

Lesson One: First John 1:2–2:2

Prologue: The Subject Matter of First John First John 1:1–4

1. What is the subject of this epistle, as defined by the prologue?¹
2. What is the authority behind this epistle, according to the prologue?
3. Given that this epistle deals with false teachers who denied that Jesus is the Christ (2:22) or “that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh” (4:1–3), what is the importance of this particular way of defining the subject matter of the epistle?
4. What is the object (or purpose) of the apostolic declaration and of the epistle? (3–4).
5. Consider the importance of the witnesses as a link making fellowship with God possible. Can one have fellowship with God while denying and rejecting the testimony of the witnesses?
6. Finally, compare the prologue with Jesus’ prayer in John 17. Take note of the same three stages in both the prologue and the prayer:
 - 6a. Manifestation of God through Christ to Witnesses (John 17:6–19 with 1 John 1:1–2).
 - 6b. The Declaration of the Witnesses, through which people become believers (John 17:20) and have fellowship with the witnesses (1 John 1:3).
 - 6c. The Object of the Declaration: Oneness (John 17:20–23) and Fellowship (1 John 1:3).

¹ Observe: “these things we write” (v. 4). What things?

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**Summary of the Message Heard and Announced,
and Its Bearing on Fellowship with God
First John 1:5–2:2**

Summary of the Message Heard From Christ and Announced by the Witnesses (5)

How is the apostolic message received from Christ and announced to others summarized in verse 5?

Bearing of This Message on Fellowship With God and With One Another (6–7)

1a. What is the false claim anticipated by John?

1b. Why is it false, given what has been said about the nature of God in verse 5?

2. On the other hand, two consequences follow from walking in the light:

2a. What is the first, and why is it so?

2b. Realizing that sin is the great hindrance to fellowship with God, what is the second consequence of walking in the light?

2c. What then is the condition of continued fellowship with God?

3. Explain the idea of walking in the light from the frequent usage of this metaphor in John's writings, beginning with First John 2:7–11, then proceeding to the Gospel of John (1:4–9; 3:19–21; 8:12; 9:4–5; 11:9–10; 12:35–36; 12:46).

Another False Position Exposed: The Denial of Sin (8–10)

1. When we walk in the light our works are made manifest and our sins exposed (cf. John 3:19–21). Then we may react in one of two ways. What is the first possible reaction? (8).

2a. What is our real position if we claim to “have no sin”?

2b. Why would that be so?

3a. What is the second possible reaction when our sins are exposed by the light? (9).

3b. What assurance follows “if we confess our sins”?

4. What further consequences of the denial of sin are enumerated in verse 10?

The Writer’s Purpose (2:1a)

How does John describe his purpose in writing?

Provision Established in Case of Sin (2:1b–2)

1a. “The accuser of the brothers” can no longer make charges against us (for see Rev. 12:10). What do we have instead? (1b).

1b. Consider what is meant by “an Advocate with the Father.”

2a. What is meant by “the propitiation for our sins” (2; cf. 4:10).

2b. What is the ground of Jesus’ advocacy of our case?

2c. Did Jesus die only for the saved? (2b; Rom. 14:15; 2 Pet. 2:1).

2d. Is Jesus also “an Advocate” for the whole world?

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Lesson Two: First John 2:3–11

The Claim to a Relationship With God in Christ Tested by Behavior First John 2:3–11

1. Jesus is the propitiation for the sins of the whole world, but can the whole world claim him as its “Advocate with the Father”?
2. How does 2:3–11, especially 3–6, relate to the first two verses?

Keeping His Commandments the Test of the Relationship First John 2:3–6

“Hereby We Know” (3)

1. John has previously dealt with the claim to have fellowship with God the Father (1:6). But considering the verses before (1–2) and after (4–6), who is the “him” in this context?
2. Use interchangeable expressions in this context (5b, 6) to explain what is meant by “know” in the clause “that we know him.”
3. What is the test by which we may know “that we know him”?

False Claim Exposed and the True Test Declared (4–5)

1. What is the claim that John considers in verse 4?
2. What does John say about this person? (4).
3. What is the true test of our relationship with Christ? (5).
4. Explain the clause: “truly in him the love of God has been perfected” (5a) in light of the later parallel at 4:12 in its context beginning 4:7, comparing also 3:13–17. Include:

4a. What is meant by “the love of God”?

4b. When, according to 4:12, is God’s love perfected (or brought to its end) in us?

4c. Having considered this parallel in 4:12, it will also help to consider the way “his commandments” and “his word” are soon to be applied in 2:7–11. What is the primary reference or application of “his commandments” in the context of First John?

Obligation of One Who Claims to Remain in Christ (6)

John has explained the true test by which we may know “that we are in him.” What is now said to be the obligation (“ought”) of one who claims to be (and to remain or abide) in him?

The Commandment Both Old and New First John 2:7–11

John writes about a commandment that is old (7) and yet new (8); old in one sense, new in another. The commandment he has in mind most likely has reference to the obligation just expressed (6). It is soon identified (9–11). It is a single commandment that embodies all the “commandments” (4) about the way brothers should relate to each other. Observe further the allusion to John 13:34 & 15:12. In the context of the latter, “commandments” (10) and “command-ment” (12) are interchanged, just as they are in the present text.

Not a New Commandment (7)

John writes about a commandment that is first said to be not new, but old (7), but then seems immediately to reverse himself by saying that, after all, it is new (8). It seems obvious that the word “new” is used in more than one sense. So the question:

What in verse 7 indicates the sense in which the commandment is not new, but old?

(8)

Yet a New Commandment (8)

1. Yet John says he writes about “a new commandment,” but apparently in a different sense than he had used this language in verse 7. What in verse 8 defines the sense in which “the old commandment” is yet “a new commandment”?²

2. Consulting what follows in verses 9–11, and then comparing John 13:34, to which John evidently alludes, what commandment is John referring to?

Another False Claim Exposed (9)

1. What is the claim John imagines someone making?

2. What does he say about the person making that claim?

3. Consider (in light of v. 19) a possible reference to the false teachers soon to be dealt with.

The Difference Between Loving and Hating (10–11)

1a. John elaborates what he has just said (9) by means of a contrast in consequences (10–11). What are the twofold consequences that follow for one who loves his brother?

1b. The significance of loving one’s brother will become more understandable as we consider all that John will write on this subject. Consider especially 2:5; 3:17; 4:12, 17–19 for help on this point.

1c. With regard to “no occasion of stumbling” (10), consider the question whether John is talking about an “occasion of stumbling” one puts before another or an occasion for the person himself to stumble in light of the contrast with verse 11.

2a. What then are said to be the consequences for one who hates his brother? (11).

2b. Use these two verses to explain what is meant by light and darkness?

² Get some help by comparing the terminology as it is also used in Hebrews 8:13 (cf. 1:10–23).