



Epistles IV

International Alpha Bible Course
by Ralph Vincent Reynolds

International Alpha Bible Course

EPISTLES

Part IV

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INTERNATIONAL ALPHA BIBLE COURSE

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Lesson One

**THE EPISTLE OF JAMES
PART I**

A. JAMES

James is a Hellenized form of the Hebrew name *Jacob*. Two of our Lord's disciples had the name of James. John's brother, James, was the son of Zebedee. He was a fisherman who lived in Capernaum. James was the elder of the two brothers because he is always mentioned first. It is always James and John. In AD 44 he was beheaded by Herod Agrippa I, making him the first apostle to be martyred. The other disciple called James was the son of Alphaeus. He was one of the apostles, but we know little about his ministry.

The author of this epistle was the eldest half-brother of Jesus (Matthew 13:55). He pastored the Judean church for thirty years. According to Clement of Alexandria, Peter, James, and John chose James, the Lord's brother, to be bishop of Jerusalem after the Lord's ascension. Apparently James was not a believer during the Lord's earthly life. But the Lord appeared to him after His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7), and James was won to the faith. In the upper room on the Day of Pentecost, James, His brother, and His mother, Mary, were present and received the Holy Ghost.

James, the son of Mary and Joseph, was a very good man and surnamed "The Just." It was said that he spent so much time in prayer that his knees became callous like camel's knees. He was a very strict Jew, but was tolerant of the Gentiles and endorsed Paul's ministry to them.

At the Jerusalem Council, James was the moderator. He summed up the discussion and wrote the letter to the Gentiles. When Peter was delivered from prison (Acts 12), he told the church how he had been delivered and said, "Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren" (Acts 12:17). According to Josephus,

the historian, James was hurled from one of the galleries of the temple and stoned, shortly before the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

B. THE EPISTLE OF JAMES

This was the first Christian epistle and was written about AD 60 from Jerusalem. It was addressed to the Christian Jews of the Dispersion. The purpose was to comfort Jewish Christians who were passing through severe trials and to correct problems in their assemblies. James was a Jew writing to the Jews, making the Epistle of James rich in Jewish culture.

C. SALUTATION

Scriptural Reference: James 1:1

The word *servant* actually means “slave.” The epistle opens with these words: “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes.” The Bible has nothing to say about the lost ten tribes. The entire twelve tribes of Israel are scattered among the nations. James was writing to the Jewish Christians scattered everywhere.

D. TESTINGS

Scriptural Reference: James 1:2-12

The key verse in this passage of Scripture is verse 12: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation.”

James wrote about testings and trials. These are external sufferings, and he did not write about the inner impulse to evil until verse 13.

James began this exhortation by addressing his readers as “my brethren.” In this epistle he used the term *brethren* at least sixteen times. James was the pastor of the Jerusalem church, and he wrote as a pastor would write to encourage and comfort.

The word *temptation* has the connotation of evil. This is not the meaning here. It is the same word the apostle Peter used in his epistle, and it is translated “fiery trial” (I Peter 4:12). The Christian is to be joyful when trials come, not because of the trial but because of the fruit of the trial. The Christian falls into trials which are unseen and unplanned. The fruit of this is patience or endurance. Another

word which could be used is *fortitude*. The end result is to be perfect and not lacking. This is not referring to sinless perfection but rather to a maturing and spiritual manhood. It is the responsibilities of life which turn the boy into a man. Likewise, it is the trials which develop a young convert into a mature Christian.

There is a connection between the request for wisdom and the various trials which come. Some Christians may not understand the purpose of God in their sufferings. In that case, they are to ask God for practical insight into their lives and God will generously grant such a request. However, James gave a condition for such a prayer being answered: ask without doubting. James compared a doubting man to a wave of the sea, driven to and fro by the wind. Such a man cannot hope to receive anything from God.

Both poverty and wealth can be trials to a Christian. The poor Christian should rejoice that in Christ he has been brought true riches. The wealthy Christian should rejoice that he now experiences humility and understands the deceitfulness of riches. Riches are temporary. They are like the grass and flowers which soon turn brown and are burned.

In verse 12, the reward for endurance through trials is given. The man who endures will receive a crown of life.

E. TEMPTATIONS

Scriptural Reference: James 1:13-18

In verses 13-18, James dealt with the subject of temptation which is the desire to do evil. No man can blame God for his temptation for the following two reasons:

1. God cannot be tempted with evil.
2. God will not tempt any man with evil.

Man must take personal responsibility for his sins. Man is enticed by his own lust. There are three steps here:

1. Lust—unlawful desire born in his own mind
2. Sin—the unlawful act
3. Death—the result of sin

James wrote, "Dear brothers, do not be misled" (verse 16, paraphrased). Whatever is good and perfect comes to us from God. He is the Creator of all light, and He shines forever without change or shadow. Instead of God tempting us with evil, His will is the cause of our regeneration. We have been born again through His Word of truth, and the Christians to whom James was writing became the first children of God's family.

F. DOERS OF THE WORD

Scriptural Reference: James 1:19-25

James exhorted the Jewish Christians to:

1. Be swift to hear.
2. Be slow to speak.
3. Be slow to wrath.

When a Christian gives in to anger, he is incapable of acting righteously. He also exhorted them to get rid of everything that is wrong. The word *superfluity* would normally mean "excess of evil." It has been suggested, however, that this means "remainder." Therefore the Christian must lay aside all that is wrong in his life. He must give himself completely to the Word which has been implanted in his heart and is able to save his soul.

Emphasis is placed upon the importance of obeying the Word. Those who only listen to the Word only deceive themselves. They are like a man who sees himself in a mirror and then forgets what he looks like. However, he who looks into God's law which liberates men will obey God's Word and will be blessed in everything he does.

G. TRUE RELIGION

Scriptural Reference:

"If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (James 1:26-27).

In these two verses we read what is required in true religion:

1. To control one's speech
2. To visit and minister to orphans
3. To visit and minister to widows
4. To maintain personal purity

True religion is more than just a show of piety by church attendance. One must minister to those in need and to keep himself under control and separated from the world.

Lesson Two

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES PART II

A. WITHOUT PARTIALITY

Scriptural Reference: James 2:1-7

Apparently there had been a tendency to discriminate between the rich and the poor in the early church. James reproved them for this and wrote that they could not claim to belong to the Lord Jesus and at the same time show respect of persons. It was inconsistent for them to show partiality. A man with a gold ring and expensive clothes would be given a place of honor. The poor man with shabby clothes would be given the poorest place or they might even have to sit on the floor. The word *vile* in verse 2 means “worn” or “shabby.”

God deals with all men alike. God does not see the clothes men wear or the cars they drive. He has chosen the poor in this world, but rich in faith, to be heirs of the kingdom. The fact that qualifies them to be heirs of the kingdom is not their poverty, but the fact they love Him (verse 5). James reminded the Christians that they had been oppressed, persecuted, and dragged into the courts by rich men. He also reminded them that the name of Jesus had been blasphemed by the rich.

Christians were not to judge their fellow Christians by the amount of wealth they possessed or by the apparel they wore. If they did, they would become judges of evil thoughts. In other words, it would be evil thoughts and wrong motives which would prompt them in this show of partiality.

B. THE ROYAL LAW

Scriptural Reference: James 2:8-1

James referred to the “royal law” which is the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself. He reminded his readers that if they showed respect of persons, they were breaking this royal edict. Love shows no respect of persons. If one breaks the law in any point, then he has broken the whole law.

The author reminded them that they would be judged by the “law of liberty.” What is the law of liberty? Is it not that the Christian has the freedom to do that which is right of his own desire? It might be defined as an inward constraint rather than outward restraint. If a person is truly born again and filled with the Holy Ghost, he will be at liberty to do that which is right through his own convictions, not through outward restraint. The royal law of love will cause a Christian to desire to show God’s love to others. This will be shown to all men without partiality.

In verse 13, we read where there will be no mercy shown to those who have shown no mercy. However, a Christian who has shown compassion and mercy will have no fear on the day of judgment. On that day, mercy will exalt victoriously over judgment.

C. FAITH PROVEN BY GOOD WORKS

Scriptural Reference: James 2:14-26

Actually there was no disagreement between the apostle Paul and James concerning their teaching on justification. Paul taught that a man is justified by faith. He was teaching that the unjustified could be justified by faith alone without works. James taught that a man who was justified would show and prove his faith by his works. If there are no works, then he has no faith and is not justified (verse 24). James wrote, “Shew me thy faith without thy works” (verse 18). He believed that this was impossible. Faith could not be seen without works following. Faith that is only head knowledge, a mental assent, is useless. Demons are monotheists; they also believe in one god. But it does not save them; it only makes them tremble. In verse 20, James spoke of the man who did not believe in works as being a “vain man.” This expression is one of contempt. He might have said, “O foolish man.”

In order to prove his point, James referred to two characters in the Old Testament. Abraham was their Father of the Faith. He was the friend of God. Yet he proved his faith by the works in offering his son on the altar. On the other extreme, Rahab was a Gentile prostitute. She proved her faith when she hid the spies and saved their lives. By referring to these two extremes, James showed that all men must also prove their faith by their works.

Finally, he gave a final illustration. Faith without works is like a body without the spirit—both are dead.

D. A WORLD OF INIQUITY

Scriptural Reference: James 3:1-12

The tongue is the most unruly member of the body. James called it “a world of iniquity.” He said that no man could tame it. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Homes have been wrecked, churches have been divided, and millions have experienced despair because of malicious worry. When a person tells a lie, slanders another person, or repeats an unclean story, the speaker himself is defiled. James said the whole body was defiled. This is because out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. A man can control horses and ships, but he cannot control his tongue. If he does not offend in word, then he may be considered a perfect man.

James admonished his readers against blessing God and at the same time cursing men. A fountain does not send forth both bitter and sweet water. Just as a fountain cannot yield salt and fresh water, so a person cannot consistently bless God and curse men at the same time.

It is with the mouth that confession is made unto salvation (Romans 10:10). It is also with the mouth that a man may commit the unpardonable sin (Matthew 12:32). His speech will tell forth the kind of individual that he is. Much trouble has come through tale bearing, whispering, and slandering. A good rule to remember is that if you cannot say something good about a person, do not say anything at all. Our speech should always be seasoned with grace.

E. TRUE WISDOM

Scriptural Reference: James 3:13-18

True wisdom comes down from above. James describes this true wisdom as being pure, peaceable, gentle, easily entreated, full of mercy and good works, without partiality or hypocrisy. This is contrasted with the wisdom that is of this world. This type of wisdom is earthly, sensual, devilish, and the result of it is envy, strife, confusion, and evil works. The wise man will show forth a good conversation with meekness and will be a peacemaker among men.

Lesson Three

THE EPISTLE OF JAMES PART III

A. WORLDLINESS AND GODLINESS

Scriptural Reference: James 4:1-10

After making his statement about peace, James gave the reason for all fighting and wars—they come as a result of covetousness. James told the Jewish Christians that they want what they cannot have; therefore they hate and are ready to kill. They do not get their desires because they do not pray. When they do pray, their prayers are not answered because they are motivated by wrong desires.

Two reasons are given for unanswered prayer:

1. They do not ask.
2. They ask with wrong motives.

Friendship with the world is being untrue to our heavenly Lover and therefore is committing spiritual adultery. God will not tolerate His bride to be flirting with the world.

Verse 5 is one that needs special attention. There is no Scripture in the Old Testament where this quotation may be found. But there are many Scriptures that may teach this truth. Possibly the best rendering of this verse is: “He yearns jealously over the spirit he has put in our hearts” (Goodspeed). This simply means that God is a jealous God, and He will not tolerate a divided affection. At the same time, He recognizes the battle that is being fought with the world. “He giveth more grace” (verse 6) is a wonderful, comforting statement. The difficulties of living for God in this wicked world are overcome by the gracious help of our Savior. His grace is always sufficient. Because of this, the Christian should look to God for help, and, through humility, submit himself to God. God will not help the proud

and arrogant, but He will help those who are humble and dependent upon His grace.

There are seven imperatives given here:

1. Submit to God.
2. Resist the devil.
3. Draw nigh to God.
4. Cleanse your hands.
5. Purify your hearts.
6. Mourn and weep.
7. Humble yourselves.

There is victory over the devil by doing two things:

1. Submitting to God
2. Resisting the devil

The devil cannot overcome this combination and will flee. To purify your hearts, simply means to not be double-minded. A pure heart is a heart of single purpose. To mourn and weep apparently is referring to sincere repentance. The promise added to this is that God will lift the individual who will humble himself in the sight of the Lord.

B. ONE LAWGIVER

Scriptural Reference:

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?” (James 4:11-12).

He that slanders his brother is breaking the royal law of love. As such, he is no longer a doer of the law but a judge. However, there is only one Judge who gave the law. In His hands is the issue of life and death. James asked, “Who are you to judge another?”

C. SINFUL SELF-CONFIDENCE

Scriptural Reference: James 4:13-17

Life is very brief and uncertain. Only God knows our future. Because of this, we should never boast about our future plans. This reliance on self is sin. We should always make our plans subject to God's will; to do otherwise is sin.

D. JUDGMENT OF THE GODLESS RICH

Scriptural Reference: James 5:1-6

James condemned the godless rich for their corruption and exploitation of their fellowman. This is not a condemnation of the rich who are good stewards, but of the rich who have received ill-gotten gain from the down-trodden poor. Thousands have become millionaires through deceit. It is evident that riches gained in this manner can never be gained honestly. Exploitation of the working man leads to labor unrest, strikes and the overthrow of government. This condition of laborer-employer difficulties is a sign of the near coming of our Lord. James said they had heaped treasure in the last days. Certainly this condition has been fulfilled in our day!

The expression "Lord of the sabbath" means "Lord of Host" or literally "Lord of armies."

E. PATIENCE UNTIL THE LORD'S RETURN

Scriptural Reference: James 5:7-11

James gave no promise for early judgment for the rich, but exhorted the Christians to be patient, looking for the return of the Lord Jesus.

In Palestine, there was the early rain after the planting of the crops. Then the latter rain came just before the harvest while the crops were maturing. In this church age, there was the early outpouring of the Holy Ghost during the first century, which was the early rain. During the twentieth century, there has been the outpouring of the Holy Ghost again, which is the latter rain. This is one of the most certain signs of the Lord's near return. Just as the Lord is patiently waiting for the Harvest when He shall catch His church away to Himself, so we are exhorted to be patient.

"Grudge not one against the other" (verse 9) simply means do not blame one another for your troubles. A judge stands before the

door and if we begin to blame one another, we will fall under judgment. The suffering of the prophets and the patience of Job remind us that the Lord is able to help with tender mercy.

F. OATHS FORBIDDEN

Scriptural Reference:

“But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation” (James 5:12).

In this verse the Christian is forbidden to take an oath. Many times this creates a problem when one is in court. The simple way is to tell the judge that you have convictions against taking an oath. Instead of swearing that you will tell the truth, simply state that you declare or affirm that you shall speak the truth.

G. THE POWER OF PRAYER

Scriptural Reference: James 5:13-18

The key verse is found in the latter part of verse 16: “The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous man availeth much.” James wrote about the power of prayer. He illustrated this by referring to Elijah and emphasized the fact that he was an ordinary man like any of us. Though an ordinary man, yet he was able to pray and there was no rain for three and one-half years. He then prayed again and rain came.

In this Scripture, we find instructions regarding prayer for the sick. It is very important that this Scripture be studied carefully and that every detail be exquisitely obeyed. The instructions given might be listed thus:

1. The elders of the church must be called.
2. They will pray for the sick.
3. They will anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord.

Oil is a symbol of the Holy Ghost. Generally, olive oil is what is used. The connection between the healing of the body and the forgiveness of sins should be noted. Healing is in the atonement, and

we may have both the forgiveness of sins and healing for our bodies. The final instruction that we might note here is that there must be a confession of faults one to the other and prayer made for each other.

H. RECLAIMING A BACKSLIDER

Scriptural Reference:

“Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins” (James 5:19-20).

This is clearly referring to the backslider, one who is straying from the truth. If we bring the backslider back to the Lord, we save his soul from death and hide a multitude of sins. This definitely is teaching that a backslider who does not repent and is not reclaimed will die eternally lost.

Lesson Four

**THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER
PART I**

A. THE AUTHOR

The apostle Peter's natural name was *Simon*. At the first recorded meeting with our Lord, Jesus named him *Cephas* (John 1:40-42). His new name was *Peter* (Greek) or *Cephas* (Aramaic), meaning "rock." Three years later Jesus reaffirmed this (Matthew 16:18). Here Jesus used two words, *Petros* and *Petra*. *Petros*, a single piece of rock, was Peter. *Petra*, a large mass of rock, was Peter's confession or the truth of the deity of Jesus upon which the church was to be built.

Peter was a native of Bethsaida (John 1:44) and had a home in Capernaum (Mark 1:29). Peter had a wife (Mark 1:30) who accompanied him in his ministry (I Corinthians 9:5). Peter was a natural born leader, enthusiastic, and impulsive. He is a well-loved Bible character because of his human nature. Jesus gave him the keys of the kingdom. It was Peter who preached the first gospel message as recorded in the second chapter of Acts. Although he once denied his Master and once dissimulated at Antioch, he was absolutely fearless under persecution. Peter suffered martyrdom under Nero at Rome. Tradition states that he was crucified head downward, feeling not worthy to be crucified as his Lord was.

B. THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER

This letter was written by Peter from Babylon (I Peter 5:13) around AD 60. Some believe that this was literal Babylon on the Euphrates; however, it undoubtedly was Rome. In Revelation, Rome was called Babylon. The purpose of the epistle was to encourage believers to hold fast during persecution and suffering and exhort them to holiness. Jesus had commanded Peter, "Strengthen thy brethren" (Luke 22:32). This epistle accomplished that very thing.

C. SALUTATION

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 1:1-2

Peter addressed this epistle to the “strangers scattered abroad.” These were the Jewish exiles of the dispersion. Many of them had been converted at Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost. They were scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. They were from parts of the country where Paul had established churches, mainly among the Gentiles. Undoubtedly many of these Jewish believers had heard Peter preach on the Day of Pentecost.

In I Peter 2:11, Peter called them strangers and pilgrims. This world certainly was not their home. They were strangers in the cities where they lived. Now that they were Christians, this fact became all the more pronounced.

Verse 2 is a very important verse. Man is a free-will agent. God never has and never will violate this prerogative which He has given man. He allows man to choose freely. God foreknows man’s choice and on the basis of this foreknowledge, chooses His elect. This fact must be understood in order to understand the great doctrine of predestination. This also explains that our security in Christ is wholly conditional upon our own free choice.

D. CONSUMMATION OF FAITH

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 1:3-12

1. Lively Hope (Verse 3)

Peter stressed the fact that the saints are lively stones. Everything that God has provided for His children is lively (alive). They have a living hope because Jesus arose from the dead. He is alive and therefore our hope is alive.

2. Kept by the Power of God (Verse 5)

The power of God keeps the Christian unto salvation. The saint cannot keep himself, but it is his responsibility to keep himself in the love of God (Jude 21). He keeps himself where he can be kept by God’s power. He is like a passenger who buys a ticket and takes a

seat in the train. The locomotive takes him to his destination, but the passenger must stay on board.

3. Trial of Your Faith (Verse 7)

The testing of faith is more valuable than gold, because it is through this exercise of faith that it is made strong. It is exercise which makes strong muscles. It is the trial of faith which makes our faith strong.

4. Joy Unspeakable (Verse 8)

The fact that we cannot see Jesus does not make Him any less real. If we could see Him, we would need no faith. We see Him through the eye of faith and love Him. This brings rejoicing with a glorious joy which cannot be expressed with mere words.

5. Consummation of Faith (Verse 9)

The result of our faith is the salvation of our souls. Persecution will strengthen our faith which will be found unto praise and glory when Jesus comes for His church. For this reason, we rejoice with joy unspeakable.

6. They Who Desired to Understand (Verses 10-12)

The prophets prophesied concerning the grace that should come. They desired to understand, but the only thing that was revealed was that they were not ministering unto themselves but unto us. The importance of salvation can be seen when we know that the angels are desirous of looking into it.

It should be noted that the "Spirit of Christ" which testified of the sufferings of Christ was "in them."

E. EXHORTATION TO HOLINESS

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 1:13-16

Peter exhorted them to be alert and to be strong in their thinking. They were not to conform to the evil desires that had previously controlled them. They were to be holy in all their conduct and manner of living. The Lord is holy and therefore they were to be holy.

F. TWO INCORRUPTIBLE AGENTS OF SALVATION

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 1:17-23

1. Incorruptible Blood (Verses 18-19)

God did not pay the price for the redemption of our souls with silver and gold, something which is perishable. The price that was paid was the blood of Christ. The power of the blood to redeem will last eternally. As an agent of salvation, the blood of Christ will never perish.

2. Incorruptible Seed (Verse 23)

Not only is the child of God born of water and of the Spirit, but he is also born of the Word of God. God's Word is the incorruptible seed which is planted in the heart of the believer. This seed will never perish. It will live and abide forever.

G. BEFORE THE FOUNDATION OF THE WORLD

Scriptural Reference:

“Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you” (I Peter 1:20).

Jesus is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). However, this was in the mind and plan of God in the past ages of eternity. It was foreordained before the foundation of the world that Christ should be the Lamb of God without blemish and without spot.

H. A HEALTHY APPETITE NECESSARY

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 2:1-3

Peter desired that the Christians would have a healthy, spiritual growth. In order to grow, they were to get rid of all hatred, insincerity, and dishonesty. They were to have healthy appetites for the milk of God's Word. The Word is milk for babes in Christ but also meat for adult Christians (I Corinthians 3:2). Apparently Peter looked upon them as still being in spiritual infancy.

I. DESCRIPTION OF GOD'S CHILDREN

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 2:4-10

In this Scripture we find some descriptions of the saints:

1. Lively stones (Verse 5)
2. Spiritual house (Verse 5)
3. Chosen generation (Verse 9)
4. Royal priesthood (Verse 9)
5. Holy nation (Verse 9)
6. Peculiar people (Verse 9)

The word *peculiar* does not mean “odd” but rather a people for a possession. We are a purchased people.

In this same Scripture we find also some vivid descriptions of our Lord:

1. Living stone (Verse 4)
2. Chief cornerstone (Verse 6)
3. Head of the corner (Verse 7)

The cornerstone of a building is the stone from which all measurements and directions are taken. Jesus is the cornerstone to the church. To the disobedient, He is a stumbling stone; but to the saints, He is precious!

As a holy priesthood, the saints are to offer up spiritual sacrifices. Many things may be included in these spiritual sacrifices: prayer, fasting, worship, thanksgiving, church attendance, tithing, etc.

J. EXHORTATION TO SEPARATION

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 2:11-12

The saints are strangers and pilgrims. They must separate themselves from all evil desires and conduct themselves properly among the Gentiles. Although Christians might be slandered now, heathens will praise God for saints' good works when Jesus returns.

K. EXHORTATION TO BE GOOD CITIZENS

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 2:13-20

Peter gave some practical instructions regarding the duties of Christians to the government and their masters. Submission, obedience, and respect are the proper attitudes. They will submit themselves to every law of man until it conflicts with their worship of God, then it means martyrdom. It should be remembered that Nero was emperor when these words were being written.

L. OUR EXAMPLE

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 2:21-25

Jesus Christ is our example. He never sinned nor ever told a lie. He never answered back when insulted. When He suffered, He never threatened to get even. He carried our sins in His own body on the cross. Therefore our sins were judged there. Because of this great truth, we are dead to sin that we might be alive to righteousness.

Lesson Five

**THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER
PART II**

A. THE DUTY OF WIVES AND HUSBANDS

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 3:1-7

Wives are to be in submission to their husbands (verses 1 and 2). If the husbands are not obeying the Word of God, they may be won to the Lord, not by argument but by respectful, pure behavior. The godly lives of the wives will speak better than words.

Wives are not to be concerned with outward beauty that depends on jewelry, beautiful clothes, or elaborate hair arrangements. They are to be beautiful within their hearts with the charm of a gentle spirit which is precious to God (verses 3-5).

In verse 6, Sarah is given as an example of honoring her husband as the head of the house. She called Abraham "lord" or "master." As daughters of Sarah, Christian wives should follow her example and give absolute respect to their husbands.

In verse 7, Peter spoke to the men. Husbands are admonished to be gentle with their wives, honoring them as the weaker partner. If they do not treat their wives as they should, their prayers will be disturbed.

B. HOW TO SEE GOOD DAYS

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 3:8-17

In verses 8-14, Peter exhorted his readers to be one happy family, loving one another with tender hearts. They were never to return insult for insult, but rather blessing. Here Peter gave a formula for enjoying life and seeing good days. They were to keep control of their tongues and keep their lips from deceit. Wickedness should be shunned and peace should be desired. Not only should peace be

desired, but it must be pursued. Generally no one will harm a person wanting to do good. However, if that happens, you are to be envied for God will reward you.

There is a throne in the heart of every man. Jesus is to be crowned Lord and King (verse 15). Jesus must be set apart from all profane desires and thoughts. He must be the center of love and devotion within the heart.

If men falsely accuse you, they will become ashamed if you do what is right. Keep your conscience clear. It is better to suffer for well doing rather than evil doing (verses 16 and 17).

C. PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 3:18-22

The true interpretation of the Scripture regarding Christ preaching to the spirits in prison is difficult. The meaning here is somewhat obscure. We shall give two interpretations, either one of which may be correct.

1. Preaching Through Noah

One common interpretation is that the Spirit of Christ was in Noah preaching to the antediluvians. This preaching was done by Noah while the people were alive and while the ark was being built.

2. Preaching in Hades.

This interpretation states that the prison is Hades. Jesus visited Hades and Paradise during the time between His death and resurrection. There are Scriptures that teach that Jesus did visit Hades during this period. The spirits of the lost of Noah's generation would certainly be there. The presence of Jesus in that dreadful place would be the most powerful of sermons.

If the first interpretation be correct, there were none saved except the eight souls in the ark. If the second interpretation be correct, there is no inference that this was giving these lost souls a second chance. Hell is everlasting and there is no deliverance from that awful abode.

D. SUFFERING IN THE FLESH

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 4:1-6

Since Christ suffered in the flesh, we must be prepared to suffer also. He who has shared Christ's cross is no longer alive to the pull of sin through human desire, but is only alive to the desire of doing God's will. Such a person has had enough of the evil things which the godless enjoy. Of course, former friends will be surprised that they are not eagerly joined and will scorn the Christian for not entering into the same excesses of dissipation.

Jesus is the judge of the living (quick) and the dead (verse 5). Verse 6 is not an easy verse to explain. It certainly does not mean that the dead are given a second chance. Here Peter is referring to the gospel being preached to Christians before they died. They were judged as men while they were alive, but now they will enjoy eternal life.

E. GOOD STEWARDS OF THE GRACE OF GOD

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 4:7-11

Since judgment is at hand, they had better have self-control and be prayerful. They are to have deep love one for another. Love makes up for many faults. Christians must cheerfully share their home and food with visitors. They are to be good stewards of the grace of God. If one is preaching, let him preach as if God is speaking through him. If one is called to help others, let him do it with all the energy which God supplies. One should minister in such a way that the glory will always be given to God.

F. FIERY TRIALS

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 4:12-19

The fiery trials may be a reference to the human torches that Nero had in his gardens. He would set the Christians on fire and light his gardens. At any rate, one is not to be bewildered by the fiery ordeal which may come. The Christian is to rejoice that he can share in the sufferings of Christ.

The Christian is to be happy if he is abused for the name of Jesus. The Bible student should note that this again may become real. Real persecution may come because of the name of Jesus. If it does, happy are we!

Four things are mentioned that we are not to suffer as: a murderer, a thief, an evildoer and a busybody in other men's matters. It is significant that being a busybody is listed with murder and theft. However, if we suffer as a Christian, we are never to be ashamed.

Judgment begins with the people of God. The question is asked, "What will become of the godless and wicked if the righteous are barely saved?"

G. AN EXHORTATION TO THE ELDERS

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 5:1-4

Verse 1 proves that Peter was at Calvary and was a witness of Christ's sufferings.

Three times the Lord had told Peter to "feed my sheep" (John 21:15-17). Peter now handed this instruction on to the elders (verses 2-4). The main work of the shepherd is to feed the flock and take care of the sheep. This ministry is not done because of financial remuneration, nor is the spirit of the shepherd that of a dictator. He goes before the sheep and leads the way. His ministry is always controlled by love and self-sacrifice. He sees that the sheep are always well fed.

H. AN EXHORTATION TO HUMILITY

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 5:5-6

These two verses should be noted carefully. God sets Himself against the proud. The principle to be remembered is that if a person will humble himself, God eventually will lift him up.

I. AN EXHORTATION TO VIGILANCE

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 5:7-9

Satan is our enemy, and he is prowling about like a hungry, roaring lion. Vigilance is absolutely essential. We are to stand firm when he attacks and remember that other Christians are also going through these sufferings. During such times, we are to cast our worries and cares upon Jesus for He cares for us!

J. BENEDICTION

Scriptural Reference: I Peter 5:10-14

The epistle closes with a beautiful benediction. After you have suffered awhile, the God of all grace will perfect, stabilize, strengthen, and set you firmly in place.

The letter was carried by Silvanus, a faithful brother. Peter also wrote that Mark, his son, sent his greetings.

They were to greet one another with a kiss of love.

Lesson Six

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER PART I

A. THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER

Peter's second epistle was written to the same people to whom he wrote his first letter (II Peter 3:1).

The date of the writing is about AD 66 or 67, just before Peter's martyrdom in AD 68, the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and the end of Nero's reign. It was probably written about the same time as Paul's second letter to Timothy. Both Paul and Peter knew that martyrdom was near (II Timothy 4:6 and II Peter 1:14).

Peter claimed that he had been present at the transfiguration of Christ (II Peter 1:16-17) and had been warned by Jesus of his impending martyrdom.

Peter warned of the danger of apostasy and false doctrine. The epistle gives a prophetic picture of the apostasy of the last days and urges upon the believer preparedness of heart and life which alone can fit him to meet the dangers of the last days.

B. KEY VERSE

The key verse for this epistle is II Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

C. SALUTATION

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 1:1-2

Peter stated that he was Jesus Christ's servant and missionary. He wrote to those who had obtained the same precious faith through the righteousness of God. He then prayed for their spiritual growth. His desire for them was that grace and peace be multiplied.

A little later on, Peter wrote about additional virtues, but here he spoke only of the multiplication of grace and peace. These were to be abundantly given to them through the knowledge of God. The epistle both began and closed with emphasis upon the knowledge of God.

D. THE BASIS OF SAVING KNOWLEDGE

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 1:3-4

God has called us to glory and virtue. He has given us all the things that are needed for life and godliness by the power of God through the knowledge of God. The student should note the phrase "all things." Nothing has been left out; nothing is lacking!

How important is the knowledge of God! It is through the knowledge of God that one is able to receive eternal life.

By this same mighty power, He has given us wonderful promises so that we may escape from the moral decay that is in the world and become sharers of God's nature. When we consider all that God has promised us, we certainly agree with the apostle (verse 4) that God's promises are "exceedingly" great!

E. EIGHT DIVINE QUALITIES

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 1:5-8

Peter named eight virtues which we are to add to the blessings which God has multiplied to us. They are steps from earth to glory and will cause the child of God to become fruitful. Without them, he will be barren and unfruitful.

These eight divine qualities are: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. When we add these together, we have for the sum a fruitful life. The foundation is faith and the crown is love.

Again we should note that this fruitful life will be in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

F. MAKING OUR ELECTION CERTAIN

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 1:9-12

When these divine qualities are lacking, the professing Christian is short sighted and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from the old life of sin.

Peter exhorted his readers to give diligence, to work hard, to make certain of their calling and election. One need never be in doubt about God's selection of him, but neither should he take it for granted. As a person exercises the virtues listed, he will be certain of his election and will never stumble or fall away. Also by so doing, God will open wide the gates of heaven that the saint may enter into the eternal kingdom of our Lord. Although his readers already knew these truths, Peter was determined to keep stirring them up by way of remembrance.

G. PETER REMEMBERED THE MINISTRY OF OUR LORD

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 1:13-18

In this passage of Scripture, Peter recalled two incidents from the ministry of our Lord.

1. His Death

Some thirty-seven years before, Jesus spoke to him about the manner of death which he would suffer. Peter realized that this was now close at hand. He knew that he was going to suffer martyrdom, but did not draw back from it. In fact, he wrote about the subject joyfully. The expression of "putting off of my tabernacle" is a beautiful way of describing death. Certainly death is not to be feared!

2. Mount of Transfiguration

Peter assured his readers that he was not telling them fairy tales. He had witnessed with his own eyes the splendor and glory of Christ's transfiguration. He had heard with his own ears the majestic voice of God saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." Since he was a personal witness, he was able to certify concerning the power of Jesus Christ and the certainty of His return.

H. THE SURE WORD OF PROPHECY

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 1:19-21

Every Bible student should carefully studied these three verses.

1. Verse 19

After testifying of hearing the voice of God upon the Mount, Peter stated that we have a “*more sure*” word of prophecy. It is quite startling to read that Peter considered the Old Testament Scriptures more sure than the literal voice of God which he had heard. Because of this, we had better heed the Scriptures as a lamp shining in the darkness until the day breaks through the gloom and Christ, the Morning Star, shines in our hearts.

2. Verse 20

The truth that must be clearly understood is that no Scripture is a matter of personal interpretation. God’s truth is unchanging. A person cannot explain it to his own choosing. If he does so, the truth has not changed. It remains constant.

3. Verse 21

We shall quote from the Living New Testament which clearly explains the meaning here: “For no prophecy recorded in Scripture was ever thought up by the prophet himself. It was the Holy Spirit within these godly men who gave them true messages from God.”

The Word of God is the best defense against apostasy, and the Christian’s faith should rest squarely upon God’s inspired Word.

Lesson Seven

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER PART II

A. FALSE TEACHERS

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 2:1-3

Just as there were false teachers during the days of the prophets, there are false teachers who will come into the churches and introduce destructive heresies today. They will tell lies about God and deny the Lord who died for them upon the cross. Two main characteristics will be noted: immorality and greed. They will exploit the saints with false arguments. They will bring swift judgment upon themselves for God has already condemned them and their destruction is on the way.

B. THE JUDGMENT OF FALSE TEACHERS

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 2:4-6

Peter gave three examples out of the Old Testament to prove the certainty of judgment on these false teachers:

1. **The Angels that Sinned:** If God would have overlooked sin anywhere, it would have been with the angels. However, God did not spare them but cast them into hell and has kept them bound in pits of darkness awaiting judgment.
2. **The People to Whom Noah Preached:** God did not spare the ancient world of Noah's day. He brought a flood upon the ungodly and saved only eight people.
3. **Sodom and Gomorrah:** He condemned these cities to extinction, reducing them to ashes, making them an example to all the ungodly.

C. CHARACTERISTICS OF FALSE TEACHERS

Scripture Reference: II Peter 2:7-18

We shall list the terrible characteristics of these ungodly men:

1. Walk after the lust of uncleanness (verse 10)
2. Despise government (verse 10)
3. Presumptuous (verse 10)
4. Self-willed (verse 10)
5. Natural brute beasts (verse 12)
6. Spots and blemishes (verse 13)
7. Eyes full of adultery (verse 14)
8. Cursed children (verse 14)
9. Wells without water (verse 17)
10. Clouds carried with a tempest (verse 17)

Peter's language is very vivid in describing these people. In comparison, Peter described Lot as being a just man who vexed his soul as he saw the awful wickedness around him.

There is a wonderful promise in verse 9. The Lord knows how to rescue the godly out of temptation and trials. This promise should always be remembered.

In verse 10, these false teachers are described as despising government. This is a terrible sin and frequently is found in the church today.

Another phrase that we should note is found in verse 14, "beguiling unstable souls." It is a dangerous thing to be unsettled. How important it is to be rooted and grounded in the Word!

D. THE END OF THE APOSTATE

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 2:19-22

The person who is deceived and led astray by the false teacher becomes an apostate himself. His horrible end is described here. He is in a worse state than before he was saved. It would have been better for him to have never known the Lord as a Savior than to turn back into the pollutions of the world. Peter stated that such a person is like the dog who eats his own vomit and the pig who has been washed going back to wallowing in the mud.

E. SCOFFERS CONCERNING OUR LORD'S RETURN

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 3:1-4

The mocking inquiry of scoffers, "Where is the promise of His coming?" is a sign of the times. We should not be astonished but rather strengthened in our faith and our hope of Christ's return. Scoffers are only one more fulfilled prophecy of the near coming of the Lord.

F. ANSWER TO THE SCOFFERS

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 3:5-9

These scoffers are not only ignorant, but they are willingly ignorant. There is no excuse for this ignorance. There are many prophecies in the Scriptures relating to the return of our Lord in judgment. The fact of the flood destroying the world in Noah's day is well known. It is also a fact that this planet is reserved for judgment by fire. Even the scientists are fully persuaded that such a judgment will come.

The Lord is longsuffering. He does not desire that any should perish but that all should turn to repentance.

It is very significant to know that God is dealing with this world in a week of millennia. Each day is one thousand years long. The seventh day will be the Millennium. We are now down at the close of the sixth millennia.

G. THE LORD'S RETURN TO BE CATASTROPHIC

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 3:10-13

Planet Earth is a great time bomb. The chief chemicals, nitrogen, oxygen, and carbon, are all highly explosive. Apart from that, the earth's surface, in comparison to an egg, is as thin as the egg shell. However, it is a cracked shell which is in constant motion. The day will come when the elements will melt and the heavens will be on fire. At that time, there will be a new heaven and a new earth (Revelation 21:1).

H. CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS

Scriptural Reference: II Peter 3:14-18

The concluding exhortations may be stated as follows:

1. To live blamelessly in the light of their great hope (verse 14)
2. To remember the reason for the Lord's delay is to give men an opportunity to repent (verse 15)
3. To beware of being led astray by false doctrine (verse 17)
4. To grow in grace (verse 18).

Not only is it necessary to grow in grace but also in the knowledge of our Lord. There are two ways in which we may grow in this knowledge:

1. By growing in the knowledge of the, Word of God
2. By walking with the Lord and having constant fellowship with Him

Peter referred to Paul as "our beloved brother." He endorsed his epistles as being part of the Scriptures (verse 16) although he did admit that there were some things hard to understand. It is good to know that there was this cordial recognition as these great veterans of the gospel faced martyrdom.

Lesson Eight

THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN PART I

A. THE APOSTLE JOHN

The apostle John wrote five books of the New Testament: a gospel, three epistles, and Revelation. He was the son of Zebedee and Salome. (Salome was apparently a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus.) He was a partner in a fishing business that employed hired servants (Mark 1:16-20) and was acquainted with the high priest (John 18:15-16). He had first been a follower of John the Baptist, but then became one of the first five disciples of our Lord. He was one of the three disciples of the inner circle and the one closest to Jesus. Five times he is spoken of as the disciple “whom Jesus loved.”

John made Jerusalem his headquarters, caring for Mary, the mother of Jesus, until her death. After the destruction of Jerusalem, he lived at Ephesus. Here he lived to a great age and was the last apostle to die. Among his pupils were Polycarp, Papias, and Ignatius.

John is known as the “apostle of love,” but he was also a stern man who was intolerant of heresy. He was known to be great in his love for the brethren but strong in his condemnation of heresy.

B. THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN

The epistle was written about AD 90 from Ephesus. The author is not named, but there certainly is strong evidence that the author was the apostle John. In this epistle, John took a strong stand against the error of Gnosticism.

In the letter itself he stated the reasons for his writing:

1. That the child of God might have fellowship with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ and with one another (I John 1:3)

2. That the child of God might have the fullness of joy (I John 1:4)
3. That he might not sin (I John 2:1)
4. That he might recognize the grounds of his assurance of eternal life (I John 5:13)

C. THE HERESY OF GNOSTICISM

Morality in Ephesus was very low. The temple of Diana was a cesspool of sin in the name of religion. It is not surprising that with this low state of morality there should arise a heresy that would try to invade the church.

Gnosticism was a philosophy that attacked the truth of the incarnation. It taught that Jesus was either a theophany who was not human at all or He was the natural son of Joseph and Mary upon whom the Christ came at His baptism. They taught that all matter was evil which resulted in the two extremes: asceticism and antinomianism.

John answered these errors by emphasizing the incarnation and the power of the example of Christ's life.

D. CHAPTER ONE

1. Introduction

Scriptural Reference: I John 1:1-3

John introduced his epistle with a strong statement affirming the truth of the incarnation. He stated this with a declaration of personal experience by declaring:

- a. He had heard Christ.
- b. He had seen Christ.
- c. He had gazed upon Christ.
- d. He had touched Christ.

The epistle is introduced with a statement similar to that of the opening statement of John's Gospel. In the Gospel, John called Christ the Logos, the Living Word. Here in his epistle, he spoke of Christ as being the Word of Life. In the conclusion of this epistle,

John wrote concerning Jesus Christ: "This is the true God, and eternal life" (I John 5:20).

Eternal life has no beginning nor ending. Therefore this life was with the Father, but in the incarnation this life was made visible. John saw it and bore testimony to it.

"The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14).

John declared his personal experience of seeing and hearing Christ so that all may share in the blessing of also seeing and hearing the Word of Life, Jesus Christ.

John's purpose in writing the epistle was that they might experience fullness of joy. There is no joy greater than the joy of knowing the Lord. As a person experiences fellowship with Jesus Christ and receives eternal life, his joy becomes full.

2. God Is Light

Two things John declared that God is: Light and Love. "God is light" (I John 1:5). "God is love" (I John 4:8).

This truth reveals God's purity and holiness. It speaks of God's absolute, perfect holiness. In Him there is not even a shadow of darkness.

Darkness is a symbol of sin, ignorance and error. In God there is not even a shadow of sin or error. Sin and error are revealed in the presence of God. Flaws and stains which are not seen in the shade are revealed in the light. As the Christian draws nigh to God, all imperfections are clearly revealed.

3. Fellowship

Scriptural Reference: I John 1:6-7

Fellowship is a sharing of that which is common to all. There is no fellowship without this sharing. For this reason, there is no fellowship between light and darkness, truth and error, life and death.

For this reason, anyone who would claim that he is sharing in the life of Christ and still living a life of sin and darkness is lying. His

very life is a lie. Only as we walk in the light as Jesus is in the light are able to share a common life. As we walk in the light, we are cleansed from every sin by the blood of Jesus Christ. Anything less than this is not true fellowship.

4. Confession of Sin

Scriptural Reference: I John 1:8-10

Four times in this epistle, John accused the false teachers of being liars. God has said that all have sinned. If we deny this, we are only deceiving ourselves and making God a liar. In this case, the truth and His Word are not in us. It is only through heart-searching and confession that the joy of forgiveness and the blessing of cleansing can be experienced.

The student should carefully note that this is not referring to a willful abiding in open sin. If we are born of God, we shall be delivered from a life of bondage. Being human, however, there are many imperfections which will be revealed by the light. If we confess these, there will be cleansing and forgiveness. To experience this forgiveness, confession is absolutely essential.

E. CHAPTER TWO

1. Jesus, Our Advocate

Scriptural Reference: I John 2:1-2

An advocate is one called to the aid of another. It is a judicial term and used only in the writings of John (I John 4:10). In the Gospel of John, the word is translated "comforter" (John 14:16).

Having shown the assurance of the forgiveness, John warned against having a light view of sin. He admonished his readers to sin not. Yet, if any man sin, there is a righteous advocate to plead his cause. It is a single act of sin, not an abiding in sin, which is referred to here. Jesus is righteous and this gives Him the right to plead the cause of the child of God who fails.

Propitiation is satisfaction. Jesus Christ, through His death on Calvary, was able to satisfy the justice of God for all men. While His advocacy is for believers only, propitiation is for all men.

2. Knowing God

Scriptural Reference: I John 2:3-6

There is a true test that will prove whether or not we know God. It is that we keep His commands and live as Christ Himself lived. If a man says, "I know Him," and disobeys His commands, he is a liar and a stranger to the truth.

3. The Old and New Commandment

Scriptural Reference: I John 2:7-8

John stated that he was not writing a new commandment, for it has been here from the start. Yet it became new as they obeyed the commandment to love one another. The darkness in their lives disappeared and Christ's light shone in.

4. Light and Darkness

Scriptural Reference: I John 2:9-11

John emphasized the connection between love and hatred with light and darkness. If we love our brother, we are walking in light and there is nothing in us to cause us to stumble. However, if we hate our brother, we do not know where we are going because darkness has blinded us.

5. Exhortation to All

Scriptural Reference: I John 2:12-14

The term "little children" is applied to the entire church. The believers are divided between fathers and young men, those of maturity and experience and youth with their strength and vitality. The reason of addressing them separately is given:

Fathers: Because you have known Christ who is from the beginning.

Young Men: Because you have overcome Satan and because you are strong and the Word of God abides in you.

6. Love Not the World

Scriptural Reference: I John 2:15-17

The *world* (*kosmos*) is that system which acts as a rival of God. God loves the world of men (John 3:16), but we are not to love the system which opposes God. Friendship with the world is enmity with God (James 4:4).

No man can serve two masters. The world is the same as darkness, therefore God, who is light, is excluded. John gave two reasons for not loving the world:

- a. The things of the world are not of the Father
- b. The things of the world pass away

John named three things which constitute the things of the world:

- a. Lust of the flesh
- b. Lust of the eyes
- c. Pride of life

This trinity of evil desire is evident both in the temptation of Eve in the garden and Christ in the wilderness. It is clear that:

- a. One cannot love God and the world at the same time.
- b. Eternal life is evident in doing the will of God.

7. The Antichrist

Scriptural Reference: I John 2:18-23

The word *antichrist* only appears in John's epistles. It is identified with the man of sin (II Thessalonians 2) and the beast (Revelation 13). John uses the word as applying to all those false teachers who deny that Jesus is the Christ. They at one time belonged outwardly to the church, but they left. This separation proved their false profession. However, the true Christians have an unction or anointing which permit them to discern between the true and the false.

One statement should be especially noted here in verse 23. A person who doesn't believe in Christ cannot have God the Father, but he who has Christ has God the Father also.

8. Abiding In Christ

Scriptural Reference: I John 2:24-29

Emphasis is placed upon the necessity of remaining steadfast (abiding) in Christ. One can prove whether or not he is abiding in Christ by his style of living (I John 2:29). The unction (anointing) will teach them all truth which is to abide in Christ.

Lesson Nine

**THE FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN
PART II**

A. CHAPTER THREE

1. The Purifying Hope

Scriptural Reference: I John 3:1-3

The most sanctifying influence in the life of a believer is the hope that he shall see Jesus. God's love has permitted us to know that we are the sons of God, but we do not know entirely just what we shall be. However, we do know that we shall see Jesus and that we shall be like Him. This is the hope of the church and it has a tremendous purifying influence in the life of every saint.

2. Obligation of Purity

Scriptural Reference: I John 3:4-8

A definition of *sin* is given here in verse 4: "Sin is the transgression of the law." The devil has sinned from the very beginning and the man who abides in sin is of the devil. It was the reason of destroying the works of the devil that Jesus Christ came into the world. Jesus came to take away our sins. Therefore one cannot abide in Christ and abide in sin at the same time. The righteous man will live righteously even as Jesus Christ is righteous. There is no alternative to this principle of truth.

3. The Man Who Cannot Sin

Scriptural Reference:

"Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (I John 3:9).

This is not referring to an individual act of sin but rather to the habitual practice of sin. The man who is born of God has God's nature abiding within. As such, it is impossible for him to abide in sin and for God's seed to abide within him at the same time. He is either a child of the devil or a son of God. If a son of God, God's nature will not permit him to live a life of sin.

4. Marks of the Children of God

Scriptural Reference: I John 3:10-17

Here the children of God and the children of the devil are compared:

Children of God:

- Love the brethren (verse 14)
- Lay down our lives for the brethren (verse 16)
- Have compassion for our brother in his need (verse 17)

Children of the devil:

- Loves not his brother (verse 10)
- Abides in death (verse 14)
- Hates his brother and is a murderer (verse 15)
- Shuts up his bowels of compassion (verse 17)

Even as Cain hated Abel because of his righteous works, so the world hates the children of God. We are not to be surprised at this.

5. The True Test

Scriptural Reference: I John 3:18-24

The true test is that we love, not in word, but in deed and truth. If we keep His commandments and do those things pleasing to Him, we know that He abides in us and will answer our prayers (verse 22). We cannot always trust our own hearts. Sometimes our hearts would condemn us, but at such times we must remember that God is greater than our hearts and knows all things. By loving in deed and in truth, our hearts will be assured and we shall have confidence towards God (verse 21).

B. CHAPTER FOUR

1. False Prophets

Scriptural Reference: I John 4:1-6

There are many false teachers. These false teachers are to be revealed by the error they teach and the wrong spirit which dominates them. The test is concerning the truth of the incarnation and the deity of Jesus. Every spirit that does not confess the deity of Jesus is of the world and is the spirit of antichrist. Everyone who confesses the truth of the incarnation is of God. The world will listen to this wrong teaching because it has a kindred spirit. The children of God have nothing to fear from these false teachers and wrong spirits, because He who dwells within our hearts is greater than the forces of darkness in the world.

2. Love

Scriptural Reference: I John 4:7-21

The rest of chapter 4 is dealing with love. Twice John stated that God is love (verses 8 and 16). The love of God was manifested by Christ's death on the cross that we might have eternal life. God loved us before we loved Him, and we love Him because He first loved us (verse 19). In verse 18, love is contrasted with fear. Fear has torment, but love will cast out fear. The real proof that a man loves God is that he loves his brother. If he hates his brother and says he loves God, he is a liar.

C. CHAPTER FIVE

1. The Proof of Our Love

Scriptural Reference: I John 5:1-3

Everyone who loves God will also love them who are born of God. The real proof that we love God is that we shall keep His commandments. The commandments of God are not oppressive and will be kept by all who love Him.

2. The Victory of Faith

Scriptural Reference: I John 5:4-5

Everyone who is born of God has victory over the world. The power which gives us the victory is the faith that we have in the deity of Jesus. The person who is victorious over the world is the one who believes in the deity of Jesus.

3. The Witnesses In Earth and Heaven

Scriptural Reference: I John 5:6-9

When the soldiers pierced the side of our Lord on the cross, there came out blood and water (John 19:34). Just as Eve was taken from the side of Adam, so the church was born of blood and water from the side of Christ.

In this Scripture there are three elements named which bear witness to our salvation: spirit, water, and blood. John stated that these three are in agreement. They all testify to the same thing.

There are also three witnesses in heaven: Father, Word, and Holy Ghost. John was careful to state that these three are one. On earth the three witnesses agree in one, but in Heaven the three are one!

4. The Witness of the Spirit

Scriptural Reference:

“He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son” (I John 5:10).

The child of God has the witness within himself. The Holy Spirit witnesses to our spirit that we are born of God (Romans 8:16).

5. Life in the Son

Scriptural Reference: I John 5:11-13

The truth that eternal life is in the Son is very important. At the conclusion of this chapter we read: "This is the true God, and eternal life" (verse 20).

The fact is that whosoever has the Son has eternal life. If the presence of Christ withdraws from a life, he does not have eternal life. There is no such thing as possessing eternal life and at the same time abiding in willful transgression.

6. Certainty of Answered Prayer

Scriptural Reference: I John 5:14-15

There is a definite assurance of answered prayer when one prays according to God's will. God listens to the child of God praying when he prays according to His will. If God listens, He will also answer.

7. The Sin unto Death

Scriptural Reference: I John 5:16-17

There is a sin unto death which is the unpardonable sin. Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost cannot be forgiven (Matthew 12:31-32). It is a waste of time to pray for a person who has committed this sin.

If the Holy Ghost burdens a person to pray, then it is positive that he has not committed this sin. We are told to pray for our brother who may have sinned which is not unto death. God will hear and give him life. This is another strong Scripture which reveals the error of unconditional eternal security.

8. The Believer's Knowledge

Scriptural Reference: I John 5:18-20

Here are stated four things that the believer knows:

- a. Whosoever is born of God sins not.
- b. We are of God and the world around us is under Satan's power.

- c. Jesus has come and given us understanding.
- d. We are in Jesus Christ who is the true God.

9. Conclusion

Scriptural Reference:

“Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen” (I John 5:21).

John concluded his epistle with an exhortation against idolatry. Anything that takes God’s place in our hearts becomes an idol. We are to keep ourselves from anything of this nature.

Lesson Ten

THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

A. THE SECOND EPISTLE OF JOHN

This epistle is very similar to the Third Epistle of John. They were short, personal letters to friends which were preserved for the church. Undoubtedly written on the standard papyrus sheet of that day, each of them would have been one page in length. Both of these short letters were written about the same time and almost certainly were written in Ephesus.

The purpose of this second epistle was to warn against heresy and having fellowship with false teachers. At this particular time in the history of the church, there were many itinerant preachers. These men traveled from church to church, living at the expense of local congregations. Many times they were false teachers who sought to undermine the foundational doctrines. It was against these false teachers that John warned.

B. THE ELDER

The author of this epistle called himself “the elder.” Certainly he was none other than the apostle John who wrote the Gospel, the First Epistle of John and the Book of Revelation.

Elders were church officials who were ordained to minister within a local congregation. The term is not used with this meaning here. The word does not refer to an official but rather to the meaning of the term in the natural sense. The word *elder* here could be translated “the ancient” or “the aged.” It is from his position of age and experience that John wrote this epistle. Here we have John, an aged saint, one of the last of the first century Christians. He was one of the last disciples of Christ in the flesh and therein lay his authority to speak.

C. THE ELECT LADY

John addressed this letter to the “elect lady and her children.” Bible scholars have never been able to settle the question regarding the identity of this elect lady. There are two interpretations, either one of which may be correct. Both of these are given here although the writer believes that the second one is probably correct.

1. A Local Church near Ephesus

It is concluded that the elect lady is a church for she is loved by all who have known the truth. This would hardly be true if she were an individual. Also she is addressed in this epistle in the plural.

If she is a church, then her children would be the Christians who worship in that local assembly. Her elect sister would be another local assembly, possibly in Ephesus, where John worshiped.

It must be admitted that this interpretation could be correct for the church is feminine in gender, as is the bride of Christ.

2. An Unknown Lady

The simplicity of the epistle would cause a person to believe that it was addressed to an individual. The Greek here used for lady is *kuria*. It was not unknown for this to be a proper name. It is probable that the epistle was written to the elect Kuria.

She would have been a prominent lady, residing near Ephesus, well known in the community. Very likely her home was the meeting place of the local church. She had a sister who was now deceased, but whose children attended John’s congregation. The elect lady’s children had apparently visited their cousins and John had become acquainted with them. Having become acquainted with them, John wrote their mother this letter.

D. THE SALUTATION

The wording of the salutation is interesting. In other epistles the salutations are given in the form of a prayer. Here the salutation is a statement: “Grace, mercy and peace will be with us.” John did not pray that they might receive these gifts of the grace of God, he assured them that they will receive them.

E. LOVE AND TRUTH

Scripture Reference:

“Grace be with you, mercy, and peace, from God the Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love” (II John 3).

In this epistle love and truth are closely connected. It is in the truth that the elder loved the elect lady, and it is because of the truth that he wrote this epistle.

Truth tells us how we should love. *Agape* is the word for Christian love. This love will always seek the highest good of others. It is significant that John wrote in love to warn them. The word *truth* is used five times in the first four verses.

F. WARNING AGAINST THREATENING PERIL

Scriptural Reference: II John 4-9

John reminded the lady of the commandment to love one another. In verse 5, the commandment is to love; in verse 6 love is obeying His commands. Love is not just a soft, sentimental emotion with no direction. Rather love is revealed in a healthy principle which will cause us to do the right thing.

John now warned the lady against a spreading heresy which was a denial of the incarnation. He exhorted her to a self-examination in verse 8: “Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought.”

He then exhorted her to examine others on the basis of their abiding in the truth. The doctrine of Christ is the truth of the incarnation. Those who deny this truth have not God; those who continue in this truth have both the Father and the Son.

John called those who denied this truth deceivers. Such a man was both a deceiver and an antichrist.

G. NO COMPROMISE

Scriptural Reference: II John 10-13

There must be no compromise with false teaching. These false teachers were to be given no hospitality. A refusal of hospitality would help to stop the spread of the heresy. Not only were they not to be invited into the home, but they were not to be given a greeting on the street. Giving a man "God speed" is to encourage him and to fellowship him in his false teachings.

It would be a false love to invite such a one into our homes. For truth's sake, they are to be refused admission. This admonition given to the elect lady is one the church should remember in these last days of widespread heresy.

Lesson Eleven

THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

A. THE THIRD EPISTLE OF JOHN

This epistle was written by the apostle John about the same time as his first two epistles.

This was a very personal letter written to Gaius, emphasizing the duty of hospitality and warning against the danger of domineering leadership. In this letter John commended Gaius for entertaining Christian workers and denounced the inhospitable attitude of Diotrephes.

B. GAIUS

The name “Gaius” was very common in the New Testament. We might identify three other men by this name:

1. Gaius of Corinth (Romans 16:23; I Corinthian 1:14)
2. Gaius of Macedonia (Acts 19:29)
3. Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20:4-5)

The Gaius to whom this letter was written was not one of these men. Apparently he had been one of John’s converts, for John called him one of his children (verse 4). Three times in the first five verses, John called him “beloved.” This revealed the love John had for this man. He was a faithful man with a reputation for practical goodness.

C. DIOTREPES

This man was a leader in the local congregation. He did not accept the authority of John nor would he entertain itinerant missionaries. There is no suggestion that this man had wrong doctrines. He is pictured as a strong and dominant leader who loved to have the pre-eminence. It was this personal desire for authority that John condemned.

D. DEMETRIUS

The third character in this epistle is Demetrius. We are told little about this man. John commended him and said he had a good report of all men. Whether or not he was the silversmith, now converted, who was mentioned in Acts 19:24, we do not know. To assume that it was the same man would be a mere conjecture.

E. JOHN'S PRAYER FOR GAIUS

Scriptural Reference:

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth" (III John 2).

John knew that the soul of Gaius prospered and that he was a spiritual man. Therefore he could pray such a prayer that he would prosper and be in health even as his soul prospered. This prayer would tell us that there is nothing wrong in prospering in our business affairs. If Gaius prospered, his wealth would be kept dedicated to the work of God. This is something to be desired.

The Bible student should pause here and ask himself this question. Could I have this prayer prayed for me? Is my soul sufficiently prosperous that I would desire to be in health to the same degree?

F. THE DUTY OF HOSPITALITY

In the ancient world hospitality was a sacred duty. Hospitality was a virtue emphasized over and over. A bishop must be a man given to hospitality (I Timothy 3:2). Titus was told to be hospitable (Titus 1:8). A widow could only be honored if she had shown hospitality (I Timothy 5:10). The Romans were to be given to hospitality (Romans 12:13).

The Christian's home was the place of the open door and loving welcome. Hospitality is a wonderful ministry especially when it is extended to the ministry. John mentioned those who were preaching the name of Jesus and who accepted nothing from the unsaved (verse 7). Such ministers were worthy of encouragement. All who ministered to them would be fellow helpers of the truth (verse 8).

G. THE PRIDE OF DIOTREPES

The word *pre-eminence* does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. The sin of Diotrepes was one of proud ambition. He desired power and authority. He challenged the authority of John. His talk was wicked and senseless.

The word *prating* means to talk nonsense. He not only used insulting language against John, but he refused welcome to the traveling missionaries and told others not to. When some of the Christians tried to show hospitality to these itinerant preachers, Diotrepes tried to put them out of the church.

John instructed Gaius not to follow this bad example but to follow good (verse 11).

Apparently John had written the church a letter, but Diotrepes had refused to allow its publication. John said that he would deal with him when he saw him.

H. THE PRAISE OF DEMETRIUS

How refreshing it is to read John's words of praise for Demetrius. The goodness of Demetrius is all the more noticeable as it is contrasted with the pride of Diotrepes. There are three sources which witness to the good testimony of Demetrius:

1. All men
2. The truth
3. John and those with him

Lesson Twelve

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

A. THE AUTHOR

This epistle was written by Jude, the brother of James and half-brother of Jesus (Jude 1). He is mentioned in the following Scriptures: Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3.

Jude was not an apostle. It was not until after our Lord's resurrection that he acknowledged the messiahship of his Brother. During our Lord's ministry upon earth, Jude was an unbeliever. It was not until after Jesus appeared to James that Jude was converted.

B. THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

Even though this epistle contains only twenty-five verses, it is a very important book. In the matter of dealing with the seriousness of apostasy, it is unsurpassed. It contains some similarity to the second epistle of Peter. Although the date when this epistle was written is not known, it was probably between AD 70 and 80.

The epistle is Jewish in character; yet is to be applied to the church everywhere.

Jude quoted from two apocryphal books: Book of Enoch and Assumption of Moses. The fact that Jude quoted from these books does not make them divine any more than if a preacher today quoted from Shakespeare. In fact, the apostle Paul quoted from heathen poets.

C. SALUTATION

The salutation is beautiful and should be studied carefully. Jude spoke of himself as being the following:

1. A Servant of Jesus Christ

The Greek word *doulos* means more than a servant, it means slave. This is the only title he gave himself, a “slave of Jesus.”

2. A Brother of James

Jude was content with second place. He was satisfied to be known as the brother of James.

Jude wrote this letter to Christians who are sanctified, preserved, and called. This is clearly expressed in the Amplified New Testament, “To those who are called, dearly loved by God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ.”

D. CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH

Scriptural Reference: Jude 3-4

Jude had planned to write to his readers about the common salvation. This would have been a general statement concerning the gospel message. However, because of an alarming growth in apostasy, he was prompted to write this stern warning exposing the apostates and showing the seriousness of this condition.

Apostasy is a turning away from the truth. It is usually followed by perversion. The most serious characteristic of apostasy is that forgiveness and restoration are most difficult. The apostate seldom gets back into full fellowship with God. The backslider who falls into a single act of sin may be restored through sincere repentance and confession. The apostate is given over to delusion and seldom sees his need of repentance.

Jude described the ungodly men as doing two things:

1. Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness
2. Denying the only Lord God

These are an attack on holiness and the truth of the deity of Jesus. The church is still under attack on these two points. Lasciviousness may be defined as a license to sin. When the grace of God is taught as excusing sin and the oneness message is destroyed, every evil and corrupt act follows.

Jude warned that judgment always followed apostasy and it is necessary to contend for the pure faith of the apostles.

E. JUDE'S DESCRIPTION OF THE APOSTATES

Jude describes the apostate leaders within the church in very strong terms:

1. Ungodly men (verse 4)
2. Given to fornication (verse 7)
3. Filthy dreamers (verse 8)
4. Like brute beasts, they corrupt themselves (verse 10)
5. Spots in your expressions of love one to another (verse 12)
6. Clouds without water (verse 12)
7. Trees without fruit (verse 12)
8. Raging waves of the sea (verse 13)
9. Wandering stars (verse 13)
10. Murmurers (verse 16)
11. Complainers (verse 16)
12. Mockers (verse 18)
13. Sensual (verse 19)
14. Not having the Spirit (verse 19)

It is doubtful whether anyone could be condemned in any stronger terms. It certainly allows us to know the terribleness of apostasy.

In verse 12, Jude stated that they are twice dead and plucked up by the roots. This certainly proves the awful error of unconditional eternal security. These people had once been saved but now were eternally lost.

F. EXAMPLES OF JUDGMENT IN HISTORY

1. Israel (verse 5)

The Lord saved Israel out of Egypt and then destroyed them in the wilderness because of unbelief.

2. Fallen Angels (verse 6)

The fallen angels are also mentioned in II Peter 2:4. These are the angels Satan led in rebellion against God. They are being held in chains of darkness, awaiting judgment.

3. Sodom (verse 7)

Sodom and Gomorrah were notorious for homosexual sin or sodomy. These cities were destroyed by the fire of God. It is reasonable to suppose that the apostate leaders whom Jude attacked had also descended to sodomy and were perverting the grace of God to try to cover their sin.

G. REBELLION

The condition of apostasy has its beginning in presumption and rebellion. It is characterized by murmuring and complaining. Apostates do not hesitate to criticize and blaspheme those who are greater than themselves.

In contrast, Jude referred to Michael who refused to condemn the devil in insulting words as the two argued over the body of Moses. (Josephus wrote that God hid the body of Moses lest it be made an idol. Apparently this was the responsibility of Michael, and the devil tried to hinder.) The lesson shown here is that if the archangel would not scold against the devil, we should never speak evil of those in authority. Apostates do not hesitate to do so.

Jude gave three examples of Old Testament characters who were guilty of this sin. The apostates in the church were guilty of following the example of these three men.

:

1. **Cain**—He started a new religion based on works which resulted in violence.
2. **Balaam**—He prostituted God's gift for material gain.
3. **Korah**—He led a rebellion against the leadership of Moses and Aaron.

H. THE PROPHECY OF ENOCH

Enoch lived in the days which preceded the flood and witnessed the sins of that generation. He foresaw the Lord's return at the end of the age. This would be preceded by a terrible apostasy. He prophesied that the Lord would return with millions of His saints to execute judgment against the ungodly and to prove the terrible things they have done against God in rebellion.

The fact that Jude quoted from the Book of Enoch should not disturb us. He was simply quoting from a book which was well known at that time. It does not sanction the entire Book of Enoch. Also we should remember that Jude was writing by the inspiration of God.

I. EXHORTATION TO CONSTANCY IN THE FAITH

Scriptural Reference: Jude 20-23

Jude exhorted his readers to:

1. Build themselves up in the faith
2. Pray in the Holy Ghost
3. Keep themselves in the love of God
4. Look for mercy unto eternal life
5. Try to save those who are wavering

The expression “making a difference” would seem to refer to those who are wavering between truth and error. Many of those still can be helped. They were to save as many as possible, snatching them from the very flames of hell. At the same time, they must be careful they are not contaminated with their sins. They were to hate every trace of sin but be merciful to the sinner.

J. BENEDICTION

Scriptural Reference: Jude 24-25

This is a beautiful doxology. It assures the child of God that he will be presented faultless with great joy into the presence of the Lord’s glory.

This doxology also affirms that there is only one God and He is our Savior. Unto Him be glory, majesty, dominion, and power, now and forever, unto all the ages of eternity. Amen—so be it.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Self Help Test: Epistles IV

Lesson One

Fill in the blanks.

1. James, the author of the epistle, was the _____
2. At the Jerusalem Council, James served as the _____
3. James was the _____ Christian epistle written. It was penned about AD _____ from _____ and addressed to the _____.
4. In the salutation, James describes himself as a _____.
5. Quote James 1:12: _____

_____.
6. Trials help to develop a young convert into a _____.
7. God cannot be blamed for a man's temptation because:
 - a. _____.
 - b. _____.
8. In James 1:19-25, the apostle exhorted the Jewish Christians to _____ and to _____.
9. *Superfluity* means _____.
10. James 1:26-27 gives four requirements of true religion:
 - a. _____
 - b. _____
 - c. _____
 - d. _____

Name: _____ Date: _____

Self Help Test: Epistles IV

Lesson Six

Fill in the blanks.

1. II Peter was written about AD _____.
2. II Peter's key verse is _____.
3. Peter stated that he was Jesus Christ's _____.
4. II Peter gives a prophetic picture of _____.
5. The eight virtues which should be added to the blessings which God has multiplied to us are:
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
 - f.
 - g.
 - h.
6. The _____ is the "more sure" word of prophecy.
7. _____ Scripture is a matter of personal interpretation.
8. The Word of God is the best defense against _____.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Self Help Test: Epistles IV

Lesson Eight

1. Name the biblical books written by John the apostle.
2. What four reasons were give for writing I John?
3. What did the philosophy of Gnosticism teach?
4. John began this epistle by affirming what great truth?
5. John declared that God is light. What is the meaning of this statement?
6. What happens when we walk in the light?
7. What is essential to experience forgiveness?
8. What is one sure test that proves whether or not a man knows God?
9. What did John mean by stating, "Love not the world"?
10. What did John teach regarding "abiding in Christ"?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Self Help Test: Epistles IV

Lesson Ten

Fill in the blanks with the words below:

Agape	compromise	elder
fellowship	heresy	love
personal	truth	walking

1. II John may be described as a _____ letter.
2. II John was written to warn against _____ and having _____ with false teachers.
3. John called himself the _____.
4. All who know the _____ love the “elect lady.”
5. John rejoiced because he found the lady’s children “_____ in truth.”
6. John stated that we should _____ one another.
7. _____ is the word for Christian love.
8. There must be no _____ with false doctrine.

