

**THY
KINGDOM
COME**

**13. Other New Testament Letters
James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3 John, Jude**

Tim Attaway

**A Teaching Commentary
of the New Testament**

Note – This piece has been segmented out of a larger document.

© Copyright 1997, 1999, 2007 by Tim Attaway
All Rights Reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without prior written permission from the author.

Unless otherwise stated, the Bible translation used in this commentary is taken from the HOLY BIBLE: NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION copyright © 1978 by the New York International Bible Society.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. JAMES	1
1.1 GREETING	2
1.2 PERSEVERANCE THAT BUILDS MATURITY.....	2
1.3 TREATMENT OF FELLOW MAN	4
1.4 FAITH WITHOUT WORKS	5
1.5 CAUTION IN SPEECH	6
1.6 WISDOM FROM HEAVEN	6
1.7 SUBMIT TO GOD, RESIST THE DEVIL.....	7
1.8 MISCELLANEOUS COUNSEL.....	8
2. THE LETTERS OF PETER	11
3. FIRST PETER	12
3.1 GREETING	12
3.2 LIVING HOPE	12
3.3 LIVING STONES.....	13
3.4 GODLY HOUSEHOLDS	14
3.5 GODLY RELATIONSHIPS.....	15
3.6 LIVE FOR GOD.....	16
3.7 REJOICE IN SUFFERINGS.....	17
3.8 MISCELLANEOUS INSTRUCTIONS	18
3.9 CONCLUSION	18
4. SECOND PETER	20
4.1 GREETING	20
4.2 GODLY QUALITIES	20
4.3 EYEWITNESSES OF HIS MAJESTY	20
4.4 FALSE TEACHERS.....	21
4.5 THE DAY OF JUDGMENT	24
5. THE LETTERS OF JOHN	26
6. FIRST JOHN	27
6.1 LIGHT, LIFE, AND TRUTH.....	27
6.2 WALK AS JESUS DID	28
6.3 THE ANTICHRIST	29
6.4 CHILDREN OF GOD	29
6.5 SPIRITS AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD	30
6.6 LOVE.....	31
6.7 ETERNAL LIFE	32
7. SECOND JOHN	34
7.1 GREETING	34
7.2 LOVE.....	34
7.3 FALSE TEACHERS.....	34
7.4 CONCLUSION	34
8. THIRD JOHN	36
9. JUDE	38

9.1	GREETING	38
9.2	FALSE TEACHERS	38
9.3	ABIDE IN GOD’S LOVE.....	39
10.	TOPICAL INDEX.....	40
11.	INDEX OF SCRIPTURE REFERENCES	42

1. James

There is more than one prominent James in the early church. James, the brother of John, was an apostle. James was also the name of one of the sons of Mary and Joseph – the half-brother of Jesus. We know from the Gospels that Jesus' brothers were not his followers during his earthly ministry. Mark 3:21 says that when Jesus' family learned how he was conducting his ministry, "they went to take charge of him, for they said, 'He is out of his mind.'" John 7:5 says, "For even his own brothers did not believe in him." After the resurrection, things changed. Acts 1:14 says, "They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers." The events of the crucifixion and the resurrection were sufficient to convince them that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. 1 Corinthians 15:7 indicates that the resurrected Jesus specifically appeared to his half-brother James. Thus James became a follower. He also became a leader in the church.

James, the apostle and the brother of John, was killed in Acts 12:2. Subsequent to that, Peter was miraculously released from prison. He went to the home where the church was assembled. In Acts 12:17 we read, "Peter motioned with his hand for them to be quiet and described how the Lord had brought him out of prison. 'Tell James and the brothers about this,' he said, and then he left for another place." This is a reference to James, the brother of Jesus. He obviously had a place of prominence in the church by this time. We see James giving counsel as a leader of the church in Acts 15:13 and again in Acts 21. He was an overseer or bishop in the church at Jerusalem.

The Epistle of James does not say which James wrote the letter. James the apostle died quite early in the life of the church, earlier than this letter was likely written. It is not totally impossible that the author was some James other than the two mentioned above. It is highly unlikely. That the letter was written by James the brother of Jesus is fairly universally accepted.

The Book of James is an extremely practical book. It is similar in style to the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament (e.g. Proverbs.) It has an underlying assumption that the Christian life should produce fruit. The people of Christ ought to be about the business of Christ. Because of this emphasis on "doing," Martin Luther actually challenged its place in Scripture. Luther's reformation started as a reaction to the fact that the Catholic Church was adding works as a requirement for salvation. His desire was to bring back a pure theology of salvation by grace alone. Because of that, he found the emphasis on works in James to be distasteful and tried to have the book removed from the canon of Scripture. Other church leaders of his time did not share his feelings and fortunately preserved the place of James in the Bible.

James never embraced a salvation by works theology. He knew that Ephesians 2:8-9 said:

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.

James also knew that the story did not stop there. The next verse, Ephesians 2:10, says:

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

It is very fortunate that the Book of James has been preserved for us. James grew up in the same home as Jesus. By reading the wisdom that he offers, we have reflected to us the things that Mary and Joseph taught their boys as they grew into men. The book has been compared to

the Sermon on the Mount in its approach to living a holy life. It is understandable, since James and Jesus sat at the feet of the same teachers as young boys.

1.1 Greeting

James 1:1

James 1:1 identifies the author as “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.” He does not claim to be the brother of the Lord and probably felt unworthy to do so. Like the rest of, he is the Lord’s servant. The letter is addressed to “the twelve tribes scattered among the nations.” The audience was intended to be Hebrew Christians. This would be in line with James, the brother of Jesus. He was the head of the church at Jerusalem, which was primarily (or completely) a group of Jewish Christians. We know from Acts and from Paul’s writings (particularly Galatians) that James was not really involved in the outreach to the Gentiles.

1.2 Perseverance that Builds Maturity

James 1:2-27

In Romans 5:3-5, Paul wrote:

Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

James echoes those ideas in this section. He says that we should have joy in our trials. James 1:2 says, “the testing of your faith develops perseverance.” Perseverance builds maturity in us. Only when we are mature are we really complete. Note that this is a predominant theme in Hebrews 12 as well.

It is God’s desire to bring us to maturity. James 1:5-8 says,

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

God wants us to be wise. He freely grants wisdom to those who seek it. It important to understand what James means by wisdom. Remember that many of the letters that we have surveyed have dealt with the issue of false doctrine in the church. Among the prominent heresies of that time (and this time) is Gnosticism. The Gnostics taught that salvation is gained through knowledge. Our goal in life is to strive to attain understanding of the mysteries that empower us to rise above the physical world. The striving led to dissensions and unrest. It did not seem to lead people into disciplined and peaceful lives.

This is not the kind of wisdom that James encouraged people to seek. James 3:13-18 gives James’ definition of wisdom. It is practical knowledge that manifests in Christ-like behavior.

Also, contrary to what the Gnostics taught, knowledge is not attained through striving, asceticism, and other methods. It is freely available from God. Just ask. He did add one caveat, however. Do not bother to ask God for something that you do not believe he will give

you. We are to approach God in confidence. Jesus taught us that if we ask for anything that is consistent with the nature and character of God and his purposes, then it will be granted. James has already told us that God desires to give us his wisdom. Therefore we should expect to receive it when we request it.

Continuing with the theme of perseverance that leads to maturity, James turns to the topic of worldly riches. Those who have little are engaged in a circumstance that calls for perseverance. They are in training for maturity. Therefore they should take pride – rejoice in their condition. Those who are rich have no cause to rejoice in those riches, for they are fleeting. They can pass as quickly as the beauty of a flower when exposed to scorching heat. James' teaching here was not in line with common teachings – then or today. Wealth is generally considered to be preferable over a lack of wealth. The Bible does not teach that money is inherently evil (although it clearly teaches that the love of money is evil). It is not always a blessing, however. Remember that Proverbs 13:8 says, "A man's riches may ransom his life, but a poor man hears no threat." Many a man's life has been consumed trying to preserve and increase his wealth, to the detriment of everything else in his life. Our wealth can possess us rather than the other way around.

James calls upon people to persevere, particularly in the face of temptation. We are not to blame God for temptation (and our failure under temptation). James 1:14-15 says, "Each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death."

God is not the source of temptation. In fact, 1 Corinthians 10:13 teaches us that God allows temptation (it does not say that he is the source of it) but always provides us a way to deal with it when it happens. Hebrews 2:18 affirms that Jesus, who faced temptation himself, stands ready to assist us in our times of temptation. Successfully dealing with temptation moves us towards the maturity that we desire.

God is not the source of temptation that leads us to destruction. He is the source of our ability to overcome. James 1:16-18 says:

Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

God is the source of good and perfect gifts, not those which destroy us. His desire is to lead us into truth rather than deception. He wants to lead us to maturity and the ability to be overcomers. We must nurture the word of truth that he has planted in us. According to James 1:19-21, we do this by:

- Being quick to listen.
- Being slow to speak.
- Being slow to anger.
- Ridding ourselves of immorality and evil.

As mentioned above, James' concept of wisdom is not strictly an intellectual pursuit. It is a knowledge that manifests itself in a change of behavior. It is a very practical, life-changing thing. James 1:22-25 says:

Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. But the

man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does.

What James is saying (in a nice way) is that anyone who hears the word of truth and does not do what it says is stupid. James 1:22 in the King James Version tell us “Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only.” I like that rendering, even with the “ye.” It seems incredible to James that anyone would hear and understand the truth of God but not do what it says. It should seem incredible. The word of God is life. Simply knowing it does not bring life, however. Doing it is required. Doing “the perfect law that gives freedom” brings a blessing. It means yielding control, however, and thus so many will not yield to it.

Trying to practice religion without yielding to the word of God is useless. His truth must be evidenced in our lives. As some practical examples, James 1:26-27 says:

If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

1.3 Treatment of Fellow Man

James 2:1-13

The wisdom of God should be manifest in the way that we treat one another. Thus in James 2:1 James admonishes us not to show favoritism, especially in church gatherings. He applies this particularly in reference to the treatment of the poor vs. the rich. They are to be treated the same by the church. People tend to kowtow to the rich and treat the poor as a burden. In our hearts, most of us would rather identify with the rich than the poor (because we would rather be rich than poor). James 2:5-7 puts this in perspective, however:

Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are dragging you into court? Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong?

The fact is that the poor have a special standing before God. We have no business treating them as second-class citizens, because in the Kingdom they are not. Even in this kingdom, we tend to have more trouble with the rich than the poor. Although it is not a blanket indictment of wealthy people, many got that way by exploiting others, manipulating them through legal action, etc. Why would we want to give them a special place of honor in the church? God does not.

Leviticus 19:18 teaches us to “Love your neighbor as yourself.” This law does not distinguish between the rich and the poor. Thus when we show favoritism, we break this law. James warns that anyone who breaks part of the law breaks all of it. At times we try to rationalize our behavior by saying, “Well I may have sinned in this little-bitty area, but look at all of the things that I have done right.” The fact is that the law is like a piece of glass. Either it is broken or it is not. Either we are guilty before God or we are not. Showing favoritism breaks the law. It brings guilt before God just like murder or adultery. That is not to say that the consequences are identical, but it is equally wrong in God’s sight.

We are to avoid favoritism. We are to be people of mercy, because mercy is of God. God will give mercy to those who show mercy. James 2:13 says:

Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

1.4 Faith Without Works

James 2:14-26

James continues with the theme of maturity and of wisdom that changes behavior. James 2:14-17 says:

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead.

The question "Can such faith save him?" has bothered many people over the years. Is James teaching that works are necessary for salvation? No. James is teaching that people who are hearers of the word but not doers have never submitted to the truth of God. It is not hearing the word of God that saves. It is submitting to it. If a person encounters God without becoming a follower then he was never really saved.

Being a follower of God means using our resources to do the work of God. We are not to be people of hollow platitudes. This is very practical and simple. If you see a brother in need and you have it within your means to assist him, do so. Do not simply tell him that you will pray for him. Pray with your hands, feet and resources and get busy helping him. James 2:18 says "I will show you my faith by what I do."

Faith is not a matter of intellectual assent. James 2:19 says:

You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that – and shudder.

God is not looking for people who merely believe in him. The demons believe in God and probably know him better than we do. Knowing him or knowing about him has not produced obedience in them. In spite of their belief, they live in rebellion. They are not submitted.

Mental assent about the existence and power of God does us no more good than it does the demons or Satan himself. Faith is required, and faith is a life-changing submission to his word. In Greek, the concept of faith is more something that you do than something you have.

As Paul did in Romans 4:3 and Galatians 3:6, James 2:23 quotes Genesis 15:6, "Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness." The events of Abraham's life did not constitute mental assent to the existence of God. He had faith, manifest in actions. When he took Isaac up the mountain to be sacrificed, this was motivated by total submission to the word of God and faith in the God of the word. That obedience is the sort of faith that brings righteousness. James also cites the faith of Rahab, manifest in actions, which resulted in her life being spared. This is the kind of faith that saves. James 2:26 says:

As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead.

1.5 Caution in Speech

James 3:1-12

In the beginning of chapter 3, James turns to the issue of speech. Our wisdom and maturity should be evidenced in our speech. He begins with the subject of teachers. James 3:1 says:

Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

A teacher is one who seeks to influence the lives of others through his speech. Anyone who seeks this kind of authority over others should be careful that he speaks the word of the Lord when he teaches. God will strictly judge false teachers. The word of God teaches that leaders in the church are held to higher standards. This verse enforces that concept.

Speech is powerful, more than we probably realize. God spoke the universe into existence. There is power in spoken words. A mature individual, submitted to the truth of God, must master the words that he speaks rather than being mastered by them. James 3:3-6 says:

When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. Likewise the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole person, sets the whole course of his life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell.

Our tongue is to us like a rudder to a boat. If the pilot of a boat does not control the rudder, then the boat will float about under the control of the currents and will not go where the pilot desires. The rudder must be controlled. Likewise we must control our tongues or they will control us. Uncontrolled speech will take us places that we do not want to go. It will produce evil and lead to corruption.

How ironic that this same part of us has the power to bless and the power to curse. We can bring great benefit to people and we can destroy them, all with the same tongue. James 3:9-11 says:

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring?

What a potent thought! How can the same mouth praise God and curse one who is made in God's image? We can control this. We must control this. Otherwise we are not experiencing the maturity and wisdom of God. We are hearing but not doing his word.

1.6 Wisdom from Heaven

James 3:13-18

James 1:5 said,

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

In this section, James gives his definition of wisdom. James 3:13-18 says:

Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.

But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness.

James says that wisdom is:

- Evidenced by living a good life.
- Evidenced by deeds performed in humility.
- Contrary to envy and selfishness.
- Contrary to the “wisdom” of the devil.
- Not characterized by disorder or evil practices.
- Pure.
- Peace-loving.
- Considerate.
- Submissive.
- Merciful.
- Fruitful, i.e. causes the one who has wisdom to bear good fruit.
- Impartial.
- Sincere.

The “wisdom” of the Gnostics and other sects did not produce this life-changing behavior in the lives of its adherents. The wisdom of God produces this sort of fruit in the lives of those who are submitted to it – not those who simply know about it. It produces a life of peace that brings a harvest of righteousness.

1.7 Submit to God, Resist the Devil

James 4

Much of the evil in our lives comes from trying OUR WAY to get the things that WE WANT. This drive motivates people to commit all kinds of sins. The wise man will recognize that everything that we really need comes from God, and comes to us HIS WAY. James 4:2-3 says:

You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

God is the source of every good and perfect gift. He does not give us everything that we desire, which is a good thing since much of it would destroy us. When we ask for things with the right motives, we receive the things that we need. Life really is easier than we try to make it. So many of us abhor dependence, but we are fools if we ever get to believe that we are self-sufficient. God is our supply. How much easier our lives would be if we would simply recognize that and work within that reality. That would be wisdom and maturity. That would be submission.

James 4:4-6 indicates that we need to decide whether we will live lives in submission to God or in conformance to the world. You cannot have it both ways. James 4:4 says, "Don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?" This does not mean that we should seek to be in constant conflict with the world around us. We should not seek out discord and strife. If we are living lives in harmony with God, discord and strife will find us. We must choose, however. James 4:7-10 says:

Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

The mandate to submit to God has run throughout the entire epistle. In doing so, we must implicitly resist the devil. There is good news associated with that, however. If you resist the devil, he will flee from you, at least for a season. The devil is not an all-powerful omnipresent being. He is finite. He is not going to waste time on you when you are strong in your resistance to him. He will come back from time to time to ensure you still have your armor on, but as a general rule he will go find someone else to harass if he is getting nowhere with you.

Therefore we should resist the devil and draw near to God. When we do, he will draw near to us as well. Remember the image of the father of the prodigal son. When the son approached, the father ran to meet him. God will indeed meet us more than halfway.

The mandate to "grieve, mourn, and wail" has the same connotation as the Beatitude, "Blessed are they who mourn." We are to grieve over our sin. We are to bemoan our rebellion and wash our hand of our sins. This is how we humble ourselves before the Lord. When we do, he will lift us up.

I am struck at how the passage above shows the difference in the character of God and the character of Satan. If you were to turn this passage around and write it for a follower of Satan, it would have to say:

Resist God, and he will wait patiently for you to return, like the father of the prodigal son. Come near to the devil and he will consume you. ... Humble yourselves before Satan, and he will push you down lower than you ever imagined you could go.

God is always there, wooing us back, even when we resist. He desires to draw near to us in fellowship and to lift us up out of humility. The devil is there for us when we make ourselves accessible to him. He desires to destroy us.

As part of our submission to God, we must be careful not to slander or to judge our neighbor. Furthermore we must not be presumptuous about our lives. We must live one day at a time, submitting to God for the day, and should not presume about the future.

1.8 Miscellaneous Counsel

James 5

James 5:1-6 is a condemnation of men who have achieved wealth through dishonest means. Their wealth will rise up in judgment against them. All that they have gathered will turn to rot and corrosion and the cries of those they have wronged will condemn them.

James 5:7-11 is a call to the church to patiently await the return of Jesus. Just as a farmer has faith that the seed he planted will bring forth a crop, we must have patient faith that God's promises will come to pass. We must persevere, even in the face of suffering.

James 5:12 is a reminder to be people of truth. Our reputation should be such that people know that our words are true. When we say we will do something we do it. We should not be drawn into elaborate oaths. James 5:12 says, "Let your 'Yes' be yes, and your 'No,' no, or you will be condemned." Note that this echoes the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:37).

James 5:13-16 says:

Is any one of you in trouble? He should pray. Is anyone happy? Let him sing songs of praise. Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.

Anointing with oil is a practice that occurs frequently in the Old Testament. The first time we see it is in Genesis 28. In this chapter, Jacob had his "Jacob's ladder dream," in which God affirmed that he was heir to the promises made to Abraham. Genesis 28:16-19 says:

When Jacob awoke from his sleep, he thought, "Surely the Lord is in this place, and I was not aware of it." He was afraid and said, "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven."

Early the next morning Jacob took the stone he had placed under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on top of it. He called that place Bethel, though the city used to be called Luz.

The next time we see the practice is in Exodus 29, when Aaron and his sons anointed with oil to prepare them for the priesthood. In Leviticus 8, Moses anointed the tabernacle with oil. In 1 Samuel 10, Samuel anointed Saul with oil, preparing him to be king. In 1 Samuel 16, Samuel anointed David with oil, preparing him to be king.

There are many other references to anointing with oil in the Old Testament. The oil was symbolic of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Thus anointing someone with oil was acting out a prayer that the Holy Spirit would fill that person and minister in or through that person.

In the Old Testament, however, anointing was to a select few, just as the ministry of the Holy Spirit was to a select few. In the New Testament, this changed.

In Mark 6, Jesus sent the twelve out to minister. Mark 6:13 says, "They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them." This is the time that we see "common people" anointed. Jesus came to pour out the Holy Spirit on the masses. Thus anointing became a practice to be applied to all believers and not just a select few.

This brings us to James' instruction. Sick people should call upon the elders of the church to pray for them and to anoint them with oil. Again, this is a physical act requesting the Holy Spirit to minister to that person, bringing healing. We may not really understand how putting olive oil on somebody's forehead can have anything to do with that person being healed. That is extremely irrelevant. We do it because God's word says to do it. We are to be doers of the word and not hearers only.

There are some other critically important items included in this healing passage. Intertwined with healing is confession and forgiveness of sin. God is concerned with the whole person. He is every bit as concerned about a sick spirit as he is a sick body. Eternally speaking, it is a bigger issue. Not only is the spirit ultimately more important than the body, but the body and the spirit are inextricably related. Often a legitimate bona fide physical illness has a spiritual cause. (See the section entitled "The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts" in the section on 1 Corinthians for a fuller discussion.) Unconfessed and unforgiven sin can be a barrier to receiving healing. Thus confessing and receiving forgiveness may be a key to healing taking place. Often the Holy Spirit will reveal this through a word of knowledge to the elders or to the sick person during the ministry encounter.

James believes in the power of prayer. He believes in the power of prayer to heal.

The last instruction from James is for believers to hold one another to the truth of the Gospel. James 5:19-20 says:

My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins.

Consistent with the teaching in Hebrews (e.g. chapters 2 and 6), it is possible to walk away from the truth having once tasted it. We are to be in enough of a relationship with one another that we can try to prevent that from happening. Our relationship with other believers should form a safety net that prevents us from drifting. When you turn a brother back towards the Lord, you do nothing less than save his life. You bring him back into a relationship with Jesus, where his multitude of sins may be forgiven. Everybody wins.

James has called us to maturity. He has called us to the wisdom of God, which manifests itself in works for the Kingdom of God. He has called us to rise above evil and sin. He has called us to be a supportive community, caring for one another with love. It is hard to understand how Martin Luther or anyone else could have ever doubted that this is legitimate Scripture. This is down-to-earth, practical, "saved by grace to do works for the Kingdom" teaching.

2. The Letters of Peter

First and Second Peter both begin with a statement indicating that they were written by the apostle Peter. When the Gospels closed, Peter was the head apostle. At the beginning of the book of Acts, he ministered in power, preaching and healing in Jerusalem. He is mentioned frequently in the first twelve chapters of Acts. At the beginning of chapter 12, however, the Romans imprison Peter with the intention of executing him. He had been put in jail overnight by the Jews on a previous occasion, but this time it was serious. An angel delivered him from prison in chapter 12, which was a great miracle, but the incident may have shaken Peter. Just before Peter was imprisoned, James was actually executed. This business of being an apostle was exacting a great price from some.

Whether or not the imprisonment caused Peter to take a lower profile we do not know, but Peter virtually disappears from the scene after chapter 12 of Acts. The focus of the book shifts to Paul. Peter is mentioned again once in Acts 15:7 as being present at the Jerusalem council. He is mentioned only in passing in 1 Corinthians 15:5. He is publicly rebuked by Paul in Galatians (one of Paul's earliest letters) for not only tolerating, but supporting the Judaizers.

We are not exactly sure what happened to Peter. It is possible that he never stopped aggressively preaching and ministering in the name of Jesus. Perhaps the focus of Acts shifts to Paul because it was written by Luke, who was Paul's traveling companion. Remember that the apostles Andrew, Philip (probably), Bartholomew, Thomas, Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot are never mentioned outside of the Gospels, but that does not mean that they failed to serve their Lord after his resurrection and ascension.

Whatever happened to Peter in the interim, we do find him writing these two letters later in his life. Both epistles are believed to have been written from Rome. We assume that Peter arrived at Rome later in his life and was eventually executed there. (Tradition says that Peter was crucified upside down.) Roman Catholic tradition long taught that Peter left Jerusalem (probably soon after Acts 15), traveled to Rome, and founded the church there. If that were true, however, it is inconceivable that Paul would not have greeted him in Romans 16, where he greets a host of people in the Roman church by name. It is now generally assumed that Peter arrived in Rome later in life.

3. First Peter

3.1 Greeting

1 Peter 1:1-2

The letter is from the apostle Peter to “God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia” according to 1 Peter 1:1. This was written to be a circulated letter rather than as a letter to a specific church.

In 1 Peter 1:2, Peter identifies these believers as those “who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.” The subject of foreknowledge vs. predestination was discussed in the opening section of Ephesians. Foreknowledge by God does not necessarily imply predestination.

1 Peter 1:2 says that we were sanctified by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of being obedient to Christ.

3.2 Living Hope

1 Peter 1:3-25

1 Peter 1:3-5 says:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.

We have living hope! This is part of the inheritance that we have as a result of the resurrection of Jesus. The hope that we have can never fade. God keeps it for us and protects it. Furthermore he shields us until the day that our ultimate salvation is revealed.

Until that happens we may have to endure suffering and trials of various kinds. These serve to refine our faith. 1 Peter 1:6 says that our faith is more precious than gold. It brings us assurance of our salvation. It brings us joy.

In the past, the Holy Spirit ministered through the prophets, revealing to us the events that would transpire in the life of Christ – both the suffering and the glories. The prophets longed to see the events unfold. They sought to understand the timing of these events. 1 Peter 1:12 says that even the angels have longed to see these events unfold. Thus those to whom Peter wrote should rejoice to have seen these events unfold in their lifetimes. We should rejoice to be the beneficiaries of these events.

The joy that we have and the living hope should call us to live disciplined lives. We are not to be conformed to the world. We are to abandon our pre-Christian ways and be conformed to Christ. We are called to holiness. 1 Peter 1:15-16 says:

But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: “Be holy, because I am holy.”

“Holy” is a term that gets tossed around a great deal, but what does it mean to be holy?

Holiness is the very essence of God. We see this in Isaiah 6:3 when the angels before God cry out, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." We see a similar scene in Revelation 4:8, where the four living creatures cry "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was, and is, and is to come." The Holy Spirit is the Holy Spirit because he is the Spirit who is the very essence of God. Jesus was called the Holy One of God because he was of the very essence of God.

In the Bible there are many things that are referred to as holy. The first occurrence of the word in the Bible is in Genesis 2:3:

And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done.

The second occurrence of the word in the Bible is Exodus 3:5:

"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."

Exodus 19:6 calls the Jews to be a “kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” The furnishings of the tabernacle were called holy. When Moses went up Mount Sinai, the mountain was called holy.

Things that are holy are things that are consecrated to God and to his purposes. They are things that are to be revered by man. They are to be treated with respect or even fear and trembling.

For us to be holy is for us to assume the very essence of God. We are to be consecrated to God and his purposes. We are to revere, respect, and even fear God to the point that it is reflected in our lives and our behavior. We cannot achieve holiness on our own. We become holy by putting our own wills to death and letting the Holy Spirit live through us.

Being holy will make us out of step with the world. 1 Peter 1:17 says to “live your lives as strangers here in reverent fear.” We really are visitors here, with our citizenship elsewhere. It has been God’s plan since the beginning of time to redeem us for citizenship in his Kingdom. According to 1 Peter 1:19-20, the price of our citizenship was bought “with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.” That is amazing. God knew before he created man that we would rebel. He knew that Jesus would have to die for our sins. He created us anyway because he loves us. He really wanted us.

He loves us. If we are to be holy – which means that we assume the very essence of God – then we must love one another.

3.3 Living Stones

1 Peter 2:1-17

Peter calls upon us to get rid of sin in our lives and to crave the Spirit, who will mature us in our salvation. We are to become living stones.

Peter quotes Isaiah 28:16:

See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him
will never be put to shame.

Jesus was this cornerstone, the foundation for building the Kingdom of God. As sanctified Christians, we become the building blocks which are laid on that foundation. He also quotes Psalm 118:22, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone." Jesus was the cornerstone, but he was rejected by men. God chose him for the role. Likewise we, as living stones, can expect to be rejected by men. That does not mean that God will reject us. He will knit us together into his Holy Temple. 1 Peter 2:9-10 says:

But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

God originally called the Jews into his royal priesthood and his holy nation (Exodus 19:6). They refused to be either. They were to be the people who would declare the praises of God to a dark world. They would not do so. Long ago Hosea had prophesied that God would find another people. Hosea 2:23 says, "I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'" Peter points out that we are the fulfillment of this prophecy.

As God's living stones, we are to live lives that will bring him glory in the lost world. This was the failing of the Jews. They were so busy fighting among themselves that they never got around to the business of telling the rest of the world about God. We cannot make the same mistake. We must love one another – genuinely and deeply – and live lives worthy of our calling. Our lives should bring glory to God. Consistent with Paul's teachings in Romans 13, Peter says that part of that means living in submission to civil government. We need to be people of good reputation, and that means staying out of trouble as best we can. 1 Peter 2:17 calls upon us to:

Show proper respect to everyone: Love the brotherhood of believers, fear God, honor the king.

3.4 Godly Households

1 Peter 2:18-3:7

Following the mandate above involves maintaining proper relationships in the home. This is consistent with Paul's teachings in Ephesians 5:22-6:9 and in Colossians 3. As we discussed in the Ephesians section, one of the household relationships was the master/slave relationship.

Peter tells slaves to submit respectfully to their masters, even when the masters are unfair or harsh. If we are treated harshly because we are obedient to God, then he will reward us for that. If we are treated harshly because we deserve it, then there is no reward. Remember, Christ suffered for doing what was right. We can expect the same, at least at times. He suffered quietly and submitted. When he did so, he was submitting not to cruel masters, but to the will of God. His suffering never provoked him to sin. That is our model.

Unlike Paul, Peter gives no instructions to the master.

Peter calls upon wives to live in submission to their husbands. If a woman's husband is an unbeliever, then the wife's godly behavior (i.e. being holy) may win her husband to Christ. He also calls upon them to dress modestly and to let their beauty come from within rather than from

external adornment. Some people take this to an extreme and say that Christian women should not wear makeup or jewelry, go to the beauty parlor, etc. That does not seem to be Peter's intent. Like Paul (1 Timothy 2:9), he is calling for moderation in dress. Furthermore the attitude of God has always been to focus on inner beauty. That is what is most important.

Peter then calls upon husbands to be considerate of their wives. In 1 Peter 3:7 he says to "treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life." "Weaker" means physically weaker, since as a general rule women are physically weaker than men. There is nothing spiritual implied. Treating one's wife as the weaker partner means treating her gently in a physical sense. It means caring for her physical well being. It is a loving attitude. Note that he also calls her "partner" and not "second class servant." A wife is a partner with whom we inherit eternal life.

Peter does not address the parent/child relationship.

3.5 Godly Relationships

1 Peter 3:8-22

Continuing in the theme of relationships, 1 Peter 3:8-9 says:

Finally, all of you, live in harmony with one another; be sympathetic, love as brothers, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.

Being holy means submitting to one another in love. It should produce harmony and love. We are to counter evil with good. Repaying evil with more evil propagates a vicious circle. As Paul said in Romans 12:14, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." It is the only way to break the cycle.

We should always be prepared to do good, even if it brings suffering. 1 Peter 3:15-16:

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.

We should have an attitude that causes people to ask us why we have the "living hope" that we have. We should always be ready to tell them the source of this hope. It is of utmost important to maintain innocence. We live in a world that will slander us and tell lies about us. The only defense that we will have at times is our innocence. We serve a God who will bring all things to light in his own time.

1 Peter 3:18-22 says:

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

This is a certifiably weird passage of Scripture. When did Jesus preach to spirits in prison and who were they?

In Scripture the word "spirit" used without qualifiers often means "angel." A common interpretation of this passage says that between his death and resurrection, Jesus went to a "prison" where fallen angels who rebelled before the flood are confined. He preached to them, informing them of his victory and their defeat. Other interpretations have been suggested as well. None of them have very solid support. The interpretation above parallels a passage in the extra-biblical book of Enoch (1 Enoch 21:10). We do not know exactly what Peter meant because the reference is not adequately supported by other passages of Scripture. That does not mean it is wrong. It simply means that we do not really have enough of an explanation to understand it.¹

It is very important to understand the point that was just made. There are groups (often cults) who take very obscure passages such as this one and spin them into theological treatises. They build doctrines and practices upon these verses that nobody else understands. They claim that because they have figured out these secret passages, they have achieved a higher level of spirituality. They pass themselves off as a better way or even the only true church to people who are honestly seeking truth. If you think about it, it is the same tactic used by the Gnostics. They have been around since the beginning of the church and they are unlikely ever to go away.

We must be comfortable with the idea that there will be passages of Scripture that will be difficult to understand. It is OK. If we would worry about the simple passages like "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind"² then we would most likely never have time to worry about the obscure passages like 1 Peter 3:19.

The important things in the passage above include:

- Jesus, the righteous one, died for me, the unrighteous one.
- Just as some people were saved in the ark during the flood – albeit a few – we will be saved from the destruction of the evil world.
- Baptism is a symbolic cleansing of our conscience – the removal of our guilt.
- Jesus was resurrected and entered heaven. In doing so, he provided salvation for us because he opened the door for us to follow.
- All powers – angelic and human – are subject to Jesus.

3.6 Live for God

1 Peter 4:1-11

When a pagan becomes a Christian, his friends probably do not understand what has happened to him. They will not understand if he changes his behavior. They will want him to continue engaging in the same behaviors of the past. Peter understood this. In 1 Peter 4:3-5 he says:

For you have spent enough time in the past doing what pagans choose to do – living in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and detestable idolatry. They think it strange that you do not plunge with them into the same flood of dissipation, and they heap abuse on you. But they will have to give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.

¹ See also the discussion of 2 Peter 2:4 in Section 4.4, False Teachers, beginning on page 21.

² Matthew 22:37

Living for Christ is likely to bring abuse from those who do not live for Christ. We must be prepared and willing to accept that. It does not matter. It is time to join Christ in whatever suffering comes our way and it is time to join him in being done with sin. That is the point of receiving the Gospel. In 1 Peter 4:6 he says of some who have already died in the faith (or perhaps because of the faith):

For this is the reason the gospel was preached even to those who are now dead, so that they might be judged according to men in regard to the body, but live according to God in regard to the spirit.

Men may judge us and heap abuse upon us in the physical, but God is the only judge that we have in the spirit.

We should live in expectation that the end is always at hand. With that attitude, we should be disciplined. We should be people of prayer. We should be people of love. 1 Peter 4:8 says:

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

Contextually this is a bit hard to understand. Is Peter saying that our love brings forgiveness for our sins? No. Peter is loosely quoting Proverbs 10:12, "Hatred stirs up dissension, but love covers over all wrongs." Love for one another will override dissension that we might otherwise have. Those in the body of Christ need to get along. We need to have a love that makes our differences pale in comparison.

Peter encourages us to use our spiritual gifts for the edification of the church, consistent with the teaching of Paul in 1 Corinthians and in Ephesians.

3.7 Rejoice in Sufferings

1 Peter 4:12-19

Peter was present when Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:10-12 says:

Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

In this section, Peter restates these concepts in his own words. We will experience suffering and persecution if we are really living for God. When it happens, rejoice that you are counted worthy to share in the suffering of Christ. The day is going to come when every knee will bow to him and we will be overjoyed to be on his side when it happens. People who are our enemies because they are his enemies will be defeated. 1 Peter 4:17 says:

For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God?

Any suffering that we experience now is our judgment. We are being refined. The good news is that we get to get it over with now. We will come out as pure gold. Those who do not belong to God will be judged later, and they will come out as singed charcoal.

When you suffer, rejoice. Come out of it purer than you were when you went into it.

3.8 Miscellaneous Instructions

1 Peter 5:1-11

In 1 Peter 5:1-4, Peter calls upon the elders of the church to be good shepherds for the flock that God has entrusted to them. Provide godly leadership, submitted to the Lord, motivated out of love for God and for his people. Be eager to serve rather than eager to dominate. Never use the office for personal gain. He says in 1 Peter 5:4, "And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away."

Peter calls upon the younger men of the church to submit to the elders. In 1 Peter 5:6 he echoes the call in James 4:10:

Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time.

1 Peter 5:7 tells us, "Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you." This really is an act of faith. By nature we worry about things. If we had complete faith in God, would we? No. The verse does not say, "Come to me with your big items." It does not say, "Pray in the face of death or bankruptcy." It says "Cast ALL your anxiety on him because HE CARES FOR YOU." Be aware, however, that this does involve giving up control. When you bring a concern to him, he may just tell you how to fix it. It may not be something you want to do. Be prepared for him to "meddle in your personal affairs." How foolish it would be to try to fix it any other way. How often we are foolish.

1 Peter 5:8-9 echoes the idea in James 4:7. It says:

Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.

There IS a devil. He DOES want to destroy you. You CAN resist him. He is NOT omnipotent or omnipresent. When he picks on you, be firm in the faith. He picks on all believers at one time or another. You can stand firm in your resistance. The trial will not go on forever. 1 Peter 5:10 says:

And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.

You are not in it alone. God will allow you to be tested and strengthened, but he does not want anyone to be destroyed. Stand firm and he will fortify your strength.

3.9 Conclusion

1 Peter 5:12-14

In closing, Peter identifies that Silas has helped him write the letter. He indicates that Mark is with him. He refers to him as "my son Mark." We get the feeling that Peter and Mark developed the same sort of relationship that Paul and Timothy had.

1 Peter 5:13 says, "She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings." "Babylon" is generally considered to be a somewhat negative reference to Rome. Rome was the Babylon of the first century, dominating the world and imposing an unrighteous government. It is this reference that causes scholars to believe that Peter wrote the letter from Rome.

Peter closes with 1 Peter 5:14:

Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

4. Second Peter

4.1 Greeting

2 Peter 1:1-2

According to 2 Peter 1:1, the letter is from the apostle Peter and is addressed to “those who through the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours.”

4.2 Godly Qualities

2 Peter 1:3-15

In 1 Peter we saw a call to holiness. 2 Peter 1:3-15 tells us that God has already given us everything we need to live holy lives. We have been empowered to live godly lives and to “escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (2 Peter 1:4). 2 Peter 1:5-9 says:

For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.

These qualities need no explanation. They edify our minds with the things of God and they edify our characters so that we can relate properly to God and to one another. If we continually grow in these qualities then we will be equipped to be productive citizens of the Kingdom of God. 2 Peter 1:10-11 continues this theme:

Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

What does it mean to “make your calling and election sure?” This is similar to Philippians 2:12, which says, “continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” Salvation is a gift that should change us. It should be worked out in our lives every day. We should be eager to make it sure – to establish it in our lives and our character, by growing in goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, etc. If we pursue these qualities, we will not fall and we will be welcomed into the Kingdom of God. As long as Peter is alive, he sees it as his responsibility to remind people of these things.

4.3 Eyewitnesses of His Majesty

2 Peter 1:16-21

In 2 Peter 1:16-21, Peter affirms the truth of his message. He is not passing along second-hand information. He was an eyewitness to the majesty of Jesus. He was present on the mountain when the transfiguration occurred and he heard God say “This is my son, whom I love; with him I

am well pleased.”³ The prophets, who ministered through the power of the Holy Spirit, are also witnesses to the truth of Jesus.

4.4 False Teachers

2 Peter 2

In contrast to the true witnesses of Jesus, false prophets and false teachers roam about in the church. This is certainly nothing new, as many of the New Testament letters deal with the problem of false teachers upsetting the church.

Jude specifically is another letter that deals with this problem. If the reader will compare 2 Peter 2 with Jude 4-13, he may be surprised to discover that the logic flow is the same and that they are almost word-for-word identical in some places.

2 Peter 2	Jude
1 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will <u>secretly</u> introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their <u>condemnation</u> has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.	4 For certain men whose <u>condemnation</u> was written about long ago have <u>secretly</u> slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.
	5 Though you already know all this, I want to remind you that the Lord delivered his people out of Egypt, but later destroyed those who did not believe.
4 For if God did not spare <u>angels</u> when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for <u>judgment</u> ; 5 if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others;	6 And the <u>angels</u> who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home – these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for <u>judgment</u> on the great Day.
6 if he condemned the cities of <u>Sodom and Gomorrah</u> by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; 7 and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men 8 (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard) – 9 if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their	7 In a similar way, <u>Sodom and Gomorrah</u> and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.

³ Matthew 17:5

punishment.	
10 This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise <u>authority</u> . Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander <u>celestial beings</u> ;	8 In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject <u>authority</u> and <u>slander celestial beings</u> .
11 yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, <u>do not bring slanderous accusations</u> against such beings in the presence of the Lord.	9 But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, <u>did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation</u> against him, but said, "The Lord rebuke you!"
12 But these men blaspheme in matters <u>they do not understand</u> . They are like brute beasts, creatures of <u>instinct</u> , born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.	10 Yet these men speak abusively against whatever <u>they do not understand</u> ; and what things they do understand by <u>instinct</u> , like unreasoning animals – these are the very things that destroy them.
13 They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and <u>blemishes</u> , reveling in their pleasures while they <u>feast</u> with you. 14 With eyes full of adultery, they never stop sinning; they seduce the unstable; they are experts in greed – an accursed brood! 15 They have left the straight way and wandered off to follow the way of <u>Balaam</u> son of Beor, who loved the wages of wickedness. 16 But he was rebuked for his wrongdoing by a donkey – a beast without speech – who spoke with a man's voice and restrained the prophet's madness.	11 Woe to them! They have taken the way of Cain; they have rushed for profit into <u>Balaam's</u> error; they have been destroyed in Korah's rebellion. 12 These men are <u>blemishes</u> at your love <u>feasts</u> , eating with you without the slightest qualm – shepherds who feed only themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted – twice dead.
17 These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. <u>Blackest darkness is reserved</u> for them.	13 They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom <u>blackest darkness has been reserved</u> forever.

This similarity leads to two assumptions. First of all, Peter and Jude were dealing with the same heresy when they wrote their letters. We do not know the exact nature of the heresy.

Second, we assume that one of the two authors had a copy of the other author's letter and used it as a source in his writing. We have seen this before. As we saw when we studied the Gospels, it is generally believed that Matthew and Luke both used the Gospel of Mark as a source for their writings. Today we would tend to call that plagiarism. It was a common practice in the first century. It is important to remember that none of the New Testament writers were producing works for publication; they were writing letters.

Because 2 Peter is longer than Jude, it is likely that Jude was written first and Peter had a copy of it. In chapter 2, he borrowed bits and pieces of it, elaborated where he wanted, and added his own thoughts.

In 2 Peter 2:1-3, Peter harshly denounces the false teachers. They are purveyors of heresies and deny Jesus. They exploit the people for personal gain. For this, they will be condemned.

In 2 Peter 2:4-10 Peter gives examples of those whom God has judged in the past. He begins with angels. 2 Peter 2:4 says "God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for punishment." He can only be turning to extra-biblical sources for this information, but that does not mean that the information is untrue. This passage, along with the parallel Jude passage, does give us some important information about angels.

First of all, they have the capacity to sin, just like we do. They have a free will. There seem to be different consequences for their sin, however. We have been given a savior. They have been sent to hell, cast into "gloomy dungeons to be held for punishment." How and when this happens is uncertain. If angels are cast into the dungeon as soon as they sin, then how do we account for the existence of demons in the world today? Why aren't they all in hell?

We may get some insight on this question from Matthew 8:28-29:

When he arrived at the other side in the region of the Gadarenes, two demon-possessed men coming from the tombs met him. They were so violent that no one could pass that way. "What do you want with us, Son of God?" they shouted. "Have you come here to torture us before the appointed time?"

It seems that there is an "appointed time" for these rebellious angels to receive their punishment. This may be what is described in Revelation 20. It is also possible that there are different appointed times for different fallen angels. Perhaps some were already in prison at the time of the crucifixion, and it was to those that Jesus preached in 1 Peter 3:19.

This passage may give us some insight as to why demons hate people so much. We have salvation offered to us. For us, redemption is possible after sin. The same is not true for them. Their desire is to pull us down to their level so that we will share their suffering. If they cannot be saved then they do not want us to be saved, either.

As stated in the discussion of 1 Peter, it is important not to make too much of passages such as this. The reference is obscure and we cannot be certain what it means. That does not mean it is false. It simply means that it is not a sure foundation upon which we should build doctrine.

Peter continues with the theme of judgment. He cites the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. In each of these, God destroyed the wicked but preserved a righteous remnant. Likewise, God will bring punishment upon the false teachers in the church, but will preserve his righteous children. He says that these men are corrupt, bold, and arrogant. They "are not afraid to slander celestial beings." They are willing to challenge even the angels. They are blasphemers. They have no spirit and operate out of instinct, like wild creatures.

They will be punished. God will bring judgment upon them as he has fallen angels, the people of the flood, and the citizens of Sodom and Gomorrah. 2 Peter 2:13 says, "They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you." The feast is probably the "love feast" (see the parallel passage in Jude) which was common in the first century. This was a meal eaten as part of the communion celebration (see Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians 11:20-22, where he corrects abuses at the love feasts). These false teachers felt free to come and partake of these meals, reveling in their sin all the while. Peter calls them "blots and blemishes" (Ephesians 5:27 says that the church is to be a bride without blemish for Jesus). Like Balaam⁴, they are prophets for profit.

God will deal with these men sternly. 2 Peter 2:20-21 says:

⁴ Numbers 22-24

If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and are again entangled in it and overcome, they are worse off at the end than they were at the beginning. It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.

This is similar to the theme in Hebrews 2:1-3, Hebrews 6:4-6, Hebrews 10:26-27, and other passages. It is possible to walk away from salvation having once received it. The fate of such a person is worse than if they had never received it in the first place. Peter does not really explain how they will be worse off. Does this imply that hell will somehow be worse for them? Who knows? At a minimum, this life is worse off for them. Before they were ever saved, at least there was hope for them. Having forfeited their salvation, there is no other option for hope.

4.5 The Day of Judgment

2 Peter 3

2 Peter 3:1 indicates that this is his second letter. He has written both to call people back to a true faith. He reminds them of the words of the prophets.

He focuses on teachings about end times. In 2 Peter 3:3 he reminds them “that in the last days scoffers will come.” They will cast doubt on the promise of Jesus to return for his own. They will say that it has been too long since he departed and thus he is never going to return. 2 Peter 3:8-10 says:

But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Note that the concept that a thousand years to us is like a day to God comes from Psalm 90:4. God works on a different time scale than we do. He sees time from “let there be light” to eternity. Our lifetimes are his moments. The end will come, but it will come according to his schedule. He has not been hasty because his real desire is for every one of his people to come to repentance and be saved. When the door closes it is final.

It will come, however. It will come when people are not expecting it, “like a thief.” The world will be destroyed by fire. Out of the destruction will come a new heaven and a new earth.

We should anticipate this event by being ready. We should live each day as if Jesus were coming back that day. Stay reconciled. Stay in a state where your sins are confessed and forgiven. Be at peace with him. 2 Peter 3:15-16 says:

Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him. He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.

I chuckle a bit when I read that, because I have an ally in Peter, who finds some of Paul's writings hard to understand. (Unfortunately some of Peter's verses are harder to understand than any of Paul's.) People then and people now distort some of his writings and twist them into false doctrines. He wanted us to know, however, that God is patient so that we might be saved.

Peter concludes by encouraging us to avoid the error of false teachers and to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18).

5. The Letters of John

1, 2, & 3 John are generally attributed to the apostle John, although that is not without dispute. The letters do not name the author, but refer to him as “the elder.” The language and concepts in the letters bear a great similarity to the Gospel of John.

Like Peter, John is mentioned numerous times in the first several chapters of Acts (the first 8 or so) and then virtually disappears. If he was the author of Revelation (which he is generally assumed to be) then he spent some time exiled on the island of Patmos. Tradition says that he grew old in the city of Ephesus. He may have been the only apostle that did not die a martyr’s death (although a different tradition says that he was martyred as a young man.)

Whether or not these letters were written by the apostle John or some other man named John, they reflect the emphases that we see in the Gospel of John. Like Hebrews, James, and 1 & 2 Peter, 1 John was written as a general letter. 2 & 3 John were written to specific individuals or churches.

6. First John

6.1 *Light, Life, and Truth*

1 John 1

The Gospel of John begins with John 1:1, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.” 1 John opens in a similar fashion. 1 John 1:1-4 says:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched – this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard, so that you also may have fellowship with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son, Jesus Christ. We write this to make our joy complete.

The author seems to have been a companion of Jesus, which is further evidence that it was written by the apostle. He says that he had heard Jesus, seen him with his eyes, and touched him with his hands. He is a first-hand witness of Jesus. He wants to tell what he knows of Jesus so that others may benefit from his life – from his eternal life. By receiving the truth, a person can have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, as well with other believers.

John 1:4-5 says:

In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

Again 1 John parallels the Gospel of John. 1 John 1:5 says, God is light; in him there is no darkness at all.” Darkness cannot stand up against light. The light of God will drive out darkness wherever it is allowed to shine. If we open our lives to the truth of God, he drives away our sin. He will purify us. There is no other way to come to him, however. We cannot pretend to be in fellowship with him and still cling to our sin. 1 John 1:7 says:

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.

God will freely receive us into the light and will freely purify us so that we will be able to have fellowship with him. That is the real issue. Our sin is an obstacle to a relationship with God. One must deal with it if he is to be reconciled. The first step is acknowledging that we are sinners in need of a savior. Paul dealt extensively with the topic of the purpose of the law. It was to convict us that we fall short of God’s standards. We must realize our need for redemption before we can receive the gift. 1 John 1:8-10 says:

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

It is really simple. If you claim to be sinless then you are a liar. If you will confess your sins, God is faithful to forgive you and purify you.

6.2 Walk as Jesus Did

1 John 2:1-17

John says that he writes so that we might not sin. If we do, however, we have the benefit of Jesus defending us before the Father. This is similar to the idea in Hebrews 7:25 and 1 Timothy 2:5. Jesus stands before the judgment seat and claims those who are his own. He has already paid our penalty and thus we are spared destruction.

How do we know that we are his own? 1 John 2:3 says, "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands." John says that if you claim to be his but do not follow his commandments then you are a liar. This idea is expressed in John 14:15, where Jesus said, "If you love me, you will obey what I command." Belonging to him means submitting to him. Jesus did not come merely to be Savior. He came to be Lord.

In John 15:12, Jesus gave a specific command: "My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you." 1 John now picks up on that theme. 1 John 2:9 says:

Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness.

Jesus told us to love one another. If we belong to him, we do what he says. We must love one another.

1 John 2:12-14 contains some rather curious text. It contains six statements:

- I write to you dear children...
- I write to you fathers...
- I write to you young men...
- I write to you dear children...
- I write to you fathers...
- I write to you young men...

Who is being addressed in these is uncertain because the text does not explain itself. It is unlikely that it is literally the children, fathers, and young men in the church. Note that in 2 John and 3 John, he refers to his recipients as children, i.e. children in the faith. More than likely he is referring to people at different stages of maturity in their faith or spiritual discipline. Perhaps the groups that he is referring to above are:

- everyone in the church
- elders
- leaders with less authority, e.g. deacons

I would say that this is a likely scenario, but any guess is merely that. This section does not flow logically from the previous one or into the next one. Furthermore what he writes to these people is very repetitive. We are unsure exactly what we are to infer from the style and structure of this section. He does inform these groups that:

- Your sins are forgiven.
- You have come to know the one who has existed from the beginning of time.
- You have overcome the devil.
- You have known the Father.
- You are strong.
- The word of God lives in you.

John continues to tell his readers not to love the world. We have seen this theme repeatedly throughout New Testament writings, e.g. Romans 12:2. 1 John 2:16-17 says:

For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

You get to choose Kingdoms. This one will pass away. God's will last forever.

6.3 The Antichrist

1 John 2:18-29

Most people probably think of “The Antichrist” as one of the main characters of Revelation. In fact, the term “antichrist” is used only in 1 John 2:18, 1 John 2:22, 1 John 4:3, and 2 John 1:7. It is unused in Revelation. 1 John 2:18 indicates that there are many antichrists. In fact, “an” antichrist is anyone who is anti-Christ – that is, anyone who opposes the purposes of Christ. “The” antichrist is the specific agent of Satan in Revelation, referred therein as “The Beast.”

John indicates that many antichrists have gone out from the church. These were those who mingled in the fellowship but never really belonged. They denied that Jesus is the Christ, which inherently makes them antichrists. 1 John 2:23 says, “No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”

John calls upon his readers to hold fast to the truth that they have received so that they will not join the ranks of the antichrists. Thus they will remain in reconciliation and gain eternal life. He encourages them to let the anointing that they already have continue to nourish them, teach them, and keep them close to the Father.

6.4 Children of God

1 John 3

John 1:12 says, “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” That is an awesome thought. It is echoed in 1 John 3:1-3:

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.

As children of God, we will be like our brother, Jesus. When he comes back for us, we shall be transformed such that we have bodies like his glorified body. The hope that we have in him should purify us. He died to purify us from sin. If we belong to him, we must break the pattern of sin in our lives. If we do not break that pattern then we do not belong to him. The devil's domain is the domain of sin. The domain of Christ is the place where the power of sin has been broken. By your behavior you choose your domain. Those in the domain of Christ stop sinning. They also love their brothers. Jesus said in Matthew 5:21-22,

You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, “Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.” But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

1 John 3:15 echoes this idea:

Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him.

What is our model for godly love? Jesus, who laid down his life to save our lives. 1 John 3:17 parallels James 2:15-16. He says that if you see a brother in need and have the resources to meet that need but do not do so, you do not have the love of God in you. We are to love and take care of one another. Our love should be visible in our actions. We must live in his truth, such that our hearts do not condemn us, i.e. so that we are free from guilt. 1 John 3:21-24 says:

Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

If we live in his truth, free from guilt, then we have perfect communion with the Father. We will live lives in tune with his will. Thus we will have all that we need in order to do the things that he wants us to do. We will know that we are his because his Spirit will indwell us.

6.5 Spirits and the Spirit of God

1 John 4:1-6

We are to be wary, because the Holy Spirit is not the only spirit that will attempt to influence us. There are angels and demons as well. The acid test for whether or not a spirit is from God is whether or not it will acknowledge "that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh" (1 John 4:2) Any spirit that will not acknowledge Jesus is a spirit not from God. (Even with this acid test, one must still remember that demons are liars. It is probably better not to converse with them at all.) 1 John 4:3 says:

This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

Note that in writing this, John may have been addressing a Gnostic heresy. The Gnostics would have denied that Jesus Christ came in the flesh.

There are spirits in the world who will speak against Christ and will try to harass those who belong to him. They are not to be feared, however. They fool and intimidate us into believing that they are more powerful than they are. In fact, 1 John 4:4 says:

You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.

Satan is at war with God, but it is a very uneven battle. God has already won, even though Satan continues to fight.

As children of God, we need to recognize the Spirit of God and submit to him. We need to recognize other spirits and refuse to submit to them.

6.6 Love

1 John 4:7-21

The mandate to love one another has permeated this letter thus far. It is the main topic in 1 John 4:7-21. 1 John 4:7-8 says:

Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Love is from God. Those who love are born of God and know God. God is love. Those who do not love do not know God. Therefore love one another. Got it?

1 John 4:9 sounds a great deal like John 3:16:

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

That is how much God loved us! It is an incomprehensible love. It is the model of the love that we should have for one another. If God has that much love for us, then we must return it by loving each other. 1 John 4:12 says that "if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." We are God's agents of love to his children. He reaches out to us through each other. We frustrate his expression of love when we refuse to love each other.

1 John 4:18 says:

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

If we really believe in the Father's love, then we believe in his perfect care for us. We have no reason to fear anything. The omnipotent creator of the universe loves us and calls us his children. His Spirit dwells in us. Of what or whom should we be afraid? The only thing to fear would be his wrath if we should walk away from his grace.

1 John 4:19-21 says:

We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, "I love God," yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And he has given us this command: Whoever loves God must also love his brother.

This goes back to an earlier idea in the letter. If we love God, we obey his commands. He has commanded that we love our brothers. If we are unable to love those who are created in his image, then how can we pretend to love him?

Remember that "love" in this passage is a verb. It is something we do and not necessarily something we feel. The instruction is to treat one another in a loving manner. We are to put others above ourselves and watch out for their needs. If you do love you will eventually feel love, but the feeling is not the issue.

6.7 *Eternal Life*

1 John 5

Chapter 5 begins by admonishing us to obey the instructions of God (which are not burdensome), to love the Father, and to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. In this way we overcome the world.

1 John 5:6-12 talks about the three testimonies that God has given to us about Jesus, his Son. They are the Spirit, the water, and the blood. The meaning of the water and the blood is a bit obscure. The most obvious (and perhaps the correct) interpretation would be for them to refer to the baptism and the crucifixion. John the Baptized prepared people for the coming king. He led them into repentance, to await the coming of the Messiah. For Jesus, his baptism was his coronation. It initiated him to his role of Messiah. At that time the voice of God announced, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). This was the first public testimony that God gave concerning his son.

The death and resurrection was the most dramatic testimony that the Father gave of his Son. Jesus died like so many other men. Three days later, however, he walked out of the tomb. The first phase of his ministry as Messiah was completed. He had been inaugurated to the status of risen Messiah. He spent forty days on earth in his resurrected state, ensuring that all knew that he had conquered death. Then he went to be with the Father.

Around a week later was the day of Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was poured out on the church as the final testimony of who Jesus was. The third phase of his role as Messiah had begun, with Jesus ascended and the Holy Spirit ministering in the world, testifying to the truth of Jesus.

We have these three testimonies of Jesus. If we fail to believe these three testimonies given to us by God then we call him a liar. If we believe the testimony then we have eternal life. John wants us to have this eternal life and the confidence that comes with it. Repeating the idea in 1 John 3:21-22, he says in 1 John 5:13-15:

I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him.

If we are living lives attuned to his will, then our requests will be attuned to his will as well. In confidence we can ask for the things that we need and be assured that they will be granted.

In 1 John 5:16-17, John encourages us to watch out for one another and to try to keep other believers from sin. The passage says:

If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life. I refer to those whose sin does not lead to death. There is a sin that leads to death. I am not saying that he should pray about that. All wrongdoing is sin, and there is sin that does not lead to death.

The passage talks about sin that leads to death. This seems to be a reference to the sin of walking away from the faith. In the entirety of the New Testament, this is the only sin that seems to have irrevocable consequences. Until a brother has reached this point, we should always intercede for them. If, however, a former brother has rejected Christ, we have no mandate to intercede for him. There is no specific prohibition against it, but it seems that God has no plans to do anything about it.

If we remain in God, which implies that we do not continue to sin, then we are safe from the evil one. God will grant us understanding, truth, and eternal life.

The book ends very abruptly with 1 John 5:21:

Dear children, keep yourselves from idols.

Idolatry is at the heart of all rebellion against God. Whenever we put anything before God, including our own wills, then we are committing a form of rebellion. Being free from idolatry means living in submission and obedience to God. If we can achieve that, our eternity will be sure.

7. Second John

7.1 Greeting

2 John 1-3

2 John 1 identifies the letter as being from “the elder.” It is addressed to “the chosen lady and her children.” The elder is assumed to be the apostle John. The chosen lady is probably a specific church. Her children would be the members of that church. We do not know which church was the recipient of the letter.

7.2 Love

2 John 4-6

John says that it gives him great joy to find that many in the church are walking in the truth. He reminds them of the command to love each other. He also says that love means walking in obedience to the commands of God. As was stated in 1 John, loving God means obeying his commandments.

7.3 False Teachers

2 John 7-11

Even in this short letter, John addresses the issue of false teaching in the church. Probably countering Gnostic teaching, 2 John 7 says:

Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.

John encourages the people to hold fast to the teaching that they have received and to avoid getting caught up in these heresies. If they break away and follow the false teachers, they will lose the prize of salvation. John does not want the people to give any sort of encouragement to the false teachers. 2 John 10-11 says:

If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.

If the Jehovah’s Witnesses or the Mormon Missionaries come knocking on your door, your best plan of action is to send them on their way. You do not have to be rude, but you also do not need to give them an opportunity to peddle deception.

7.4 Conclusion

2 John 12-13

With that, John closes this short epistle. He indicates that he desires to come visit this church and to instruct them personally rather than do it via writing. 2 John 13 says, “The children of your chosen sister send their greetings.” He is probably relaying the greetings of the members of another church.

8. Third John

3 John 1 identifies this letter as being from “the elder,” who is most likely the apostle John, and it is addressed to an individual named Gaius.

John wishes Gaius good health. He commends him for being faithful. Gaius’ good reputation has reached John and John is encouraged that he walks in the truth of the Gospel. 3 John 4 says, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.” Any pastor would share this joy.

3 John 5-8 says:

Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God. It was for the sake of the Name that they went out, receiving no help from the pagans. We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth.

We gather from this that there is a team of missionaries in the area. They passed through the town where Gaius lived. Gaius took them into his home and showed them hospitality. He cared for their physical needs. John commended Gaius for this and encouraged them to send them on their way with provisions. They had no source of support other than what they would receive from faithful brothers.

Not everyone had been willing to support them. 3 John 9-10 continues:

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

Another man named Diotrephes caused problems for the missionaries. Not only did he refuse to help them, but he spread gossip about their work and encouraged others to refuse them as well. John intends to discipline him in person whenever he is able to visit the church.

Those who have given their lives to the service of the Lord deserve the support of the church. This is not merely a New Testament idea. In the Old Testament, the people were supposed to give offerings to the temple. Part of that offering went to the support of the Levites.

In like manner, our full-time servants need our support. This applies to servants in the local church as well as to those called to missions. Note that this does not mean that the church should hire a staff to do all of the ministry so that the people can withdraw from any active Kingdom ministry. Everyone is called to minister. Some are called to do that to the exclusion of any other vocation.

John encourages Gaius, and presumably others in his church to walk in the truth. 3 John 11 says “do not imitate what is evil but what is good.” We really are smart enough to know the difference. We are called to do good.

As was true in 2 John, he concludes with a desire to visit them personally and instruct them further.

9. Jude

In the opening verse, Jude identifies himself as “a brother of James.” It is generally believed that this refers to James, the elder of the church in Jerusalem, the author of the Epistle of James, who was also the half-brother of Jesus. This would obviously make Jude a half-brother of Jesus as well, another son of Joseph and Mary.

James is a predominant figure in the church. Jude is not. We really know nothing about him. We assume that he, like James, became a follower of Jesus after the resurrection. We can infer a great deal about his life because we know something about his family. The Bible gives us no biographical information about Jude.

9.1 Greeting

Jude 1-2

This letter, like Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, and 1 John, is a general letter, not written to a specific church or individual.

9.2 False Teachers

Jude 3-19

The background of this text was discussed in the section on 2 Peter 2. As was mentioned there, Peter probably had a copy of Jude’s letter and used it as source in writing his second epistle. He, like Jude, addressed the problem of false teachers in the church.

Jude 3 indicates that he would really prefer to write about matters of salvation, but because of circumstances in the church he felt compelled to write against the heresies that are circulating. False teachers have infiltrated the church and were subverting sound teaching.

Without repeating what was covered in 2 Peter 2, let us look at the nuances of Jude’s text.

Like Peter, he begins with the theme of destruction that comes from judgment. He mentions the unfaithful in Israel that were killed during the Exodus. He mentions the judgment of angels, as did Peter. He mentions the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, as did Peter, but he states that the judgment was for sexual immorality and perversion. Some cite Ezekiel 16:49 and say that the judgment on Sodom was for failure to care for the poor. That may have been true, but as the Genesis account states, it was clearly sexual sin that triggered the actual destruction.

Like Peter, Jude says that judgment will likewise come on the false teachers. He mentions the slander of angels, as does Peter, but gives some more detail. Jude 8-9 says:

In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings. But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, “The Lord rebuke you!”

Jude is quoting extra-biblical sources for this information. He appears to be drawing from an ancient source called “The Assumption of Moses.” This is a story about the burial of Moses. In

the story, Michael the Archangel was sent by God to bury the body of Moses after he died (Deuteronomy 34:6 indicates that God arranged for the burial of Moses and that nobody knew where the grave was). Michael and Satan got into an argument about who should have possession of the body. Satan claimed that since Moses had been a murderer (Exodus 2:12) he should get the body. Even Michael, disputing with Satan – the worst of the celestial beings – knew that there were serious consequences to slandering him. Michael the Archangel would not slander Satan, and yet these false teachers freely slander angels. That is the point.

Jude continues along the same path as Peter and talks about the judgment that will come upon these teachers. He, too, says that they are “blemishes at your love feasts” (Jude 12) that needed to be cast out of the church.

In Jude 14-15, he quotes another extra-biblical source (1 Enoch) to pronounce further judgment on these men who use the church for their own advantage. He said that the apostles had warned that such men would appear. We must avoid them and rid the church of these “blemishes.”

9.3 Abide in God's Love

Jude 20-25

Jude encourages his readers to build up their faith and to pray in the Holy Spirit. They are to abide in the love of God as they await the return of Jesus. He admonishes them to encourage each other in the faith and to strengthen those who are weak. Jude, like Peter, the writer of Hebrews, and other writers does not want to see people lost from the faith.

The letter concludes with a beautiful passage that has come to be known as the “Jude Doxology.” “Doxology” comes from two Greek words, “doxa,” meaning “glory,” and “logos,” meaning “word.” A doxology is a celebration of glory – specifically the glory of God. Jude 24-25 says:

To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy – to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen.

10. Topical Index

Angels.....	16, 23, 32, 38
Anointing with Oil.....	9
Antichrist.....	31, 36
Anxiety.....	18
Assumption of Moses.....	38
Balaam.....	24
Children of God.....	31
Cornerstone.....	14
Demons.....	24, 32
Doxology.....	39
Enoch.....	39
Ephesus.....	28
Eschatology.....	25
Faith.....	5
False Teachers.....	22, 36, 38
Family Relationships.....	14
Favoritism.....	4
Gnosticism.....	2, 7, 32
Healing.....	8
Holy.....	13
Holy Spirit.....	9, 13
Hope.....	12
James.....	1
Judgment.....	25
Living Stones.....	13
Losing Salvation.....	10, 25
Love.....	30, 33, 36
Mark.....	18
Martin Luther.....	1
Maturity.....	2, 5
Michael the Archangel.....	38
Money.....	3
Moses.....	39
Burial.....	39
Perseverance.....	2
Peter.....	11
Poor.....	4
Prayer.....	8, 10
Proverbs.....	1
Relationships.....	15
Righteousness.....	5
Royal Priesthood.....	14
Satan.....	18
Speech.....	5
Spirits in Prison.....	15
Spiritual Warfare.....	7
Submission.....	7, 15

Suffering	12, 17
Temptation	3
Wisdom	2, 6
Wisdom Literature	1
Work	14
Works	5

11. Index of Scripture References

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES

1 Corinthians 10:13-----	3
1 Corinthians 11:20-22-----	24
1 Corinthians 15:5-----	11
1 Corinthians 15:7-----	1
1 John 1-----	29
1 John 1:1-4-----	29
1 John 1:5-----	29
1 John 1:7-----	29
1 John 1:8-10-----	29
1 John 2:1-17-----	30
1 John 2:12-14-----	30
1 John 2:16-17-----	30
1 John 2:18-----	31
1 John 2:18-29-----	31
1 John 2:22-----	31
1 John 2:23-----	31
1 John 2:3-----	30
1 John 2:9-----	30
1 John 3-----	31
1 John 3:1-3-----	31
1 John 3:15-----	31
1 John 3:17-----	32
1 John 3:21-24-----	32
1 John 4:12-----	33
1 John 4:1-6-----	32
1 John 4:18-----	33
1 John 4:19-21-----	33
1 John 4:2-----	32
1 John 4:3-----	31, 32
1 John 4:4-----	32
1 John 4:7-21-----	33
1 John 4:7-8-----	33
1 John 4:9-----	33
1 John 5-----	34
1 John 5:13-15-----	34
1 John 5:16-17-----	34
1 John 5:21-----	35
1 John 5:6-12-----	34
1 Peter 1:1-----	12
1 Peter 1:12-----	12
1 Peter 1:1-2-----	12
1 Peter 1:15-16-----	12
1 Peter 1:17-----	13
1 Peter 1:19-20-----	13
1 Peter 1:2-----	12

1 Peter 1:3-25	12
1 Peter 1:3-5	12
1 Peter 1:6	12
1 Peter 2:1-17	13
1 Peter 2:17	14
1 Peter 2:18-3:7	14
1 Peter 2:9-10	14
1 Peter 3:15-16	15
1 Peter 3:18-22	15
1 Peter 3:19	16, 24
1 Peter 3:7	15
1 Peter 3:8-22	15
1 Peter 3:8-9	15
1 Peter 4:1-11	16
1 Peter 4:12-19	17
1 Peter 4:17	17
1 Peter 4:3-5	16
1 Peter 4:6	17
1 Peter 4:8	17
1 Peter 5:10	18
1 Peter 5:1-11	18
1 Peter 5:12-14	18
1 Peter 5:14	18
1 Peter 5:1-4	18
1 Peter 5:4	18
1 Peter 5:6	18
1 Peter 5:7	18
1 Peter 5:8-9	18
1 Samuel 10	9
1 Timothy 2:5	30
1 Timothy 2:9	15
2 John 1	36
2 John 1:7	31
2 John 10-11	36
2 John 12-13	36
2 John 13	36
2 John 1-3	36
2 John 4-6	36
2 John 7	36
2 John 7-11	36
2 Peter 1:1	21
2 Peter 1:10-11	21
2 Peter 1:1-2	21
2 Peter 1:16-21	21
2 Peter 1:3-15	21
2 Peter 1:4	21
2 Peter 1:5-9	21
2 Peter 2	22, 38
2 Peter 2:13	24
2 Peter 2:1-3	23
2 Peter 2:20-21	24
2 Peter 2:4	23

2 Peter 2:4-10	23
2 Peter 3	25
2 Peter 3:1	25
2 Peter 3:15-16	25
2 Peter 3:18	26
2 Peter 3:3	25
2 Peter 3:8-10	25
3 John 1	37
3 John 4	37
3 John 5-8	37
3 John 9-10	37
Acts 1:14	1
Acts 12:17	1
Acts 12:2	1
Acts 15	11
Acts 15:13	1
Acts 15:7	11
Acts 21	1
Colossians 3	14
Deuteronomy 34:6	39
Ephesians 2:10	1
Ephesians 2:8-9	1
Ephesians 5:22-6:9	14
Ephesians 5:27	24
Exodus 19:6	13, 14
Exodus 2:12	39
Exodus 29	9
Exodus 3:5	13
Ezekiel 16:49	38
Galatians 3:6	5
Genesis 15:6	5
Genesis 2:3	13
Genesis 28	9
Genesis 28:16-19	9
Hebrews 10:26-27	25
Hebrews 12	2
Hebrews 2:1-3	25
Hebrews 2:18	3
Hebrews 6:4-6	25
Hebrews 7:25	30
Hosea 2:23	14
Isaiah 28:16	13
Isaiah 6:3	13
James 1:1	2
James 1:14-15	3
James 1:16-18	3
James 1:19-21	3
James 1:2	2
James 1:22	4
James 1:22-25	3
James 1:2-27	2
James 1:26-27	4

James 1:5	6
James 1:5-8	2
James 2:1-13	4
James 2:13	4
James 2:14-17	5
James 2:14-26	5
James 2:15-16	32
James 2:18	5
James 2:19	5
James 2:23	5
James 2:26	5
James 2:5-7	4
James 3:1	5
James 3:1-12	5
James 3:13-18	2, 6
James 3:3-6	6
James 3:9-11	6
James 4	7
James 4:10	18
James 4:2-3	7
James 4:4	7
James 4:4-6	7
James 4:7-10	7
James 5	8
James 5:12	8
James 5:13-16	8
James 5:1-6	8
James 5:19-20	10
James 5:7-11	8
John 1:1	29
John 1:12	31
John 1:4-5	29
John 14:15	30
John 15:12	30
John 3:16	33
John 3:21-22	34
John 7:5	1
Jude 12	39
Jude 1-2	38
Jude 14-15	39
Jude 20-25	39
Jude 24-25	39
Jude 3	38
Jude 3-19	38
Jude 4-13	22
Jude 8-9	38
Leviticus 19:18	4
Mark 3:21	1
Mark 6:13	9
Matthew 3:17	34
Matthew 5:10-12	17
Matthew 5:21-22	31

Matthew 5:37	8
Matthew 8:28-29	24
Philippians 2:12	21
Proverbs 10:12	17
Proverbs 13:8	3
Psalms 118:22	14
Psalms 90:4	25
Revelation 20	24
Revelation 4:8	13
Romans 12:14	15
Romans 12:2	30
Romans 13	14
Romans 16	11
Romans 4:3	5
Romans 5:3-5	2