

1 John 3

V1-3. One of the most spectacular verses in the Bible. Read Romans 8:15-16. Buddhists and Hindus believe in reincarnation, Muslims believe in heaven (Janat) in which there's 7 gardens, you'll be 100 times fitter / stronger than any man and you spend eternity there with your wife plus two extra 'buxom' virgins in their early 30s, referred to as 'companions'. You earn your ticket there by being righteous, following the Quran. But the Christian Bible tells us that when we go to Heaven, we'll be adopted sons of God, younger brothers of Jesus, we'll even get to look like Him. I wonder what that will be like? There are very few verses in the New Testament that's not rooted in the Old Testament. Here, Daniel 12:2-3 and Malachi 3:16-17. Fantastical as it may seem, we all know it's true because Paul says the same thing. Read the following, making note of whether they are present or future tense. Romans 8:29 and Philippians 3:20-21 and 2 Corinthians 3:18. Past tense or future tense; it's all summed up in verse 3, ie: it's both.

Let's go back to: 'Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.' Is that something you've experienced? What is it about our faith and beliefs that outsiders struggle to get their heads around? Have you ever experienced hostility or is today's world more subtle than that, being patronising rather than violent? You're kind of sweet but naive believing in Jesus.

V 4-9 appears to be in contradiction with 1 John 2:4 and previously 1 John 1:8. So verses 4-9 cannot mean that from the moment of conversion we are total and absolute perfection in thoughts, deeds and words. If that were the case I'd walk out of this Bible study as a lost cause right now. So what do these verses actually mean? Let's look at the Amplified Version -

Everyone who commits (practices) sin is guilty of lawlessness; for [that is what] sin is, lawlessness (the breaking, violating of God's law by transgression or neglect—being unrestrained and unregulated by His commands and His will). You know that He appeared in visible form and became Man to take away [upon Himself] sins, and in Him there is no sin [essentially and forever]. No one who abides in Him [who lives and remains in communion with and in obedience to Him—deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] commits (practices) sin. No one who [habitually] sins has either seen or known Him [recognized, perceived, or understood Him, or has had an experiential acquaintance with Him]. Boys (lads), let no one deceive and lead you astray. He who practices righteousness [who is upright, conforming to the divine will in purpose, thought, and action, living a consistently conscientious life] is righteous, even as He is righteous. [But] he who commits sin [who practices evildoing] is of the devil [takes his character from the evil one], for the devil has sinned (violated the divine law) from the beginning. The reason the Son of God was made manifest (visible) was to undo (destroy, loosen, and dissolve) the works the devil [has done]. No one born (begotten) of God [deliberately, knowingly, and habitually] practices sin, for God's nature abides in him [His principle of life, the divine sperm, remains permanently within him]; and he cannot practice sinning because he is born (begotten) of God. 1 John 3:4-9 AMPC

Key words. Practices. Abides. Habitually. Astray. Is of. God's nature. Begotten. You cannot have a foot in both camps. If you're fulfilling v1-3 how can you take an indulgent sin sabbatical? How can a Sunday Christian claim v 1-3? John's not talking about an occasional slip, rather an indulgent lifestyle, someone who is serving two masters. Matthew 6:24-26.

V10. Anyone who doesn't do right or who doesn't love their brother/sister. That's the litmus test for whether someone is a Christian or an unbeliever. According to John being unrighteous is the equivalent to not loving your brother.

V11-12. If you don't love your brother/sister then that makes you like Cain in Genesis 4:3-8. Why did Cain murder Abel? Verse 6-7, Cain had a bad attitude despite God warning him about it. Yes, he messed up with his offering but God said that's OK, try again. Instead he went for a chat and a walk with his brother, Abel, and then he killed him. Why? Because Cain was evil and Abel was righteous. There was sibling rivalry going on there. Cain wanted it: Able had it. God's warning was ignored, Satan took control of him and so Cain the evil, took his brother for a walk and when he wasn't looking, he murdered him. This wasn't a fit of rage, there was no red mist, it was a premeditated murder.

V13-14. Compare John 15:18-19, this is just what Jesus had said years before. But John goes further, loving your brother is a litmus test of your faith. If a brother/ sister really does your head in to the point that you dislike them, then that puts a big question mark over your faith. John 13:34. In fact John is going further than what Jesus said in Matthew 5:21-22 but maybe not, Matthew 18:34-35.

V15. This is the litmus test, if you fail, you're every bit the same as Cain. Question, can a murderer find eternal life?

V16. This is the opposite end of that spectrum. At one you've got a brother who does your head because he prattles on about the Royal family or Brexit or he takes up 3 spaces in the church car park and at the other end there's Jesus who lays His life down for the sake of the brethren. So going back to John 13:34, if you love your brother as Jesus loves you, you should be prepared to give the ultimate sacrifice for him. So the question is; would you? Possibly not. So what does that tell you about your level of righteousness as compared to Jesus's?

V17. Does this verse prevent a believer from having surplus material wealth? Does this contradict the Old Testament verses on tithing? Leviticus 27:30-34.

V18. How do you love someone in word or in tongue? Is this saying don't bother praying for a brother, if you've got the answer to your prayer sat in your bank account? Maybe you need to revisit Matthew 19:16-30.

V19. If you do this (really and deeply and practically loving our brothers and sisters) your heart will have a warm, fuzzy feeling and you'll know that you're of the truth. Is your heart in this context the same as what we'd call today, your conscience?

V20. If you do this and still your conscience doesn't feel good and you feel condemned over another minor slip up, ignore it because God is bigger than your heart or conscience. What role does the Holy Spirit play, with regards to your conscience? Peter suggests that your heart can't be relied on, it can condemn you when you've done nothing wrong. Luke 18:9-14. You know from experience, that feeling that you're a lousy Christian and not worthy of that title; guess where that comes from?

V21. If your heart's not condemning you (or you can ignore/overcome that condemnation) you're going to be so confident before God. Just take that in; God, the all powerful,

almighty, totally pure and holy, served and worshipped by billions angels and heavenly beings, you can come into His presence with confidence. How so? Romans 8:14-17.

V22. And because you're so confident before Him, you'll receive anything you ask because you're keeping His commands and you're doing your best to please Him. What commands is Peter talking about? Is it the 10 commandments plus the 603 other laws and regulations? We think of these condemning us, Romans 3:19 but David and the prophets loved God's law, Psalm 119:165-168. But in the context of this passage, Peter is just talking about loving your brothers and sisters and believing on Jesus. John 13:34.

But in V24, Peter extends his definition of God's law to all of it, just as Jesus did in Matthew 22:34-40. If you do, you will live in Him and He in you. John 15:7. How can you be sure that God is living within you. If you truly follow these principles, you will. If there's genuine doubt, as opposed to listening to Satan's lies, go back to God and seek out the areas that He tells you that are getting in the way.