



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Beginnings (1 John 1:1)

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Bob Lewis / 267-278-1992 / Bob.Lewis@capitolcom.org

What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life—!

THE BEGINNING

The thrust of the divine record is God's resolution of the transgression which occurred in Eden on the part of our first parents, Adam and Eve.

By their singular act of disobedience, which the author of the current epistle refers to as *ανομια*, i.e. lawlessness, the fraternal relationship enjoyed with their Creator was immediately severed and the two experienced "The Death".

Prior to this experience, the Creator had issued a single prohibition into their lexicon; *"You shall not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for in the day you eat of it you shall surely die"*.²

Their transgression of this singular prohibition is referred to as "The Sin" (ἡ ἁμαρτία).³

They violated this prohibition and immediately experienced a change in their status as well as a change in their perceptions. As to the latter, they saw they were naked. As to the former, the intimate familial relationship with their creator was lost.

They had experienced "The Death". It was a spiritual death, for the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the church at Rome refers to this sentence as "The Death" (ὁ θάνατος).⁴

From this point on, the Imago Dei (image of God) becomes a marred image. Mankind is now a fallen or marred image bearer and brings forth after their kind, i.e. offspring in their image-fallen.⁵

As a result of this Fall, their descendants throughout history are born spiritually dead, as a result of The Death by virtue of The Sin.⁶

Immediately following this lawlessness on the part of our first parents and in the face of their having experienced The Death, the Creator moves to confront their conduct and inform them of a physical/tangible manifestation of their changed status in terms of respective personal judgments.⁷

A BEGINNING

The Creator issues the promise of ultimate restoration in what has come to be known as the **protoevangelium**⁸. He makes provision for restoration by virtue of a substitute, typified by the coat of skins to cover their nakedness.

Through this imputed covering, they are sovereignly restored into a spiritual relationship with their Creator though this covering does not automatically apply to their descendants.

This **protoevangelium** is, in my opinion, the first instance of what the author of 1 John refers to as **The Word of Life** in his opening comments in the epistle's prologue.

The Old Testament record is not replete with illustrations of the internal character changes which come to pass when one is clothed with this imputed covering. We see this impact come more into play in the New Testament record and it is this reality I want to focus on as it pertains to our author of this brief writing, John.

JOHN'S BEGINNING

It appears John was a Galilean born into a fishing family. His father's name was Zebedee and he had a brother named James. Later on, Jesus named the brothers "sons of thunder" (Βοανηργές), probably not on the basis of their father's conduct but their own.⁹

The brothers were both ambitious, but the text seems to indicate John as the more volatile and outspoken, though there is only one recorded comment from John in the gospel record. The brothers, along with Peter, make up the inner circle of Jesus' disciples. This reality may have contributed to their ambitious concerns. We see this ambitious spirit manifested during the months prior to Jesus' arrival at Jerusalem. James and John are so ambitious it appears they enlist the efforts of their mother to promote them to Jesus¹⁰ which serves to incite the rest of the apostles.

Two recorded instances bear testimony to John's 1) narrowness, 2) strong actions, and 3) decisiveness: the instance of the individual casting out a demon in Jesus name¹¹ and the Samaritan village which did not receive Jesus.¹²

John soon fades from view following the resurrection, ascension, and Pentecost as Peter and then Paul assume center stage.

THE LATTER JOHN

Delaware

Beginnings (1 John 1:1)

Roughly 3/4ths of the way through the first century, John comes to the fore as he pens a gospel, three epistles, and The Revelation of Jesus Christ. This John is now a tempered man and tradition reports that he was the apostle of love. He is no longer a son of thunder, but the one who leaned on Jesus' breast, the one who says, "...*little children, love one another...*".

He has not lost his strength of character when it comes to certain things, none the least of which is the issue of Truth. We see this most graphically in his three short epistles where he is swift to confront the error being perpetuated to the degree of refusing hospitality to those embracing known error.¹³ He personally endures the ambition of another¹⁴ til such time as he can minister to it face to face (a manifestation of love).

JOHN'S ENDING

John lived long enough to witness and experience the falling off of the faithful as it pertained to The Faith¹⁵.

His contribution comes after he has been tempered by the ministry of the indwelling Spirit, leaving us an example in terms of our own generation. With the exception of James, the Lord's brother, we are left with 2nd and 3rd hand info relative to the death of the "The Twelve". The manner of their particular deaths are not of import when compared to the death of the Lord Jesus and that of John. The former secured our eternal destiny whereas the latter reminds us of God's superintendence of His creation and intent in effecting the Great Commission.

THE TIME OF JOHN'S WRITING

There are many opinions regarding the dating of this epistle ranging from 95 AD 70 just prior to 70 AD. I am in the latter group

Reading the epistle To The Hebrews, we learn the believing Hebrews are being sorely tempted to return to the Old Covenant. In fact, it appears many had returned prompting the writer's strong admonitions.

The Apostle John is facing similar concerns in terms of the recipients of his writing. We are not informed as to the recipients of this epistle, so it may have been in the nature of a circular letter. Within the context of his audience are three generations of believers: "children", young men, fathers¹⁶. From these three groups, defections have occurred and these defections were grounded in theology and ethics. At the same time, it also appears those who had defected were continuing to exert their insidious influence.

THE WEIGHT OF JOHN'S WRITING

- A. That of a first-hand personal witness who had observed, scrutinized, and tested what he had seen and experienced and who, under the inspiration of The Spirit, was putting down in propositional form said evidences. These propositional evidences become the basis for the fellowship he desires for them.
- B. The weight of a transformed life. There would be those among the various audiences (assuming the circular nature of the epistle) who would have known of the earlier John.
- C. The confidence which flows from the two!

BACK TO THE BEGINNING

That "which was from the beginning" was a focus on the resolution of THE problem. THE problem was resolved through the finished work of Christ and the application of that work in their lives, John serving as an eye-witness testimony and long-term example.

¹ 1 John 1:1

² Genesis 2:17

³ Romans 5:12

⁴ Romans 5:12

⁵ Genesis 5:3

⁶ Ephesians 2:1

⁷ Genesis 3:16-19

⁸ Genesis 3:15

⁹ Mark 3:17

¹⁰ Matt. 20:20-23

¹¹ Mark 9:38 (Luke 9:49)

¹² Luke 9:52-54

¹³ 2 John 10, Didache, chapter 11

(<http://www.earlychristianwritings.com/text/didache-roberts.html>)

¹⁴ 3 John 10

¹⁵ Jude 3

¹⁶ 1 John 2:12-14