

Bible Study Notes and Questions on 1John

Introduction: The writer of this letter is **John, son of Zebedee**, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus. It was written about **85-95 AD**. John was an eyewitness to the word of God through Jesus Christ.

John wrote this letter to give believers the assurance of salvation in Jesus Christ alone. He stressed the divinity of Christ and the humanity of Christ. Secondly, he exposed false teaching from Gnostic teachers particularly in their lack of morality. By confirming belief in Christ, his readers will not deliberately sin and will know great joy in serving the Lord. What John has not written is any new commandments, but to remind Christians to be faithful to the word of God and not to be taken in by false teaching.

In the first century there had already developed various heresies of which the most dangerous was **Gnosticism**. It taught that the spirit was entirely good and that the matter was entirely evil. Such dualism is not biblical. The errors in this teaching have been shown below.

- 1)** The human body is matter and must be evil. God is entirely spirit and therefore good.
- 2)** Salvation was achieved by escaping the body and not achieved by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who died in the flesh on the cross to save us from our sins. Salvation was by special knowledge (Greek word: Gnosis. Hence the name: Gnosticism).
- 3)** The humanity of Christ was denied. There were two views expressed.
 - (i) Jesus only seemed to have a body but it was not real. This view was called **Docetism** from the Greek word "dokeo" meaning "to seem".
 - (ii) Others said the divine Christ spirit entered the man Jesus at his baptism and left him just before he died. This view was called **Cerinthianism** named after its main spokesman Cerinthus.
- 4)** This unbiblical dualism of matter and spirit led to immorality. Since matter was evil; disobedience to God's law was of no moral consequence.
- 5)** If the body was evil it could be treated harshly. This view showed an ascetic form of Gnosticism where a person (i) could abstain from ordinary bodily gratifications for the sake of the conscience; (ii) could be aiming at holiness by putting to death the flesh; (iii) could live in isolation as a strict hermit. See **Colossians 2:21-23**.

Suggested way of attempting the bible studies

The intention of these bible study notes with questions was not to give a lengthy exposition and interpretation of this letter, but to provoke everyone interested to read the scriptures and to attempt to think about the text. Time spent with others in a small group up to about ten to fifteen people who are willing to study the scriptures is of immense value where there is time to ask questions and give views on a particular text. Such bible studies should be interactive i.e. dialogue between everyone present.

It is advisable where possible to have someone leading the bible study who can facilitate in guiding the study possibly giving a short introduction up to fifteen minutes and adding questions to provoke discussion where necessary. If no one feels able to lead in the group that meets, it is suggested that you read together the portion of scripture to study. Then give a short time of ten minutes before each person shares what the scriptures are really saying. Try to avoid just giving opinions but attempt to see what the Lord is revealing to you as a group during the bible study. Perhaps a bit of time should be allowed to give a concluding summary which helps to finish the study.

Starting the bible study with prayer and worship can be of benefit in leading to a stimulating time studying the scriptures together. An exhaustive concordance and any other relevant resources can be of value in contributing to the study.

Questions

Before proceeding with the questions, it is helpful to read the letter right through. You may find it useful to list important words in this letter. The questions have not been put in sections because you may find it better to attempt them in any order and only select those you wish to discuss in the time available. If you wish to arrange the questions according to themes, you may find the themes below helpful with the questions allied to them.

- 1) Christians must love one another if they are to love God. See **Q1, 2, 3, 15, 21.**
- 2) Christians need to continue always to abide/remain in Christ which means fellowship with God. See **Q5, 6, 16, 22.**
- 3) Christians need to be able to distinguish error from truth. See **Q7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14.**
- 4) Christians claim to be born again (born of God). John has revealed the traits of the true believer. See **Q4, 17, 19, 20.**
- 5) John has shown what the response of true believers should be with regards to the world. See **Q8, 9, 18.**

- Q1)** Why was the letter written? See **1:4; 2:1, 7-8, 12-14, 21, 26; 5:13.**
- Q2)** Discuss the importance of love in this letter. See **2:5, 10, 15; 3:1, 10, 14, 16-18, 23; 4:7-12, 16-21; 5:2-3.**
- Q3)** How can we show the love of God? See **3:16-24.**
- Q4)** What are the traits that show that a person is born again (born of God)?
See **2:29; 3:9; 4:7; 5:1, 4, 18.**
- Q5)** How do we know that John was an eyewitness of the Lord Jesus? See **1:1-4.**
- Q6)** What did John mean by the “anointing”? See **2:20, 27.**
- Q7)** Does this letter show us the false teaching that John has exposed? Does he show us how to deal with this false teaching? See **2:18-27; 4:1-6.**
- Q8)** What was known about the world in this letter?
See **2:2, 15-17; 3:1,13; 4:1, 3-5, 9, 14, 17; 5:4-5, 19.**
- Q9)** How should Christians respond to the world? See **2:15-17; 4:1-6; 5:4-5.**
- Q10)** Describe the way John wrote about liars. See **1:10; 2:4, 22; 4:10; 5:10.**
- Q11)** Read **1:8-10** and then **3:9** and **5:18**. These verses appear to contradict each other. How can we say a Christian (born of God) does not sin as well as saying a Christian is a liar if he says he has not sinned? Discuss what John was teaching in these verses.
- Q12)** Look carefully at these verses: **2:20-21, 29a; 3:2, 5, 14-15, 18-19, 20a.**
What do you **ALREADY KNOW**?
- Q13)** What do the following verses show us of what we need to **CONTINUE TO KNOW** experientially (Greek word: **ginosko** meaning “to know”).
See **2:3-5, 18, 29b; 3:19, 24; 4:2, 6, 13; 5:2, 20b.**
- Q14)** What did John understand by an antichrist? See **2:18; 4:3.**
- Q15)** What does the letter tell us about “death”? See **3:14; 5:16-17.**
- Q16)** What did John teach us about the word “life”?
See **1:1-2; 2:16, 25; 3:14-16; 5:11-13, 16, 20.**
- Q17)** To what did John bear witness to in this letter? See **1:2; 4:14; 5:6-11.**
- Q18)** Discuss the teaching that John has revealed regarding sin.
See **1:7-10; 2:1-2, 12; 3:4-6; 4:10; 5:8-9, 16-17.**
- Q19)** John used the word “brother” to show we are in a family as believers. What happens when you love your brother? See **2:9-11; 3:10, 12, 14-15, 17; 4:20-21; 5:16.**
- Q20)** John wrote to various groups of Christians. List the three groups that were mentioned. Discuss the kind of believers each group has shown. See **2:12-14.**
- Q21)** What did John reveal about God? See **1:5; 4:16; 5:20.**
- Q22)** Why is John confident that God will answer prayer? See **5:14-15.**

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