

BOOK OF 1 JOHN

1. This book does not have the characteristics typical of other epistles that have greetings. It seems more like a fatherly sermon to his people warning them of happenings during that time.
2. Apostle John, the author, was very old at the time of writing this epistle. Probably in his 80s, he had already written the Gospel of John. This book of 1 John was written before he was exiled to the Patmos Island where he then wrote the book of Revelation.
3. John was in Ephesus when he wrote this epistle. He was supervising a network of churches in Ephesus at that time. There was a crisis then and as he was too old to travel and visit them, thus he wrote this epistle of 1 John.

What is this Book of 1 John about?

1. What was the crisis that the churches that John supervised was facing? A group of people denied that Christ came as 100% man or that He is human.
 - a) Due to the Greek philosophy of separating God and man, spiritual and physical (secular), they concluded that Jesus cannot be 100% man and 100% God at the same time.
 - b) These people taught that God came down to Earth in the appearance of a man but that He is not really a man. They said that He just looked like a man.
 - c) If that is the case, then Jesus' death on the Cross is meaningless because the sacrifice to replace man must be a man! If Jesus is God at the time while He was on the Cross, then He didn't really die for men because God cannot die. This false teaching nullifies Christ's death on the Cross. The power of the Cross can only be effective when Jesus is 100% God and 100% man. The incarnation of Christ is to be believed by faith otherwise the Cross has no effect.
 - d) These people denied that Jesus came in the flesh; thus, they came up with alternatives which suit that Greek thinking and they left the Church.
2. Apostle John wrote this epistle as a circular letter to be circulated amongst all the churches he supervised. His style was different from Paul's. Paul wrote in his educated Greek style that followed a very logical fashion. John was of a Jewish mind and hence his letter is more difficult to understand.
3. The word "relationship" appears 30 times in this book. Its purpose is to inform believers that we should have "koinonia" which means partnership or fellowship.
4. The letter commences without greetings. In 1 John 1:1, it begins with "That which was from the beginning.....", so it was not in the usual greeting style.

Chapter 1

1. 1 John 1:1 says, "...which we have seen and touched with our hands...." (ESV). John was trying to convince them that Jesus was not just appearing like a man but He was flesh and He was a real man. He was not a phantom.
2. 1 John 1:3-4 says, "that which we have seen and heard.....fellowship with the Father and with His Son.....so that our joy may be full." John was saying that the fullness of joy as a Christian is on earth, and we need not wait until we get to heaven. We should realise how wonderful it is to be a Christian.

3. 1 John 1:5 says, “God is light and in Him, there is no darkness”. In 1 John 3:11, John emphasized that God is love. Hence, this book has 2 main themes :
 - a) God is Light
 - b) God is LoveUnlike Paul who wrote in a logical straight flowing manner, John wrote around these themes which may not be obvious to readers.
4. What is the meaning of “God is Light”?
 - a) The world is dark and evil. Sins are commonly executed in the dark. God only do things that are above board; those things that are good and things that He can be proud of. God do things openly.
 - b) Light divides the two worlds. The kingdom of light is under God and the kingdom of darkness is under Satan.
5. 1 John 1:6-7.
 - a) If we have fellowship with God, how can we at the same time walk in darkness? We are lying if we say that we have fellowship with Christ, and at the same time, still do wrong in the dark or commit sinful things. We will have no joy if we behave as such.
 - b) It is only when we walk in the light, then can we have fellowship with God and with one another. Of course, if we do sin accidentally, the blood of Christ will cleanse us.
6. 1 John 1:8-10. It is, however, impossible to always walk in the light as we will occasionally slip. But verse 9 says that if we confess, He will cleanse us in His faithfulness when such accidental sins happen. We should confess our sins quickly to restore our fellowship with God because God is light.

Chapter 2

1. 1 John 2:1-2. The goal is to walk in the light and not in sin. But if we do sin, we should not worry as we have an Advocate in Christ. Christ is our defence lawyer in heaven because He had already paid for our sins. He is the propitiation that had appeased God’s wrath and had the penalty of all our sins settled at the Cross.
2. 1 John 2:3 says that we know God if we keep His commandments. But people will say, “But there are so many commandments, how do we remember and keep them all?”
3. 1 John 2:6. If we abide in Christ and walk the same way as Christ walks, there is no need to memorise all the commandments. We need to just ask ourselves this question, “Will Christ do this if He is here?” For example, if you see a person in need, you would know what Christ would do if He was there; He would surely help the needy!
4. 1 John 2:7.
 - a) There was really no new commandment that John was writing about. At the Last Supper, Christ said in John 13:34-35, “A new commandment I give to you, to love one another as I have loved you”. Jesus said that that was a new commandment at that time; but after 60 years, when John wrote this, it was no longer a new commandment.

- b) Basically, what Jesus was saying was that there was no need to memorise all the commandments in the Old Testament, but to just “love one another” as recorded in Galatians 5:14. We must love others like Christ loves us.
5. 1 John 2:9-10.
- a) If you hate your brother, you are living in darkness.
 - b) If you love your brother, you are living in the light.
 - c) Before we are saved, we do not love others and we only love ourselves.
6. 1 John 2:12-24. This was John’s classical way of writing in a “circular fashion” which emphasized the same thing and this was very different from Paul’s “logical flowing” style. He was writing to 3 groups of people who had differing levels of maturities (not referring to physical age of the people), namely :
- a) Little children who were the new converts in faith and who only know that their sins were forgiven;
 - b) Young men who were strong and growing in the Lord and could overcome temptations
 - c) Fathers who were matured and had experienced Christ from the beginning of their salvation.
7. 1 John 2:15-16.
- a) Do not love the world. John was dividing the old world of loving desires and lusts versus loving only God and our brethren in the new Kingdom Christians live in. The old world refers to that before we become Christian and this is not God’s way. So basically, he is saying, “Don’t love the things in the world or yourself BUT love others.”
 - b) God is light and He shines the way for us. It is not about things we can get but people we can love.
 - c) It is not about grabbing but giving. It is not thinking that you will be happy if you have more but that you will be happy when you love others.
8. 1 John 2:18-19.
- a) There are already many antichrists in the world and the last one who is the Antichrist (with the capital “A”) will be coming.
 - b) John was saying that those who left the Church were antichrists who denied God.
 - c) Anyone who denies Christ and who claims he is Christ is an antichrist.
9. 1 John 2:22.
- a) If anyone denies the Son (Christ), he denies the Father too because the Father and Son are one as in John 10:30. We have to accept this by faith through the Holy Spirit given to us. Faith is from God.
 - b) The issue of whether Christ is 100% man is usually not questioned by “baby” Christians (Little children in John’s categorisation) but they will grow and find out more and may start to question.

Chapter 3

1. 1 John 3:1-3.
 - a) We will see God one day and we will know that the day we see God, we will be in a new resurrected body which is not yet revealed to us. But we will be like Christ on that day.
 - b) Knowing that we will become like Christ, means we will have to take care of our own body now and purify it. See Thessalonians 5:23.
 - c) However, the Greeks indulge in bodily sins because they think their bodies will be left in the dust after they die.
2. 1 John 3:6. If we habitually sin, it means we do not know Christ nor abide in Him.
3. 1 John 3:8-9.
 - a) The Devil sinned since the beginning, but no one born of God will or can keep on sinning freely without feeling guilty and will not make sinning a routine.
 - b) However, when unbelievers and those who claim to be Christians habitually sin, they are proud to get away with their sins. Such people get their character from the Devil.
 - c) Christ came to destroy the works of the Devil by dying on the Cross and sending His Holy Spirit to live in us. See 1 Corinthians 3:16, Galatians 2:20 and John 3:3. A new birth is needed because we need the DNA of Christ, the seed of Christ. When we were physically born, we inherit the DNA of our fathers; but now that we are born again of God, we thus have Christ's DNA. It is the DNA of the agape love of Christ which causes us to want to love others.
 - d) If we have the new DNA, or seed or character of Christ, we cannot keep on sinning. The old nature or flesh in us may still continue to fall into sin occasionally but we will want to be different. There should be a struggle between the old flesh and the new spirit as Paul described in Rom 7:15-24.
4. 1 John 3:10.
 - a) John said that it is very evident who the children of God are. You can see it by their lives and by their love for others.
 - b) We should pray and help others who are lost, hungry, etc. As James 2:17 says, there is no such thing as faith without works.
5. 1 John 3:11. This verse starts with "For this is the message....." It starts with a new theme that God is Love.
6. 1 John 3:12-13.
 - a) Just as Cain hated his brother Abel (in Genesis Chapter 4) because Cain was evil and his brother was righteous, so why should we be troubled about persecutors of the Church?
 - b) John said that these people who had left the Church were like Cain doing evil deeds. No one in darkness likes to be shown up.
 - c) If everyone is evil, there is no persecution. Just as in a whole class of students who are always failing their examinations, even students with just one mark will be happy. However, when one of the student obtained 99 marks; then this student will be attacked by the others. This is expected due to the sin of envy and a life of darkness.

- d) So do not worry about persecution as it is not new and it has been there since Cain's time.
- 7. 1 John 3:6. "Abide in Christ" means you will realise that you are a child of God and have the power to overcome sins. When we do not abide, we forget that we are children of God and we fall into sins. The competing old nature is still there in us. The new nature needs to be activated as we realise that we should not live in the old way anymore.
- 8. 1 John 3:16-18. Love others just as Christ loves us. Lay down your life for others. Be willing to sacrifice and to give attention to the people in need.

Chapter 4

- 1. 1 John 4:1-2. If anyone does not confess that Jesus came in the flesh and was 100% man, he is an antichrist.
- 2. 1 John 4:7-8.
 - a) If anyone does not love, he does not know God because God is Love.
 - b) No other religion teaches that God is Love. If God is not the Trinity, He cannot love. Hence to other religion, their Unitarian gods cannot love.
 - c) To the people in Ephesian churches, they believed that God was only one person and so Jesus could not be God, thus they could not accept the precept of Trinity.
- 3. 1 John 4:9-11. This is repetitive. It was John's circular style. He was emphasizing that God gave us His only begotten Son and His Son gave His life for us, so we ought to do the same.
- 4. 1 John 4:16-18.
 - a) God is Love. If we live a life of love, then we know we are really His children.
 - b) If you are caught up in the world as a born-again Christian and do not abide in Christ, then you will feel uncertain as to whether you are truly a child of God and will start to fear. The Devil cannot cause doubt in you when you have proof to show the Devil, as evidenced by your good works from salvation. You will not fear that God does not or will not hear you. The Devil loves to cast doubts on whether you are really His child. This means that you cannot have the joy as a Christian though you are born again, and you will have doubts of salvation even at your deathbed. Then you will not have abundant living while on earth (See John 10:9-10).

Chapter 5

- 1. 1 John 5:3-4. Our faith is the victory that overcomes the world. We do not need to live like the world and think foolishly like them, having to grab as much as possible. We conquer the world with agape love and have joy because we have overcome by faith.
- 2. 1 John 5:6-8.
 - a) "The Spirit, the water and the blood, these three agree as one."
 - b) These antichrists taught a new theory that Jesus was born as a real man but at his baptism, He became like God and that the life of God was put into Him at baptism. They said that, however, just before the Cross, the Holy Spirit left Him

and hence He became man and died. Thus, what they were saying was that Jesus was a real man, but for that brief period of 3 years, he was a “God-thing” because they cannot accept that Jesus is 100% man and 100% God, hence they created this alternative theory.

- c) The truth is that even now, Jesus is still 100% man and 100% God. Christ chose to unite God and Man in one body.
 - i. “Water” in this verse here refers to the “baptism of water of Jesus”. However, another school of thought is that this refers to the “water” and blood that came out of the side of the body of Jesus when he was pierced by the soldier on the cross as in John 19:34. This alternative view is possible too because there was a heretical teaching at that time which said that Jesus was not fully human, and so the presence of water together with blood on the Cross proved that Jesus was indeed 100% man.
 - ii. “Blood” here refers to the Cross. God vindicated Jesus to prove that Jesus is 100% man.

All three - the Holy Spirit, the water and the blood, testify that Jesus is 100% man and 100% God.

- 3. 1 John 5:14. If you do God’s will, you have the confidence that He hears you. God’s will is for you to love others. Hence if you love others, you can ask for the things that you need to help others and God will answer your prayers. It is not about asking for anything you desire for selfish reasons, e.g. to make yourself richer, etc. See James 4:2-3.
- 4. 1 John 5:16-18.
 - a) What is this sin that leads to death? Verse 18 says that if a person is in the perpetual habit of sinning, then he was never saved.
 - b) John said that there is no need to pray for such a person who is an antichrist and you do not have to treat him as a brother if he habitually sins even if he claims to be a “Christian”. Instead, we should share the Gospel with him because he has not been saved yet.
 - c) In summary, verse 18 is saying that if a person persists in sinning and denying and shaming Christ (in spite of much prayer, clear declarations and testimonies of the Gospel), then there is no further need to pray for such a person.
- 5. 1 John 5:21. This is a strange ending with “Little children keep yourselves from idols” and it does not have greetings or good-byes. Little children here refer to new converts. Idols refer to false gods. John was basically reminding them not to trust in a “Jesus” who is not 100% man and 100% God because such a “Jesus” is an idol.

As matured Christians, we should note the following from the book of 1 John:

- 1. God chose to limit Himself to come and live as a Man and die for our sins and then rise again.
- 2. Even today, Jesus is still both 100% God and 100% Man forever!
- 3. What kind of love is this? Jesus is now in His resurrected body so that He can live with us forever in New Heaven and New Earth!