14; 1 John 1:1-3; 4:1-3; 2 John 7⁶. The Oriental mind has a peculiar bent toward the allegorical, the mystical, the vague, and the immense.⁷ Gnosticism comes from the Greek γνωσις (gnosis) “knowledge” and is characterized by the following:

⁵ R.C.H.Lenski, *The Interpretation of the three Epistles of John* (Minneapolis:Augsburg Publishing House, 1966, p. 363)

⁶ Henry Sheldon, *History of the Christian Church* (Peabody:Hendrickson, 1999), vol. 1, p. 208

⁷ Sheldon, p. 203

1. “Special knowledge” that is, Christ had revealed to a select few what He never declared openly to all. So many problems arise through the idea that some have a superior knowledge, some have a higher “special” knowledge. This brings in the claim of equal apostleship by those who were not disciples.
2. Allegorical interpretation. The plain meaning turns to the allegorical in order to justify their claims (whatever claims they desire).
3. Dualism. The belief that the physical is evil and the spiritual is good is the heart of this letter. Since the divine is inherently good, flesh inherently evil, Christ could not take on human form, thus separating the man Jesus from the spiritual Christ. The Holy Spirit, it was claimed, came upon Jesus at His baptism and departed before His crucifixion. Another variation was that Christ only seemed to have a human body, a kind of spook. This dualism drove the idea that there were three classes of men; (a) the pneumatic who constitute the elite of the Church (and those capable of higher knowledge); (b) the psychic consisting of the ordinary Church members; and (c) the hylic or Gentiles.⁸

Introduction

Tradition holds that John was a leader of the Church in Ephesus after the expulsion of Jerusalem in the year 66-70. This Church is dear to him as he addresses them seven times as “little children” τεκνια (teknia), twice as παιδιον (paidion) “a young child, infant,” and six times as αγαπητος (agapetos) “beloved.”

His desire to protect them from error and the false teachers is reflected throughout the letter. The Church was experiencing severe spiritual warfare as is evident by the problems address and John’s use of the word αντιχριστος (antichristos) “antichrists”. The false teaching was affecting their understanding, their ability to discern good and evil as the strong statement “if you say you have no sin you make God a liar (1:10; 2:4).” Dr. Bruce says, “On a practical level these new teachers claimed to have reached such an advanced stage in spiritual experience that they were ‘beyond good and evil’. They maintained that they had no sin, not in the sense that they had attained moral perfection but in the sense that what might be sin for people at a less mature stage of inner development was no longer sin for the completely ‘spiritual’ man. For him ethical distinction had ceased to be relevant.”⁹

The clearest teaching in this letter involves what is true and αληθεια “truth.” The word truth occurs ten times, while true occurs five times. Truth is under attack and the way one knows truth and what is true is to measure what is said against the standard – the word of God. The themes, God is light, God is love and God is life finds solid ground in arguing the great truths of this letter as he persuades his audience they too can enjoy fellowship with God in quality of life.

At the heart of truth is knowledge and what is known γνωσκω “to know.” This is the heart of the Gnostic heresy. The great historian Philip Schaff notes, “As attempts has already been made, before Christ, by Philo, by the Therapeutea and the Essenes, etc., to blend the Jewish religion with heathen philosophy, especially that of Pythagoras and Plato, so now, under the Christian name, there appeared confused combinations of these

⁸ Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), p. 49

⁹ FF Bruce, *The Gospel & Epistles of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), p. 26

opposite systems, forming either a Paganism Judaism, i.e., Gnostic Ebionism, or a Judaizing Paganism, i.e., Ebionistic Gnosticism, according as the Jewish or the heathen element prevailed. This syncretistic heresy was the caricature of John's theology, which truly reconciled Jewish and Gentile Christianity in the highest conception of the person and work of Christ...They [Judaism and heathenism] were usually shrouded in a shadowy mysticism and surrounded by the halo of a self-made ascetic holiness, but sometimes degenerated into the opposite extreme of antinomian licentiousness."¹⁰

Finally, First John is a book of contrasts, of antithetical parallels: light verses darkness, truth verses falsehood, love verses hatred, love of the world verses love of the Father, contrast between Christ and antichrists, children of God verses children of the Devil, righteousness verses sin, life verses death.

¹⁰ Philip Scaff, *History of the Christian Church* (Peabody:Hendrickson, 1996), vol. 1, p. 567

Introduction (1:1-2:6)

1. Purpose for writing (1:1-4)

1 John 1:1-4

1 That which was from [the] beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen by the eyes of us, which we looked upon, and our hands, they touched and felt concerning the word of life. 2 Indeed the life had been made known and we have seen and we are testifying and we are proclaiming to you the eternal life which was from the father and had been made manifest to us. 3 What we have seen and heard we are making known to you, and in order that you might have fellowship with us; and moreover, our fellowship [is] with the father and with the Son of Him, Jesus Christ 4 And these things we are writing to you in order that our joy might be made complete.

1 Ὃ ἦν ἀπ' ἀρχῆς ὃ ἀκηκοαμεν ὃ ἑώρακαμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν, ὃ ἔθεασαμεθα καὶ αἱ χεῖρες ἡμῶν ἔψηλαφονσαν περὶ τοῦ λόγου τῆς ζωῆς 2 καὶ ἡ ζωὴ ἐφανερώθη καὶ ἑώρακαμεν καὶ μαρτυροῦμεν καὶ ἀπαγγελλομεν ὑμῖν τὴν ζωὴν τὴν αἰώνιον ἣτις ἦν πρὸς τὸν πατέρα καὶ ἐφανερώθη ἡμῖν 3 ὃ ἑώρακαμεν καὶ ἀκνκοαμεν, ἀπαγγελλομεν καὶ ὑμῖν ἵνα καὶ ὑμεῖς κοινωνίαν ἔχητε μεθ' ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ κοινωνία δε ἡ ἡμετέρα μετὰ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ 4 καὶ τούτα γραφομεν ὑμῖν (ἡμεῖς) ἵνα ἡ χαρὰ ὑμῶν (ἡμῶν) ἧ πεπληρωμένη.

1.a. It is a historical message (1:1-2)

Wuest notes the view of Westcott, “that 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. In the words, ‘which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled,’ he is maintaining the real humanity of our Lord against its denial by a certain group in the Church at that time. These were the Gnostics.”¹¹

The historical message the Church passes down from generation to generation until the Lord’s return is grounded on a testimony that is real on three levels – a testimony of three witnesses, one that is heard, another that is seen and yet another which is touched. Our Bible records the testimony of who Christ is, the Son of God who came into the world as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, who revealed the glory of God - God in the flesh; that message that is historical and heard, seen and touched. The message is one that really took place in history, the cross was a real event, its atoning merit applied, His burial and subsequent resurrection a fact that no one can deny since these events were surrounded by witnesses. One can deny the facts, ignore the witnesses, but no one has an excuse – the message is established by multiple witnesses. Notice, what Jesus says in John’s Gospel, “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not have sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin” (John 15:22). This is the heart of the gospel we preach today, the gospel of 1 Corinthians 15:1-8:

Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, 2 by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. 3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that He appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 After that He appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but some have fallen asleep; 7 then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles; 8 and last of all, as to one untimely born, He appeared to me also.

1:1. Ὁ ἦν ἀπ’ ἀρχῆς (That which was from [the] beginning). The relative pronoun ος (hos) is a.n.sg., “who, which, what, that,” introduces the letter. The neuter pronoun is properly translated “that which” and has the idea that everything, both masculine and feminine, everything that existed typologically and prophetically from the beginning has testified concerning Christ. This neuter relative pronoun is repeated four times in verse one alone.

Dr. Vincent in his great work “Vincent’s Word Studies” notes the following:

¹¹ Kenneth Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies From the Greek New Testament*, (Grand Rapids:Eerdmans, 1973), vol. 2. p.88

The construction of the first three verses is somewhat involved. It will be simplified by throwing it into three parts, represented respectively by 1 Jo 1:1, 1 Jo 1:2, 1 Jo 1:3. The first part, *That which was from the beginning - Word of Life*, forms a suspended clause, the verb being omitted for the time, and the course of the sentence being broken by 1 Jo 1:2, which forms a parenthesis: *and the Life - manifested unto us*. 1 Jo 1:3, in order to resume the broken sentence of 1 Jo 1:1, repeats in a condensed form two of the clauses in that verse, *that which we have seen and heard*, and furnishes the governing verb, *we declare*. Thus the simple sentence, divested of parenthesis and resumptive words would be, *We declare unto you that which was from the beginning, that which we have seen with our eyes, that which we beheld, and our hands handled concerning the Word of Life*.¹²

As can be seen, what is usually attributed as an easy book to translate; the first three verses present a challenge in its complexity. The purpose of the relative pronoun is to introduce a subordinate clause and much has been said concerning what the neuter relative pronoun points to. It no doubt, points to everything that the Old Testament has said in the form of words and types concerning Christ from the beginning of time up to the point of this writing. This is made clear by the phrase *ην απ αρχης*. The Impf. Act. Ind. 3sg., of *ειμι* (*eimi*) “to be, exist,” means that the action is on going and is not yet brought to its intended accomplishment. I take this to be an inceptive imperfect, meaning continuous action, but emphasizes the initiation of the process. The emphasis is placed on the beginning of the action rather than its progress. As such, what then does the beginning refer to?

The timing is described as being from [the] beginning. The definite article is inserted as required by the English, the Greek has no need of specifying definiteness for a point of origin since its definiteness is there by definition as *αρχη* (*arche*) g.f.sg., means “the beginning, origin.” The beginning could refer either to the beginning of time and creation as John uses in John 1:1, or it could mean the beginning with reference to Christ’s incarnation (John 1:14). Many great expositors have taken one side or the other and there is no consensus with this point. I, however, take this point of origin to have its origin at creation for two reasons: First, the Word of life, that is, Christ, is pre-existent and John’s writings consistently speak with reference to Christ as being from the beginning to time (cf. John 1:1). He existed before His incarnation and manifested Himself before His incarnation in the garden (Gen. 2:16-18; 3:8-22), as an angel (Gen. 16:7-14; 21:17-18; 22:11-18; 31:11-13; Ex. 3:2; Judg. 2:1-4; 5:23; 6:11-22; 13:3-22; 2 Sam. 24:16; Zech 1:12; 3:1; 12:8), and through various means (e.g., dreams and visions). The second point is that from before the creation of the world His plans of world history are clearly defined, including His people Israel, salvation, His incarnation, death, burial and resurrection and kingdom.

ὃ ἀκηκοαμεν (which we have heard). The next phrase places two neuters in a kind of literary one-two punch. It starts with the neuter relative pronoun *ος* (*hos*) rel. pron., a.n.sg., “who, which, what, that” and highlights the hearing aspect of the testimony. Everything concerning Christ that, “we have heard,” *ακουω* (*akouo*) Perf. Act. Ind. 1pl., “to hear.” The perfect tense implies a process, but views the process as having reached its consummation. In the New Testament the perfect serves as a significant theological instrument since it views action as a finished product. It looks at both ends of the action, implying a process, and views the process as having reached

¹² Vincent, *Vincent’s Word Studies* (Online Bible Version 7.8.5)

its consummation, exiting in a finished state. The perfect is often used for hearing (you have heard), seeing (you have seen), written (having been written), knowing (having known) and presents saving knowledge as a completed state of being (cf. Eph. 2:8-10).¹³

ὃ ἑώρακαμεν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς ἡμῶν , ὃ ἔθεασαμεθα (which we have seen by the eyes of us which we looked upon). The author, as if to make it absolutely clear that what has been seen was physically seen, says, ο εωρακαμεν τοις οφθαλμοις ημων (which we have seen by our eyes). The eyes (properly, “to stare at”), as opposed to the metaphorical sense “the eyes of the mind.” We get the English word optics from this word and relates to vision. In the Greek the word is used as an organ of sense perception¹⁴ but at its heart is primarily perception using the eye. The perfect is again used of the verb οραω (horaō) Perf. Act. Ind. 1pl., “to see,” “we have seen by the eyes.” The instrumental case of the word “eyes” with the definite article, is the case of means or instrument, it is by the eyes that we had seen these things. And finally, what had been seen was seen by our own eyes. The genitive pronoun is possessive and it was not by others eyes, but by our own eyes.

The author and others of his day, some 60 years before, had seen the Lord, but the “our” used here seems to point to everyone in the target audience, progressive revelation is at play. Abraham heard and saw less than Daniel the prophet and Daniel less than John the apostle. The progressive revelation of God’s word in history has been built up over the 1400 years from Moses to John, from Genesis to Revelation. The Bible like any book reveals the story progressively through time, from chapter to chapter until the entire book has been read. There is nothing left to be revealed, the book has been closed.

και αι χειρεζ ημων ενηλαφνσαν περι του λογου της ζωης (and our hands, they touched and felt concerning the word of life). The reality of the testimony becomes evident as the author includes the hands have ψηλαφω (“to handle,” “touch and feel”) touched and felt the things concerning the Word of Life. The object of the phrase is the accusative relative pronoun “that which” whose neuter singular form, points to the abstract “all things” called the collective as it is not a single thing which our eyes have seen and our ears heard and hands touched, but all the evidence providing the testimony concerning the message – the good news about the Lord Jesus Christ, the One who has life in Himself (John 1:4), who sustains life (Col. 1:15-17) and who gives life (John 1:3-4).

The “word of life” is given in the genitive expressing description or possession. It could be said, “the things we saw, heard and touched circling around (the prep. *peri* “around”) the things related to or belonging to the words related to life.” These words are closely related by the apostle John to the Word namely, the God-man Jesus Christ. This continues from his Gospel account of our Lord:

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life. (John 5:24)

¹³ John Pappas, *Bible Greek, Basic Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (www.biblegreekvpod.com, p. 50)

¹⁴ BAG

The apostle now moves the action from the perfect (completed action with the effect continuing to the point of writing) to the timeless aorist. “The aorist normally views the action as a whole, taking no interest in the internal workings of the action.”¹⁵ It describes the action in summary fashion, so Lenski writes, “John has two perfects and two aorists. The perfects convey the thought that what ‘we have heard,’ what ‘we have seen,’ has its continuous effect on us. John’s Gospel uses a number of such significant perfects. Beside them John places decisive aorists of fact: ‘we did actually behold,’ ‘we did actually handle.’ As the perfects stress the continuing effect, so the aorists stress the actuality.”¹⁶ What Lenski points out by saying “aorists of fact” and “we did actually behold” is the indicative mood of the aorist verb. The indicative mood means the action is actually taking place.

Notice the word *θεαομαι* (*theaomai*) Aor. Mid. Dep. Ind. 1pl., “to behold, look upon, view attentively.” The word means to view carefully as a spectator, one who looks at a thing with interest and for a purpose, usually indicating the careful observation of details. The word combines with the next verb *ψηλαφωω* (*pselaphao*) Aor. Act. Ind. 3pl., “to handle, touch and feel,” “they [our hands] touched” from the base of *ψαλλω* (*psallo*) “to pluck off, pull out.” Wuest notes, “In the late Greek it meant ‘to examine closely.’ The word is used in the Greek translation of the Old Testament when blind Isaac felt the hands of Jacob (Gen. 27:22). The old man, puzzled at the voice of Jacob, handled his hands with a view to investigating whether the speaker was really Esau. The same word is used in Luke 24:39, where our Lord said, ‘Handle Me with a view to investigation and see; because a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have. Our Lord’s proof to the disciples that what was raised in the physical body in which He died was based on the scientific evidence of their sense of touch.’”¹⁷

1:2. και η ζωη εφανερωθη (Indeed the life had been made known). Verse two reflects and stresses what was said in verse one, so the translation “indeed” for the conj. *και*. The definite article used for life points not to the Lord but to what He provides - life, and this life is something that “has been made known.” The tense is really an Aorist not a Perfect, but most translations use the Aorist as culminative, but the sense is really expressed with the Aorist in mind, that is, it does not distinguish the action as complete or incomplete; it simply states that the action took place in the past without regard to its duration. As such, this Aorist is seen as a *culminative* Aorist- the action is viewed in its results; life has been made known. What John uses here is *φανερωω* (*phaneroo*) Aor. Pas. Ind. 3sg., “to make manifest, visible or known,” and has as its basic sense “what has been hidden or unknown.” In this sense, the meaning most likely is that which has become known, and thoroughly understood since our Lord has made the subject, namely, life (meaning eternal life) known. The passive “has been made known” means, what was made known occurred external, even, independent of ourselves. For man on his own will not except the things of God unless God Himself makes a change in the individual. This passive makes eternal life personal, relevant and effective to those included in the class of people belonging to the group “us” who John’s letter is written – the believers.

και εωρακαμεν και μαρτυροουμεν και απαγγελλομεν υμιν την ζωην την αιωνιον (and we have seen and we are testifying and we are proclaiming to you the eternal life). This “golden chain” of

¹⁵ Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids:Zondervan, 1996), p. 557

¹⁶ Lenski, p. 374

¹⁷ Kenneth Wuest, *Wuest’s Word Studies: From the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), p. 92

“ands” brings the relative pronoun construction “that which” into full light, as that which is seen is seen, that which is heard is testified and that which is touched is proclaimed, and further, all this involves the gift given to mankind – eternal life. All these things, of course, concern that which God has done in sending His Son in the flesh to be as John the Baptist boldly proclaimed, “behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (1:29).

That which was given refers to the message concerning eternal life that John gives in verse five - that message concerns the life we have in Jesus Christ. We have seen the life. The perfect active indicative means that the one seeing – has seen what was made known in the past and the effect continues up to the time of writing. In seeing οραω (horao) we have properly “stared at” this life, either with the eyes, or more likely, “to see with the mind.” Can you imagine – we have stared at eternal life with the mind! God has opened the mind, opened the heart by cutting away the excess skin blocking ones vision concerning the things of God that was corrupted by the fall. God Himself will circumcise the heart of man and make him or her alive (Deu. 30:6, cf. Col. 2:11).

That life in Christ that was testified to us by different means, namely, by the Scriptures (cf. John 1:23, 5:39), by the prophets (cf. John 6:45), by John the Baptist (cf. John 1:23), by miracles (cf. John 20:30-31) and by Jesus Himself (cf. John 5:24). It is, however, now our witness, namely, one to another through the generations that is given. The Greek μαρτυρεω (martureo) Pres. Act. Ind. 1pl., to be a witness, to bear witness, testify, is from μαρτυς (martus) a witness, martyr; we are witnesses, or better, “we continue to witness,” “to testify,” as the present tense relates the continuous nature of the witness.

A heritage of individual testimony of the good news concerning eternal life that is spread by human proclamation that will continue as the great commission was commanded by the Lord Himself (cf. Matt. 28:19). The Greek απαγγελω (apaggello) Pres. Act. Ind. 1pl., “to bring word, report, to proclaim, to make known,” from the compound of απο (apo) “from, out of” and αγγελος (aggelos) “a messenger, envoy, angel,” speaks of the timeless command of proclaiming Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world.

John does not use the word gospel in his writings except in Revelation 14:6 where he says,

And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people (Rev. 14:6)

John prefers to use the term “life,” or “eternal life,” the definite article makes the eternal life specific, describing “that message that is believed and which brings eternal life.” This represents a Jewish view that is equivalent to Paul’s western presentation of “the gospel.” Paul proclaims the gospel, John proclaims eternal life. The message is the same and involves believing in the death, burial and resurrection of the Anointed One, the Messiah, the Savior - Jesus Christ (cf., 1Cor. 15:1-5).

ἥτις ἦν προς τον πα τερα και εφανερωθη ἡμῖν (which was from the father and had been made manifest to us). This eternal life, or rather the program, plan and hence message that brings about eternal life is specific as brought out by the use of the Greek relative pronoun (actually a compound) οστις (hostis) rel. pron. n.f.sg., “whoever, whatever,” from the compound of ος

(hos) “who, which, that, what,” and τις (tis) “a certain one, some”. This specific message was from the Father.

The imperfect means the message was given in the past but says nothing about its completeness and as used here most likely can be viewed in one of two ways: (1) as a “progressive imperfect of description” – the process, the plan or the message is represented as actually being presented and on going in past time; or (2) a repeated or iterative imperfect which describes action as recurring at successive intervals or repeated action in past time, i.e., the message has been repeated again and again from the Father.

Either way one take this, the message has been made manifest to us. The Greek φανερωω (phaneroo) Aor. Pas. Ind. 3sg., “to make manifest,” either “visibly,” or “make known by teaching.” The word comes from the basic word φαινω (phaino) “to bring forth into the light,” and theologically has the connection to the opening of the eyes of the heart by God Himself (cf. Jer. 24:7; 31:33; Ezek. 11:19; 36:26). That wonderful ministry of God who uses mankind to spread the good news to mankind, but it is Him who opens the eyes of man to the message, otherwise the message is foolishness to the lost (cf. 1 Cor 1:18).

Notice this message has been revealed to us. The passive indicates an external agent has made it known and the group who the Father has made it known is an exclusive group of which John writes – us – those who have eternal life.

Detailed Analysis

1:1 - ο ην απ αρχης ο ακηκοαμεν ο εωρακαμεν τοις οφθαλμοις ημων (That which was from [the] beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen by the eye of us) : ος (hos) rel. pron., a.n.sg., who, which, what, that; ειμι (eimi) Impf. Act. Ind. 3sg., to be, exist: he/she/it was; απο (apo) prep., from, out of; αρχη (arche) g.f.sg., beginning, origin; ος (hos) rel. pron., a.n.sg., who, which, what, that; ακουω (akouo) 2 Perf. Act. Ind. 1pl., to hear: we have heard; ος (hos) rel. pron., a.n.sg., who, which, what, that; οραω (horao) Perf. Act. Ind. 1pl., to see: we have seen; οφθαλμος (ophthalmos) d.m.pl., with def. art., the eye, from the verb οπτανομαι (optanomai) to look at, behold; εγω (ego) pers. pron. 1g.pl., I.

ο εθεασαμεθα και αι χειρες ημων εψηλαφησαν περι του λογου της ζωης (which we looked upon and our hands, they touched and felt concerning the word of life) : ος (hos) rel. pron., a.n.sg., who, which, what, that; θεαομαι (theaomai) Aor. Mid. Dep. Ind. 1pl., to behold, look upon, view attentively: we looked upon; και (kai) conj., and, even, also, indeed; χειρ (cheir) n.f.pl., with def. art., hand, by the help or agency of any one; εγω (ego) pers. pron. 1g.pl., I; ψηλαφωω (pselaphao) Aor. Act. Ind. 3pl., to handle, touch and feel, from the base of ψαλλω (psallo) to pluck off, pull out: they touched and felt; περι (peri) prep., about, concerning, on account of, because; λογος (logos) g.m.sg., with def. art., word, saying; ζωη (zoe) g.f.sg., with def. art., life.

1:2 - και η ζωη εφανερωθη (Indeed the life had been made known) : και (kai) conj., and, even, also, indeed; ζωη (zoe) n.f.sg., with def. art., life; φανερωω (phaneroo) Aor. Pas. Ind. 3sg., to make manifest or visible or known what has been hidden or unknown: he/she/it had been made known.

και εωρακαμεν και μαρτυρουμεν και απαγγελομεν υμιν την ζωην την αιωνιον (and we have seen and we are testifying and we are proclaiming to you the eternal life) : και (kai) conj., and, even, also, indeed; οραω (horao) Perf. Act. Ind. 1pl., to see: we have seen; και (kai) conj., and, even, also, indeed; μαρτυρεω (martureo) Pres. Act. Ind. 1pl., to be a witness, to bear witness, testify, from μαρτυς (martus) a witness, martyr: we are witnesses; και (kai) conj., and, even, also, indeed; απαγγελω (apaggello) Pres. Act. Ind. 1pl., to bring word, report, to proclaim, make known, from the compound of απο (apo) from, out of and αγγελος (aggelos) a messenger, envoy, angel: we are proclaiming; συ (su) pers. pron. 2d.pl., you; ζωη (zoe) a.f.sg., with def. art., life; αιωνιος (aionios) adj.a.f.sg., with def. art., without beginning and end, without beginning, without end, eternal, everlasting.

ητις ην προς τον πατερα και εφανερωθη ημιν (which was from the father and had been made manifest to us) : οστις (hostis) rel. pron. n.f.sg., whoever, whatever, from the compound of ος (hos) who, which, that, what, and τις (tis) a certain one, some; ειμι (eimi) Impf. Act. Ind. 3sg., to be, exist: he/she/it was; προς (pros) prep., unto, at, near; πατηρ (pater) a.m.sg., with def. art., father; και (kai) conj., and, even, also, indeed; φανερωω (phaneroo) Aor. Pas. Ind. 3sg., to

make manifest or visible, make known, from φαίνω (phaino) to bring forth into the light:
he/she/it had been made manifest; ἐγώ (ego) pres. pron. 1d.pl., I, me.