

1 JOHN

INTRODUCTION

- I. Howard Marshall, *The opening of the letter is remarkable in that it lacks any salutation or personal reference. In this it differs from all the other New Testament letters except Hebrews.*
- Thomas Constable, *John began this epistle by explaining to his audience why he wrote. He said that he wrote so that his readers would enjoy the fellowship with God that before this was possible only to those who had seen Him. This fellowship, he explained, rests on the reality of Jesus Christ's incarnation, and it results in full joy for those who experience it.*
- William Barclay, *Everyone who sits down to write a letter or gets up to preach a sermon has some object in view. The intention, and the hope, is to produce some effect in the minds and hearts and lives of those to whom that message is addressed. And here, at the very beginning of his letter, John sets down his aim in writing to his people.*
- Zane Hodges, *The first four verses of the epistle constitute its prologue. Here the writer affirmed the tangible reality of the Incarnation of Christ and announced that the goals of his letter were fellowship and joy.*
- F. F. Bruce, *The structure of the sentence covering the first two and a half verses of chapter 1 (with the parenthesis in verse 2) is unusually complicated for the Johannine writings, and an English version will be more readily intelligible if it takes four sentences to say what the Greek text says in one: "Our theme is that which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we beheld and our hands handled. Our theme, in short, concerns the word of Life—that Life which was made manifest. Yes, we have seen and we bear witness; we make known to you the Eternal Life which was with the Father and was made manifest to us. What we have seen and heard we make known to you also, in order that you in your turn may have fellowship with us."*

PROLOGUE, 1 JOHN 1:1-4

- A. The Apostle John was an eyewitness to the incarnation (1-2)
1. John declares the nature of Jesus (1)
 - a. From the beginning (1a), *That which was from the beginning*,
 - 1) Related verse, John 1:1, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) Thomas Constable, *The beginning (Gr. arche) may refer to the beginning of all things (2:13–14; John 1:1), or the beginning of the creation (3:8; Gen. 1:1), or to Jesus' incarnation (v. 2; cf. John 1:14). It could also refer to the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry (Acts 1:22–24), the beginning of the Christian gospel (Mark 1:1–4), or the beginning of the readers' experience as Christians (2:7, 24; 3:11). The beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry, specifically the beginning of His teaching ministry, seems most consistent with what John proceeded to say about that beginning (cf. vv. 1b, 3a) ... John was probably referring to all that the apostles had experienced with Jesus from the time that they first became His disciples. John's verbs (have heard, have seen, have looked at, and touched) indicate a progressively closer approach to the object of investigation. The essence of fellowship is increasing intimacy. Our fellowship with God must involve drawing closer to Him and viewing Him more intently all the time in order for it to be genuine fellowship. The same is true of fellowship on the human level.*
 - b) Zane Hodges, *The apostle declared his subject to be that which was from the beginning. Many have thought that he referred here to an absolute beginning, such as described in Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1. This is possible, but in view of the epistle's concern with the original message about Jesus Christ, it seems more likely that John referred to the beginning of the gospel proclamation. If so, the usage is similar to that found in 1 John 2:7, 24; and 3:11. The writer was then asserting that what he proclaimed was the truth about God's Son that was originally witnessed by the apostles who had direct contact with Him.*
 - c) Charles Spurgeon, *You remember how John begins his Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word" (John 1:1), and how a little later he says, "In him was life" (John 1:4). The Holy Spirit seems to have recalled those expressions to his mind, for He moves him to use them again.*

- d) I. Howard Marshall, *If the readers were familiar with the Gospel of John and with the book of Genesis, it is highly likely that they would recognize 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 in the beginning. The writer, however, does not use the term “Word” at this precise moment (although he will do so by the end of the verse), and he thus leaves open the question of what it was that “was from the beginning.” He goes on quickly to describe it as something that he and others had “heard.” This confirms that it is the “Word” which he has in mind, and it indicates that what had been with God from the beginning had now come into the area of human experience. God’s message has come to men so that they can hear it.*
 - e) John Stott, ... *what the apostle stresses in his proclamation of the gospel is the historical manifestation of the eternal ... The eternal Son was before his historical manifestation; the preaching of the gospel came after.*
 - f) David Jackman, ... *his concern in the letter is to declare that the Word which was made flesh in the womb of the virgin Mary was the same eternal Son of the Father who was before all time and who was the agent of all creation. The Word of life did not merely come into existence at Bethlehem; he already existed from the very beginning with the Father (verse 2).*
 - g) F. F. Bruce, *The “beginning” in this sense is the beginning of the gospel—in 1 John 2:7, 24, the beginning of the gospel so far as their acquaintance with it was concerned, while in 1 John 1:1 it is the beginning of the gospel absolutely, the beginning as it was known to one who was present at the time and directly witnessed the saving events. The neuter gender of “that which was from the beginning” points to the gospel rather than to the personal Christ, although indeed the gospel is so completely bound up with the personal Christ that what is primarily true of the one may be said of the other.*
- b. Through hearing, eyesight and feeling (1b), ***which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands,***
- 1) Related verses
 - a) Acts 4:20, *for we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard.”*
 - b) John 19:35, *He who saw it has borne witness—his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe.*
 - c) 1 John 4:14, *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world.*
 - d) John 1:14, *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*
 - e) 2 Peter 1:16, *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.*
 - f) Luke 24:39, *See my hands and my feet, that it is I myself. Touch me, and see. For a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.”*
 - g) John 20:27, *Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe.”*
 - 2) Comments
 - a) Thomas Constable, *John used three of his basic senses (hearing, eyesight, and feeling) to highlight the reality of the object so that his readers would know that he was not speaking metaphorically. He cited personal experience and appealed to verifiable evidence to support the humanity of Jesus Christ (cf. Luke 24:39). Some false teachers denied His humanity ... John may have used “we” editorially to represent himself personally, or “we” may include all Christians. It is more likely, however, that “we” represents John and the other eyewitnesses of Jesus Christ: Jesus’ apostles. In this epistle John was speaking for others besides himself, and he was seeking to persuade still other believers of something not all of them had experienced or acknowledged (cf. Luke 1:2).*
 - b) Charles Ryrie, *Extreme Docetism [i.e., Docetic Gnostics] held that Jesus was not human at all but was merely a prolonged theophany, while moderate Docetism [i.e., Cerinthian Gnostics] considered Jesus the natural son of Joseph and Mary, upon whom Christ came at the time of baptism.*

- c) Zane Hodges, *The writer was then asserting that what he proclaimed was the truth about God's Son that was originally witnessed by the apostles who had direct contact with Him. Numbering himself among these apostolic eyewitnesses, the author described this proclamation as one which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched.*
 - d) I. Howard Marshall, *Our writer here wants to emphasize that the Christian message is identical with Jesus; it took personal form in a person who could be heard, seen, and even touched ... the writer goes on to add "we have seen with our eyes." It is a strange message which is visible, and the qualification "with our eyes" leaves no doubt that literal seeing is meant. The point is hammered home by the further statement that the writer had gazed upon it and had touched it with his hands. These descriptions of something perceived by the senses mean that the writer cannot be thinking merely of a message that is heard. He must be thinking of the appearance of the "Word" described in John 1:1–18 who was made flesh as Jesus Christ ... Our writer here wants to emphasize that the Christian message is identical with Jesus; it took personal form in a person who could be heard, seen, and even touched.*
 - e) William Barclay, *Here at the very beginning of his letter, John sets down his right to speak. It consists in one thing—in personal experience of Christ ... (1) He says that he has heard Christ ... True teachers are those who have a message from Jesus Christ because they have heard his voice. (2) He says that he has seen Christ ... We cannot see Christ in the flesh as John did; but we can still see him with the eye of faith ... (3) He says that he has gazed on Christ ... a steadfast searching gaze which seeks to discover something of the mystery of Christ ... (4) He says that his hands actually touched Christ ... John is thinking of those people called the Docetists who were so spiritually minded that they insisted that Jesus never had a flesh-and-blood body but was only a ghost in human form.*
 - f) Charles Spurgeon, *They were veracious witnesses, and they died in testimony of their faith in what they asserted. And when anything has been heard, seen, inspected, and even touched and handled, by a company of reliable witnesses, the testimony of such witnesses concerning it must be accepted as true.*
 - g) David Walls, *More than likely, false teachers were suggesting that Jesus' physical body was not a normal body; or that he was an angel, not a man; or that his physical body was an illusion; or some other erroneous speculation. John met this false teaching head-on by saying that he had firsthand experience with Jesus, and based on that experience, he is telling us what he knows about Jesus.*
- c. Concerning the Word of Life (1c), **concerning the word of life—**
- 1) Thomas Constable, *The word of life probably refers to the message about Jesus Christ, namely, the gospel. John referred to Jesus as the Word in his Gospel, and he described Jesus claiming to be the life (John 14:6). The phrase word of life seems more likely to describe the message about the Person who is and who personifies life (cf. v. 2; Phil. 2:16; Acts 5:20). John probably spoke of Christ as "what," rather than "He" because here he wanted to emphasize the content of the message about Christ rather than the person of Christ.*
 - 2) Zane Hodges, *Numbering himself among these apostolic eyewitnesses, the author described this proclamation as one which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched ... With these introductory words, the apostle directed his first shafts at the heresy with which he was concerned. The antichrists brought new ideas, not those which were "from the beginning" of the gospel era. Moreover, their denial of the reality of the incarnate life of Christ could be countered by the experiences of the eyewitnesses whose testimony was founded on actual hearing, seeing, and touching (cf. "look" and "touch" in Luke 24:39). John's message is solidly based on a historical reality.*
 - 3) Charles Spurgeon, *The facts of Christ's history on earth are recorded by eyewitnesses who could not be deceived concerning them. They exercised their various senses with regard to Christ—hearing, seeing, and touching him again and again. They were veracious witnesses, and they died in testimony of their faith in what they asserted. And when anything has been heard, seen, inspected, and even touched and handled, by a company of reliable witnesses, the testimony of such witnesses concerning it must be accepted as true.*

- 4) William Barclay, *Here at the very beginning of his letter, John sets down his right to speak. It consists in one thing—in personal experience of Christ (verses 2–3) ... (1) He says that he has heard Christ. ... (2) He says that he has seen Christ ... (3) He says that he has gazed on Christ. What is the difference between seeing Christ and gazing upon him? In the Greek, the verb for to see is horan, and it means simply to see with physical sight. The verb for to gaze is theasthai, and it means to gaze at someone or something until something has been grasped of the significance of that person or thing ... (4) He says that his hands actually touched Christ ... Here, John is thinking of those people called the Docetists who were so spiritually minded that they insisted that Jesus never had a flesh-and-blood body but was only a ghost in human form. They refused to believe that God could ever degrade himself by taking human flesh and blood upon himself. John here insists that the Jesus he had known was, in truth, a man who came among them; he felt there was nothing in all the world more dangerous—as we shall see—than to doubt that Jesus was fully human.*
 - 5) H. D. M. Pence, *Between the first clause and what follows lies the tremendous fact of the Incarnation; and St. John piles verb on verb, and clause on clause, to show that he speaks with the authority of full knowledge, and that there is no possible room for Ebionite or Cerinthian error. The first clause assures us that Jesus was no mere man; the others assure us that he was really man. Precisely that Being who was in existence from the beginning is that of whom St. John and others have had, and still possess, knowledge by all the means through which knowledge can have access to the mind of man.*
 - 6) David Walls, *He said he had heard, seen, and touched the Word of life. Why would John talk about hearing, seeing, and touching Jesus? The answer seems to be related to false teaching that his readers were hearing. More than likely, false teachers were suggesting that Jesus' physical body was not a normal body; or that he was an angel, not a man; or that his physical body was an illusion; or some other erroneous speculation. John met this false teaching head-on by saying that he had firsthand experience with Jesus, and based on that experience, he is telling us what he knows about Jesus.*
 - 7) David Jackman, *It is this divine life which has been manifested in human history, in a real man, who really lived, really died and really rose again from the grave; in Jesus of Nazareth. John and his fellow apostles heard him speak. They saw him with their own eyes; not as a mystical vision, but in living reality. It was more than a momentary glimpse, rather, it was a consistent daily revelation. They touched him physically both before his death and after his resurrection. This was no spirit being, disguised in a temporary human suit of clothes. Neither was he a mere man on whom 'the Christ' descended for a period of time. He who was from the beginning and whom John heard and saw and physically touched was the Word who is the life.*
 - 8) F. F. Bruce, *The language John uses is the language of apostolic witness: "we cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard" was the reply of the apostles Peter and John to the Sanhedrin when they were ordered to give up speaking or teaching in Jesus' name (Acts 4:20). If we ask who it was that they heard and saw, the answer is that they heard and saw Jesus; if we ask what it was, the answer is that they heard His words and saw His works.*
2. John experienced the life of Jesus (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—***
- a. Related verses
 - 1) John 1:4, *In him was life, and the life was the light of men.*
 - 2) John 11:25, *Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live,*
 - 3) John 14:6, *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*
 - 4) 1 John 3:5, *You know that he appeared in order to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.*
 - 5) 1 Timothy 3:16, *Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.*
 - 6) John 15:27, *And you also will bear witness, because you have been with me from the beginning.*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *Life is a title of Jesus Christ here, like Word is in John's Gospel (John 1:1). "Life" reflects the Christian experiences about which John wrote here, whereas the "Word" (Gr. logos) reflects the facts that Jesus declared and that John recorded in the fourth Gospel. Grace and truth explain the Word in John's Gospel (John 1:14), but light and love clarify the Life in his epistles ... In verse 1 the progression in the series of verbs (heard, seen, looked at, and touched) reflects increasingly intent attention to Jesus as the essence of fellowship. The progression in the verbs in verse 2 (revealed, seen, testify, and proclaim) shows the result of contemplating Jesus Christ and enjoying His fellowship, namely, bearing witness. One first sees the manifested Christ. Then, having seen, he or she is able to bear witness. Finally, one feels impelled by what he or she has seen to announce to others the message of life ... There is a strong stress on the eternality of the Life (Jesus Christ) in this verse. The emphases on the quality of the life (eternal) and its equality with the Father make this point (cf. John 1:2). The Incarnation is in view.*
- 2) I. Howard Marshall, *Although the Christian message is the means of bringing eternal life, it was of supreme importance to the writer to make it clear beyond all possibility of mistake that the life to which it bears witness was revealed by God in the historical person of Jesus ... It is the eternal life, he says, which was with the Father and then appeared to us ... It was the personal manifestation of eternal life in the historical person of Jesus which was of crucial importance for the writer—and his readers.*
- 3) Zane Hodges, *The Life which the apostles proclaimed is intensely personal. Not only has that Life appeared, but it is nothing less than the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to people. The Incarnation is unquestionably in view.*
- 4) Charles Spurgeon, *True witnesses speak not of what they have gathered second-hand from others, but of what they have themselves personally seen and heard. It is for this reason that the verbs to 'see' and to 'testify' are so commonly associated with each other in the New Testament, as they are in verse 2 ... He not only showed himself to the disciples to qualify them as eyewitnesses, but gave them an authoritative commission as apostles to preach the gospel. Our author insists that he possesses these necessary credentials. Possessing them, he is very bold. Having heard, seen and touched the Lord Jesus, he now testifies to him. Having received a commission, he proclaims the gospel with authority. For the Christian message is neither a philosophical speculation, nor a tentative suggestion, nor a modest contribution to religious thought, but a confident affirmation by those whose experience and commission have qualified them to make it.*
- 5) David Walls, *This life is eternal, was originally with the Father, and now has appeared on earth. This supports the historic Christian teaching that Jesus is coequal and coeternal with God the Father (as well as the Holy Spirit, who is not mentioned in this passage).*

B. He states the purpose for the letter (3-4)

1. It is a declaration that fellowship is available with the Father and the Son (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.***

a. Related verses

- 1) John 17:21, *that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.*
- 2) 1 Corinthians 1:9, *God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *"You," the recipients of this epistle, must have been genuine believers in view of how John referred to them (cf. 2:12–14, 21, 27; 5:13). They had not known Jesus Christ in the flesh as the apostles had. John wrote to them so they could enter into and continue to enjoy the intimate fellowship with Christ that the apostolic eyewitnesses enjoyed (cf. Acts 10:40–41) ... Fellowship requires and rests on information, a common body of knowledge, and mutual acceptance of that data. John wrote to share this information with his readers.*

- 2) Glen W. Barker, *This verse introduces the purpose of the Epistle: 'that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ.'*
- 3) Zane Hodges, *The objective John had in mind in writing about these significant realities was that you, the readers, may have fellowship with us, the apostles. Since he later, in 2:12–14, made it perfectly clear that he regarded the readers as genuine Christians, his goal was obviously not their conversions. It is an interpretive mistake of considerable moment to treat the term 'fellowship' as though it meant little more than 'to be a Christian.'*
- 4) George Findlay, *Only when we think aright of Jesus Christ, are we in unison with God. Only when we think aright of Him and are rightly disposed toward Him, can we have fellowship with each other; only on this condition can we work together with God for the world's redemption ...*
- 5) Warren Wiersbe, *This word fellowship is an important one in the vocabulary of a Christian. It simply means "to have in common." As sinners, men have nothing in common with the holy God. But God in His grace sent Christ to have something in common with men. Christ took on Himself a human body and became a man. Then He went to the cross and took on that body the sins of the world (1 Peter 2:24). Because He paid the price for our sins, the way is open for God to forgive us and take us into His family ... In his letter, John explains the secret of fellowship with God and with other Christians. This is the first purpose John mentions for the writing of his letter—the sharing of his experience of eternal life.*
- 6) I. Howard Marshall, *Now at last he comes to the principal verb of the sentence and tells his readers that he is sharing his message with them too, so that they too may have fellowship with him. But, he goes on, he and his colleagues enjoy fellowship with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ. The implication is surely that his readers also will share in this fellowship with the Father and the Son as a result of their fellowship with him.*
- 7) Charles Spurgeon, *What the apostles learned, they learned in order that they might tell it to others. All that John saw he was prepared to speak of according to his ability, that others might have fellowship with him. Remember that, if you ever learn anything of Christ—if you have any enjoyment of His presence at any time—it is not for yourself alone, but for others also to share with you ... When fellowship is the sweetest, your desire is the strongest that others may have fellowship with you; and when, truly, your fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, you earnestly wish that the whole Christian brotherhood may share the blessing with you ... Those who have by His grace believed, and have been washed by the precious blood, have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord; they are "no longer strangers and foreigners, but ... fellow citizens of the saints and members of the household of God" (Eph 2:19), and they have access with boldness into this grace wherein we stand.*
- 8) H. D. M. Spence, *St. John's aim in writing his Gospel is that the great High Priest's prayer may be fulfilled—that believers may be one in that communion of which the unity between the Father and the Son is the pattern and the basis; may "be joined together in the same body, the same belief, the same knowledge, the same aims, the same hopes, the same destinies" ... Communion with Christians is shown to mean a great deal—no less than communion with the Father and with the Son.*
- 9) John Stott, *'Fellowship' is a specifically Christian word and denotes that common participation in the grace of God, the salvation of Christ and the indwelling Spirit which is the spiritual birthright of all believers. It is our common possession of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, which makes us one. So John could not have written that you also may have fellowship with us without adding and our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ, since our fellowship with each other arises from, and depends on, our fellowship with God.*
- 10) David Walls, *If Christians are not in fellowship with God, they cannot be in full fellowship with other devout Christians. Christian-with-Christian fellowship is rooted in fellowship with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ. Apparently, the false teachers had called into question the salvation of the readers, so John was reaffirming their faith.*
- 11) David Jackman, *You cannot know God without knowing Christ. You cannot know fellowship without receiving the truth ... All true spiritual unity is therefore grounded in the gospel.*
- 12) F. F. Bruce, *There is nothing vague or merely sentimental about this fellowship; it involves obedience to the commandments of Christ and faithfulness to His teaching communicated through His apostles. Those who abandoned the apostolic teaching and fellowship severed themselves from fellowship with the Father and the Son.*

2. It is to make joy complete within the fellowship of believers (4), *And we are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.*

a. Related verses

- 1) John 15:11, *These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*
- 2) John 16:24, *Until now you have asked nothing in my name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.*

b. Comments

- 1) Thomas Constable, *Here “we” is probably editorial. “These things” refers to what John wrote in this epistle. Not only would his readers experience full (complete) joy, but so would John, as the readers entered into and continued in intimate fellowship with God (cf. 3 John 4). Joy is the product of fellowship with God. When there is no joy, there is no fellowship (cf. John 15:11; 16:24).*
- 2) George Findlay, *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 blessings of the gospel.*
- 3) John G. Mitchell, *It is usually true that in the introduction to a book we find the key to that book. In the first four verses of this Epistle we find the key.*
- 4) Zane Hodges, *The apostles so shared the heart of Christ for His people that their own joy was bound up in the spiritual well-being of those to whom they ministered. If the readers retained their true fellowship with God and with His apostles, no one would be any happier than John himself.*
- 5) Warren Wiersbe, *Fellowship is Christ’s answer to the loneliness of life. Joy is His answer to the emptiness, the hollowness of life ... John, in his epistle, uses the word “joy” only once, but the idea of joy runs through the entire letter. Joy is not something that we manufacture for ourselves; joy is a wonderful by-product of our fellowship with God.*
- 6) Charles Spurgeon, *Very closely does the apostle John resemble his Lord in the motive that prompted him to write this epistle! Remember how Christ said, in His last discourse to His disciples on the eve of His passion, “I have spoken these things to in order that ... your joy may be made complete” (John 15:11); and how He counseled them, “Ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete” (John 16:24); and how He prayed the Father for them, “that they may have my joy completed in themselves” (John 17:13). Here, then, the beloved disciple, moved by the Spirit of God, reflects and follows out the same gracious purpose: “These things we write, in order that our joy may be complete.”*
- 7) David Jackman, *The conscious possession of eternal life, the daily enrichment of personal fellowship with the living God, the deepening awareness of oneness with all God’s people everywhere—could there be any comparable recipe for fullness of joy? Such joy is quite different from human happiness.*

C. Conclusion

1. Thomas Constable, *In summary, John wrote as an apostolic eyewitness of Jesus Christ and His earthly ministry. He identified two dangers to readers that are still prevalent in the church today: One is the assumption that Christian fellowship is possible without common belief in Christ. The other is the assumption that someone can have a relationship with God without a relationship with Jesus Christ. John wrote this epistle so his readers might join and continue in the fellowship with God that is possible only for those who have seen God, as the apostolic eyewitnesses of the incarnate Christ had done.*
2. I. Howard Marshall, *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.*
3. Charles Spurgeon, *What an evidence of our Savior’s deep attachment to His people that He is not content with having made their ultimate salvation sure, but He is anxious concerning their present state of mind! He delights that His people should not only be safe, but happy; not merely saved, but rejoicing in His salvation. Hear this, people of God! The object of the revelation of Jesus Christ is that you may have joy—indeed, that you may have a heart full of joy, and that you may know what full joy means. Here below, we get but drops and dashes of joy unless we are brought into fellowship with God through Jesus Christ; then, we have the very joy of God in our souls. Oh, the delight of it! Oh, that you could all know it to the full!*

4. David Walls, *The prologue concludes by linking John's own joy with the spiritual welfare of his readers. He reaffirmed these truths so that their joy could be made complete. John was so concerned about their welfare that he could not experience complete joy himself as long as they were struggling with doubt created by these false teachers. If the readers had their salvation reaffirmed, their joy would be made full, and in their joy, John's joy would be made full ... nothing is more enriching or more wonderful than helping others to that same conviction too, and seeing their fellowship deepen.*