

# **THE LESSER EPISTLES**

## **I PETER, II PETER, I JOHN, II JOHN III JOHN, JUDE**

### **THE EPISTLE OF I PETER**

#### **THE AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE**

The extant writings of the early church, without exception, accept Peter as the author of this epistle. Here are some examples:

- Papias (A.D. 60- 135) noted that “Mark is mentioned by Peter in his first epistle.”<sup>1</sup>
- Irenaeus (A.D. 130-200) cited I Peter, using the apostle’s name.<sup>2</sup>
- Eusebius (AD.D 265-339) summarized the canonical discussion by placing letters in four categories:<sup>3</sup>
  - a. those recognized as genuine by all Christians (e.g., I Peter);
  - b. those that, though disputed by some, were still recognized as authentic by the church as a whole and were familiar to most Christians (e.g., II Peter);
  - c. spurious, noncanonical works that were familiar to most Christians.
  - d. those that were generally acknowledged as outright heretical.

As noted above, Eusebius included I Peter in the first category – those recognized as genuine by all Christians and that Peter was the author.

Until the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, Peter was generally accepted as the author of I Peter. In the latter 19<sup>th</sup> Century, German Rationalists began to challenge the authorship of many of the documents contained in the Bible. One of their arguments they used against Peter’s being the author of this epistle is that Peter was an uneducated fisherman. The Greek of this epistle demonstrates a skill and smoothness in composition that could not have come from the pen of such an uneducated man.

The argument that the uneducated Peter could not have been the author, because he was an educated man, calls to mind the episode in acts chapters 3 &4, in which Peter and John healed a cripple. When the crowds gathered around the apostles and the man they had healed, the apostles, beginning with the prophets, preached Jesus to them. They ended their sermon with a bold reference to the resurrection.

Because of this, the Temple authorities had the apostles arrested. When Peter and John defended themselves before this august body, *Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John, and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were marveling, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.*

Another element that could be used to enforce the argument that Peter could not have been the author of such a sophisticated Greek document is the fact that Peter’s native tongue was Aramaic, although he probably spoke Greek as a second language.

However, this argument does not hold water. Peter was not the one who penned this document. Although Peter was the one who dictated the epistle, the one who put pen to papyrus and created the composition/writing was Silvanus (Peter’s amanuensis).

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<sup>1</sup> Eusebius, *The Ecclesiastical History*, (Grand Rapids, Baker Bookhouse) 1994.page 64

<sup>2</sup> Irenaeus *Against Heresies*, 4.9.2; 4.16.5 .*Against Heresies Complete* : Internet Archive pages 212, 224

<sup>3</sup> Eusebius, page 110

*Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it! (1 Peter 5:12)*

Who was this Silvanus? Silvanus is the long form of the name, Silas. Silas was with Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 15:40ff). Silas and Paul were arrested in Philippi and God used them in a very unusual way to win the jailor (Acts 16:19ff).

Silas is included with Paul in the salutation of both I & II Thessalonians. Acts 16:37 informs us that Silas was a Roman citizen, and we would assume that he, like Paul, as a Roman citizen, would have been an educated man.

Since Silvanus/Silas was the author of the epistle, the argument concerning Peter's being an uneducated man and therefore could not composed the epistle, falls to the ground as a failed argument.

### **THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE**

The date of the epistle is determined by the date of Nero's persecution of the Church. On July 19, in 64AD, a fire broke out in Rome that consumed much of the city. The fire economically devastated the occupants of Rome. Many Romans blamed the fire on Nero. He was critical of the architecture in the portion of Rome, where the fire began. After the fire, he built significant structures in that area. In order to put the blame for the fire elsewhere, Nero blamed it on Christians.

Here is the report of the Roman historian, Tacitus, who obviously did not have a high regard for Christians.<sup>4</sup>

“...To get rid of the report, Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Chrestians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judæa, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome, where all things hideous and shameful from every part of the world find their centre and become popular.

Accordingly, an arrest was first made of all who pleaded guilty; then, upon their information, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much of the crime of firing the city, as of hatred against mankind. Mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skins of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or were doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as a nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.”<sup>5</sup>

One legend describes a nighttime party in which Nero came dressed as a charioteer, illuminated the party by having Christians tied to poles, covered with pitch, and set aflame.

The writings of the early Church fathers state that Peter was arrested and executed during this Neronian persecution.

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<sup>4</sup> Publius Cornelius Tacitus, or Gaius Cornelius Tacitus, (born 56 AD; died c.20), Roman orator and public official. He was one of the greatest historians of the period, and one of the greatest prose stylists who wrote in the Latin language.

<sup>5</sup> Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, BOOK XV, chapter 44 (tufts.edu)

Eusebius wrote,

“Thus, Nero publicly announcing himself as the chief enemy of God, was led on his fury to slaughter the apostles. Paul is therefore said to have been beheaded at Rome, and Peter to have been crucified under him. And this account is confirmed by the fact, that the names of Peter and Paul still remain in the cemeteries of that city even to this day.”<sup>6</sup>

“Peter appears to have preached through Pontus, Galatia, Bithynia, Cappadocia and Asia, to the Jews that were scattered abroad; who also finally coming to Rome, was crucified with his head downward, having requested of himself to suffer in this way.”<sup>7</sup>

All of the ancient writers present the same view.

Nero committed suicide in 68 AD. Therefore, based on this evidence, we conclude that Peter was executed sometime after the fire in 64 AD and a year or two before Nero’s death in 68 AD. Therefore, the letter would have been written between 64 and 68 AD.

NOTE: Throughout this study, the New American Standard Version of the Bible is the text quoted. There are instances in which I (JWG) will alter the wording and will indicate that I have done so.

## **Salutation and identity of the recipients of the letter 1:1-2**

### ***Verse 1a Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ,***

As was the custom of the time, the letter began by identifying the author of the letter. Peter’s parents had named him Simon. His father’s name was Jonah. In the episode recorded by Matthew, Our Lord addressed him by his given name, Simon.

*And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 16:17)*

NOTE: Jesus spoke Aramaic. *Bar*, is the Aramaic word for *son*, corresponding to the Hebrew *ben*. Therefore, Jesus described Simon as being the *son of Jona*.

*"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. (Matthew 16:18)*

Speaking Aramaic, Our Lord renamed Simon, *Cephas*, which in English is *rock*. Because Matthew was writing to a Greek speaking audience, he rendered Jesus’ Aramaic into Greek. He rendered the Aramaic, *Cephas*, by the Greek equivalent, Πέτρος - *And I also say to you that you are Peter (Greek, Πέτρος – Petros), (Matthew 16:18)*

John did the same thing when he recorded the first encounter that Jesus had with Simon. In this first encounter, Jesus used the name *Simon* and spoke of what He later would rename Simon. As was true of Matthew, John also wrote for a Greek speaking audience. That being true, John wrote that Πέτρος (*Peter*) is the Greek translation of the Aramaic, *Cephas*.

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<sup>6</sup> Eusebius, Page 80

<sup>7</sup> Eusebius, page 82

*He found first his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah " (which translated means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him, and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas," which is translated Peter. (John 1:41-42)*

Following the episode recorded in Matthew and the one by John, Peter is referred to in Scripture by the Aramaic, *Cephas*, only nine times.<sup>8</sup> All other instances in the New Testament, he is referred to by the Greek, Πέτρος i.e., Peter.

**Verse 1b to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,**

The recipients of this epistle were Jewish Christians who were dispersed throughout the provinces north and east of the Mediterranean Sea. Some of these would have left Judea during the persecution of the Jerusalem Church by Saul of Tarsus (Acts 8:1-4). Some would have been descendants of the Jews who were scattered during the various occupations and deportations that took place in the centuries before the birth of Christ.

Some possibly were Jewish Christians who fled Judea during the Neronian persecution, described earlier, but they would have been few, given the timing involved.

Of signal interest is the Greek term used to describe these aliens to whom the letter is addressed. The term rendered, *scattered*, is διασπόρα (*diaspohra*). This is the noun form of the verb, διασπείρω (*diaspeiroh*). This term is the combination of two words:

- δία (*dia*), meaning, *through*, when used with Genitive of noun or pronoun, and *on account of*, when used with the accusative of a noun or pronoun.
- σπείρω (*speiroh*) meaning, *to sow seed*.

Thus, διασπείρω/διασπόρα, literally means *through the sowing of seed*, or *on account of the sowing of seed*.

There is another Greek word means, *to scatter*: διασκορπίζω (*diaskorpitzoh*) which routinely is used in the New Testament to refer to a *scattering*. Note the use of this term in Matthew 25:26, in which it contrasts with sowing seed.

*And his lord answering said to him, Evil servant, and slothful, you knew that I reap where I did not sow (speiroh), and I gather from where I did not scatter (diaskorpitzoh)!*

**The use of these terms in the New Testament**

**Verb:** διασκορπίζω (*diaskorpitzoh*) – scattering - used 10 times.

Matthew 25:24, 26; 26:31; Mark 14:27; Luke 1:51; 15:13; 16:1; John 11:52; Acts 5:37

**Verb:** διασπείρω (*diaspeiroh*) - through or on account of sowing seed - used 3 times  
Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19

**Noun:** διασπορά (*diaspora*) - the event, sowing of seed - used 3 times  
John 7:35; James 1:1; I Peter 1:1

There is another verb rendered, *scattered*, that is used only once in the New Testament  
διαλύω, which literally means, *through or on account of loosing*. Acts 5:36

<sup>8</sup> Jn. 1:42; 1 Co. 1:12; 1 Co. 3:22; 1 Co. 9:5; 1 Co. 15:5; Gal. 1:18; Gal. 2:9; Gal. 2:11; Gal. 2:14

When Jesus gave the Great Commission to the apostles, He declared His authority and commanded them,

*And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."<sup>9</sup> "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,<sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:18-20)*

Even though they were commanded, “go and make disciples of all of the nations,” they did not obey this command. For the most part, the post-Pentecostal Christians remained in Jerusalem.

It was not until the persecution of Saul Tarsus, which began after the stoning of Stephen, that the Christians left Jerusalem. Only the apostles initially remained in the city. Here are the relevant passages from Acts.

- *And Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution arose against the church in Jerusalem; and they were all scattered (diaspeiroh) throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. (Acts 8:1)*
- *Therefore, those who had been scattered (diaspeiroh) went about preaching the word. (Acts 8:4)*
- *So then those who were scattered (diaspeiroh) because of the persecution that arose in connection with Stephen made their way to Phoenicia and Cyprus and Antioch, speaking the word to no one except to Jews alone. (Acts 11:19)*

It is significant that these verses describing the “scattering” of the church, are the only three instances in which the verb, διασπείρω (*diaspeiroh*), is used in Scripture. Because they did not go forth to make disciples of the nations, Our Lord allowed persecution to come upon the Jerusalem Church and through the scattering of the Christians, the seed of the Gospel was sown in the surrounding regions and Churches were birthed.

In the mid-Third Century BC, the Jews translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek. Their Greek language version of the Old Testament came to be known as the *Septuagint*.

In their translation, they sometimes used the term, διασπορά (noun form of διασπείρω) to render the Hebrew term, *galuth* ( גּוּלוּת )<sup>9</sup>

*Galuth* has a negative concept, implying *terror*, or *trembling*.

Why was the noun form of *diaspeiroh* chosen by the Septuagint translators, rather than the noun form of the more frequently used term, *diaskoritzoh*? In all probability because *diaspeiroh* implies a positive purpose – *to sow the knowledge of God among the nations*.

Thus, by using the more positive term, *diaspora*, the creators of the Septuagint put a positive slant on the Jewish exile experience of exile. It implied that God was allowing the dispersion, perhaps even causing it, to sow the knowledge of the True God among the nations.

Indeed, this was a result of the dispersion. Many gentiles became Jewish proselytes. An example is the centurion, Cornelius, described in Acts 10.

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<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy 28:25 for example

These linguistic facts make clear that Peter states that the Christians were seed being sown in the soil of *Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia*, for the purpose of enlarging the Kingdom of God.

Dare we say that today God has Christians in city after city, but that there is little evidence of seed's being sown? Is evangelism a priority in these local churches? Will God, once again, have to take some drastic action to correct this failure?

***Verse 2 who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.***

This verse forces us to face the issue of the relationship between God's sovereignty and the freewill of individual humans. This issue has resulted in the formation of doctrines that have caused major divisions in the Church. That being true, we must at least acquaint ourselves with the issues involved and the views that have produced a variety of denominations.

The three major views are:

**Calvinism:**<sup>10</sup> God looked down through history and saw every person who would live, prior to the Second Coming. Calvinists believe in the total depravity of man. Before the foundation of the world, God unconditionally chose (or "elected") some to be saved. Election has nothing to do with a person's freewill response to the Gospel. The elect are chosen by God, and He has predetermined each individual's fate. For no reason other than his sovereign choice, God chose some for salvation and some for damnation. God foreknew those whom He would save and those whom He would not save. Those whom He chose to save, would respond positively to the Gospel when it was presented to them.

In Calvinist thinking, God's sovereignty is unconditional, unlimited, and absolute. All things are predetermined by the good pleasure of God's will.

In the Netherlands, the Calvinists created the TULIP acronym:

**T** – Total depravity. Sinfulness pervades all areas of human existence. Therefore, no human has the ability to choose to obey God.

**U** – Unconditional election. God chooses who will be saved. People are dead in their sins and cannot respond to God. Before creation, God looked down through history and chose who would be saved. These are the elect. No condition or quality of any person determines whether or not one will be saved. Only God's sovereign choice is involved.

**L** – Limited atonement. Jesus died only for the sins of the elect.

**I** – Irresistible grace. God brings the elect to salvation with an internal call which they are not able to resist.

**P** – Perseverance of the saints. The elect cannot lose their salvation because it is the work of God the Father and Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit cannot be thwarted. Once saved, always saved.

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<sup>10</sup> John Calvin was a French theologian, who served as a pastor and reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation (Born: Jehan Cauvin, July 10, 1509, Noyon, Picardy, France. Died: May 27, 1564, Geneva, Republic of Geneva).

- **Arminianism** is a modified Calvinism. Jacobus Arminius<sup>11</sup> was a Calvinist pastor and theologian, who came to question some aspects of Calvinism. In time, he developed the theology of salvation that goes by his name.

Arminius held to the Calvinist belief that humanity is totally depraved, and therefore, no individual has a freewill when it comes to the matter of accepting the Gospel. Because of this, when the Gospel is presented to a sinner, God sovereignly imparts what Arminius labeled, *prevenient grace*.

According to this belief, prevenient grace frees the will of the one to whom the Gospel is presented, enabling the sinner to say, *yes*, or *no*, to the Gospel. Although *prevenient grace* enables the chosen individual to say, *yes*, or *no*, it does not force the recipient to say, *yes*.

- **Freewill.** Those who hold this view believe that every person is born with freewill. Therefore, when one encounters the Gospel he/she is free to accept or reject the call to accept/believe the Gospel and begin the journey toward salvation. Within the various groups that hold this view, there are differing concepts as to what that path might entail. God, by His foreknowledge, looked down through the centuries and saw those who would respond positively to the Gospel. These whom He foresaw as responding to the Gospel, he chose (elected) to receive the full sanctification that is posited on those who say, “yes,” to the Word.

In order to responsibly assess this issue, we will examine all of the Scriptures that speak of foreknowledge, election, foreordination, and related terms.

### **FOREKNOWLEDGE**

*(Acts 2:23) this Man (Jesus),, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*

*(1 Peter 1:2 ) who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.*

*(Romans 8:29) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;*

*(Romans 11:2 NAS) God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?*

### **PREDETERMINED/PREDESTINED**

*(Acts 2:23) this Man (Jesus), delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death.*

*(Romans 8:29)For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;*

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<sup>11</sup> Jacobus Arminius (AD 1560-1609) was a theologian, professor, and pastor in the Netherlands. Initially, he was a Calvinist, but as a result of several ensuing debates with those who disagreed with all of the tenets of Calvinism, Arminius gradually changed his views and the result was the doctrine that is known as Arminianism.

## ELECT

(Matthew 24:22) *"And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the **sake of the elect** those days shall be cut short.*

(Mark 13:20) *"And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no life would have been saved; **but for the sake of the elect whom He chose**, He shortened the days.*

(Matthew 24:24) *"For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to **mislead, if possible, even the elect.***

(Mark 13:22) *for false Christs and false prophets will arise, and will show signs and wonders, in order, **if possible, to lead the elect astray.***

(Matthew 24:31) *"And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet, and they **will gather together His elect from the four winds**, from one end of the sky to the other.*

(Mark 13:27) *"And then He will send forth the angels, and will gather **together His elect from the four winds**, from the farthest end of the earth, to the farthest end of heaven.*

(Luke 18:7) *now shall not God bring about **justice for His elect**, who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them?*

(Romans 8:33) *Who will bring a **charge against God's elect**? God is the one who justifies;*

## CHOSEN

(Matthew 22:10-14) *And those slaves went out into the streets, and gathered together all they found, both evil and good; and the wedding hall was filled with dinner guests. But when the king came in to look over the dinner guests, he saw there a man not dressed in wedding clothes, and he said to him, "Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes?" And he was speechless. Then the king said to the servants, "Bind him hand and foot, and cast him into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." For **many are called, but few are chosen.**"*

(Romans 11:4-8) *But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal." In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to **God's gracious choice**. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. What then? That which Israel is seeking for, it has not obtained, but **those who were chosen obtained it**, and the rest were hardened; just as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, Eyes to see not and ears to hear not, down to this very day."*

(Colossians 3:12) *And so, as **those who have been chosen of God**, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;*

(2 Thessalonians 2:13) *But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because **God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation** through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.*

(2 Timothy 2:10) *For this reason **I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen**, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.*

(Titus 1:1) *Paul, a slave of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, **for the faith of those chosen of God** and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness,*

(1 Peter 1:1a-2) ***who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father**, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.*

(1 Peter 5:13) *She who is in Babylon, **chosen together with you**, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.*



*(Revelation 17:14)"These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful."*

In addition to these statements, we must consider two statements of Jesus, related to the subject:

*(John 6:37)All that the Father gives Me shall come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will certainly not cast out.*

*(John 6:44)No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him (literally, drags him - JWG);<sup>12</sup> and I will raise him up on the last day.*

Taking into account these two statements of Jesus, and the various statements made elsewhere in the New Testament on the subject of foreknowledge, foreordination, and election, God's sovereignty in the matter of bringing someone to salvation is clear. God the Father takes some sort of an initiative in enabling/motivating individuals to accept Christ and His Gospel.

However, this does not necessarily mean that each person so influenced has lost his freewill. A person so influenced, may accept the Gospel or reject it.

In keeping with the many Scriptural statements on the subject, we must conclude that God the Father, as an expression of His omnipotence, looks down through the centuries and in advance knows how a person will respond. These He elects.

Even if such seems clear, we must not be dogmatic on this subject. No human is able to formulate God. We must be reverentially cautious about how we describe God, for fear that we might have it wrong.

The important thing is for us to obey the command of Christ to make disciples of every nation - preaching the Gospel and discipling those who respond and are immersed for the forgiveness of their sins (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:38)

***by the sanctifying work of the Spirit*** The term rendered, *sanctifying* in this verse, is ἁγιασμός (*hagoasmos*), meaning, *to set apart* (i.e. *to make holy*). It is the indwelling Holy Spirit that causes this *sanctification* – *setting apart unto God*.

On the Day of Pentecost, Peter declared,

*And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)*

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, ... *do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? (1 Corinthians 6:19)*

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<sup>12</sup> The Greek term rendered, *draws him*, is ἔλκω (*elkoh*). This term does not refer to attracting someone, as one would say, *he was attracted to her beauty*. This is an aggressive term. It is the term used for grasping the handle of a sword and drawing it out of the scabbard. It commonly is used to describe dragging something or someone. Therefore, Jesus is indicating a rather aggressive action on the part of the Father. Only those whom the Father drags to Jesus can/will come to Him.

There are two Greek words for *temple*:

- ἱερόν (*heron*), which refers to the building and its environs.
- ναός (*naos*), which refers to that inner room where the Ark of the Covenant was kept and no one could enter this sacred room except the High Priest, and he could do so only once a year – on the day of Atonement.

It is the second of these terms, ναός, that Paul uses in I Corinthians 6:19. The Christian's body is holy - sanctified - because it is a sacred room in which dwells the Holy Spirit, that is received when one is immersed for the remission of sins.<sup>13</sup>

***Sprinkled with His blood***, immediately brings to mind the practice under the First Covenant, in which physical objects used for sacred purposes were sanctified by sprinkling them with the blood from a sacrifice.

Hebrews 9:22 states, *according to the Law, one may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*<sup>14</sup>

In the next chapter, Hebrews states, *For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when He comes into the world, He says, "Sacrifice and offering Thou hast not desired, But a body Thou hast prepared for Me; ... By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.* (Hebrews 10:4-5,10)

Thus, the blood of Christ, willingly shed on the cross, has been, in a spiritual sense, sprinkled on all who have been sanctified by the Holy Spirit – which according to Peter's statement on Pentecost, refers to those who have repented and been immersed in the name of Jesus for the remission of their sins, and thus, have received the Holy Spirit.

***May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.*** Twenty-one of the New Testament documents are letters. If we include the two first chapters of the Revelation, that increases the number to twenty-two. This prayer is included in the salutation in thirteen of those written by Paul, the two by Peter, and by John in Revelation.<sup>15</sup>

## **The Great Eulogy<sup>16</sup> 1:3-5**

***Verse 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,***

Note that the eulogy expresses praise to God the Father, who was the instigator of the blessings and events listed.

<sup>13</sup> Acts 2:38

<sup>14</sup> Leviticus 17:11

<sup>15</sup> Rom. 1:7; 1 Co. 1:3; 2 Co. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Eph. 1:2; Phil. 1:2; Col. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:2; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Tit. 1:4; Phlm. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Pet. 1:2; Rev. 1:4

<sup>16</sup> The Greek term rendered, *blessed*, is εὐλογητός (*eulogaytos*) from which is derived the English term, *eulogy*.

This is in keeping with John 3:16, *For God loved the world in this manner, He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.* (literal translation)<sup>17</sup>

Every human, at least those above the age of accountability, is guilty of having sinned. Because of this, there was no hope for mankind until Jesus Christ paid the price for our sins on Calvary. Then He conquered death through His resurrection. All of this was done because of the merciful heart of the Heavenly Father.

Because of these events orchestrated by the Father, we can be born again. Significantly, in this new birth, as is true with any birth - it is the Father who does the begetting.

**Verses 4-5 to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.**

Peter is preparing them for his discussion of their suffering and trials in this world. He calls attention to the fact that the life that begins with the New Birth is not confined to life in this world.

Beyond the grave awaits an inheritance that will not fade away. Fortunes in this life come and go, but such is not the case with that which is reserved in heaven for those who have been born again to a living hope. The hope of this inheritance can be cherished above all of the vicissitudes of this life.

The word rendered, *protected*, is the Greek term, φρουρέω (*phroueoh*). This is a military term that refers to keeping someone in custody or garrisoning someone. The person of faith never doubts, regardless of what he is going through, that God the Father is standing with him, keeping watch over him, and encouraging him with the thought of the wonderful inheritance waiting in heaven.

Immediately comes to mind the example of Stephen, the first Christian martyr.

*But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."*

*But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse. And when they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him, and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

*And they went on stoning Stephen as he called upon the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!"*

*And falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" And having said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:55-60)*

Another example is that of the apostles, who were arrested and then flogged for preaching in the Temple.... *and after calling the apostles in, they flogged them and ordered them to speak no more in the name of Jesus, and then released them. So, they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name. (Acts 5:40-41)*

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<sup>17</sup> The term rendered, *so loved*, in most English versions is οὕτως (*houtohs*). The term means, *in this manner, in this way*. Therefore, it refers to how God loved, rather than the degree of His love, i.e., *that God loved the world so very much that He gave....*

## The Season of Testing and The Purpose of Testing 1:6-7

**Verse 6-7** *In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials,<sup>7</sup> that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;*

The Greek word rendered, *trials*, is *πειρασμός* (*peirosmos*). This term refers to some sort of testing, which may involve temptation to sin or some other sort of test. For example, in Hebrews Chapter 3, the term is used for testing God.

*Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, As in the day of trial (peirosmos) in the wilderness, Where your fathers tried Me by testing<sup>18</sup> Me, And saw My works for forty years. "Therefore, I was angry with this generation, and said, 'They always go astray in their heart; And they did not know My ways'; As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" (Hebrews 3:8-11)*

The two Greek terms that describe some sort of enticement to sin are:

- *δελιάζω* (*delazoh*) I allure, I entice, using some sort of bait (II Peter 2:14, 18)
- *ἐξέλκω* (*excelkoh*) I entice, taken away by his own lusts (James I:14)

Therefore, the testings (*peirosmos*) that Christians encounter may include an enticement to sin, but not necessarily so. If that were the case one of the other two Greek words note above would have been used by Peter.

Our Lord warned the apostles, *"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33)

Peter addresses four truths concerning this testing:<sup>19</sup>

- **for a little while:** The time of the Christian's testing is short. He will not have to endure it forever – Even though it may last for a lifetime, it is but the snap of a finger when compared to the eternal reward that waits for those being tested.
- **if necessary** implies that there is not always a need for testing. For reasons known only to God, there seems to be more of a need for testing in the lives of some Christians than there is in the lives of other Christians. Also, in some eras, there will be more of a need for the testimony displayed by faithfulness in the midst of testing. The promise in I Corinthians 10:13 is a valuable promise: *No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.*
- **various trials:** Testings will be of various types. As noted earlier, Christians of that decade were faced with horrible persecution. For many Christians in our present era, the threat of martyrdom is the same as it was in Nero's era. More than 900,000 Christians

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<sup>18</sup> *πειράζειν ἐν δοκιμασίᾳ* - *peirazein en dokimasia* this expression simply means, *to put to the test.*

<sup>19</sup> The Old Testament account of Job's testing is a story that is very relevant to this topic.

have been killed for their faith in the last 10 years<sup>20</sup> 52,250 of these martyrs were killed in Nigeria.<sup>21</sup>

For most Christians, testings are not related to martyrdom, but, rather, the various challenges to continuing as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ, while living in a very ungodly generation.

- **The purpose of testing:** *that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ;* The picture is of an ancient goldsmith, who puts his gold ore into a crucible, where it is subjected to intense heat. All of the dross is burned away and only the pure gold remains. As soon as he can see his face reflected in the liquid gold, he knows that he has pure gold.

Thus, God, the eternal goldsmith, allows Christians to go through trials that will burn away those impurities that adulterate one's character, and the result is the reflection of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Christian's bearing and demeanor. This reminds us of Paul's statement to the Galatians, *"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.* (Galatians 2:20)

## Loved, Though Not Seen 1:8-9

**Verses 8-9** *and though you have not seen Him, you love Him, and though you do not see Him now, but believe in Him, you greatly rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory,<sup>9</sup> obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls.*

Those to whom Peter writes, had not seen Christ, during His earthly sojourn - ***though you have not seen Him***. In all probability, they had come to faith by the preaching of the apostles, and others, who had seen Him. Neither had they been granted the privilege of seeing Christ, in some sort of apparition after they came to faith.

These words immediately bring to mind Paul's statement to the Corinthians, *for we walk by faith, not by sight--* (II Corinthians 5:7)

One of Satan's most effective weapons is his insinuating doubt into the life of a Christian when trials are being experienced. Almost everyone who has been a follower of Jesus has had to deal with this challenge.

Even though we walk by faith and not by sight, the evidences of the veracity of the Gospel are many. One of the most convincing is the martyrdom of the apostles. It is not natural for people to die for a lie. The apostles had been with Jesus. They had seen the many evidences of his Divinity, and no threat of any sort could shake them from the certainty of what they knew to be true – by evidence. Each of them, in various circumstances, paid the ultimate price for being faithful to their Lord.<sup>22</sup> Therefore, their willing martyrdom is one of the strongest evidences of the truthful foundation of our faith.

<sup>20</sup> [https://www.christianpost.com/news/January 16, 2017](https://www.christianpost.com/news/January%2016,%202017)

<sup>21</sup> The ACLJ <info@email.aclj.org>

<sup>22</sup> There are a number of legends about the death of the Apostle John. The most plausible of these is that rather than killing John, the authorities exiled him to the island of Patmos where he had to work in the mines. This fits Revelation 1:9. The legend then states that because of his age he was released and went to Ephesus (present day Turkey) where he died of old age, sometime after 98 AD. He is the only apostle who was not executed for his faith.

The language, *obtaining as the outcome of your faith the salvation of your souls*, begins with the Greek term, κομιζόμενοι (*komidzomenoi*) which is the present, middle, nominative, plural participle of the verb, κομίζω (*komidzoh*), meaning *to receive*. The present middle form of the verb means that they already were receiving what was due them. Salvation was their present possession and would continue into eternity. Therefore, they rejoiced, as did Hannah,

*Then Hannah prayed and said, "My heart exults in the LORD; My horn is exalted in the LORD, My mouth speaks boldly against my enemies, Because I rejoice in Thy salvation. There is no one holy like the LORD, Indeed, there is no one besides Thee, nor is there any rock like our God."* (1 Samuel 2:1-2)

Those who continue in faith, in the midst of the challenges of this life, however severe, can look forward to *obtaining as the outcome of their faith the salvation of their souls*. They will hear the words, *Well done, good and faithful slave*. (Matthew 25:21,23; Luke 19:17)

### **The Doctrine of Salvation 1:1-12**

**Verses 10-12** *As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful search and inquiry,<sup>11</sup> seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow.*

<sup>12</sup> *It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves, but you, in these things which now have been announced to you through those who preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven-- things into which angels long to look.*

The many Old Testament prophecies that were imparted to the prophets by the Holy Spirit were not understood by these prophets. They pondered the meaning of their own prophetic pronouncements.

These truths are so phenomenal and of eternal import, that even the angels seemed to struggle to understand them, fully. Those of us who have received the Gospel have this understanding, not because of our great intelligence or ability to grasp incomprehensible truths, but because they were preached by the Holy Spirit through the apostles and have been preserved for us in Scripture.

### **Be Like the Holy One 1:13-16**

**Verses 13-16** *Therefore, gird your minds for action, keep sober in spirit, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

<sup>14</sup> *As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance,<sup>15</sup> but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior;<sup>16</sup> because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."*

In this section, Peter launches into some practical admonitions. He begins by picturing the Christian preparing for battle. The preparation, and the victory, involve the mind – how one is to think. By constantly fixing one's hope completely on the grace to be received when Christ returns, is an important element in preparing for the spiritual battle that Christians fight in this life.

As is true in every generation, the Christians to whom Peter addressed this letter needed to be warned against falling into the habits and ways of the culture in which they lived – the pattern of life that they had followed before their salvation, because prior to their salvation, they did not know any better (*which were yours in your ignorance*). As an obedient child does not stray

from the principles and morals his parent, so each Christian is to live as a child who is obedient to the Heavenly Father.

In his exhortation to be holy Peter cited the exhortation that God gave to the Israelites after their deliverance from Egypt.

*"For I am the LORD your God. Consecrate yourselves therefore, and be holy; for I am holy. And you shall not make yourselves unclean with any of the swarming things that swarm on the earth. For I am the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; thus you shall be holy for I am holy."* (Leviticus 11:44-45)

### **The Person of God 1:17-19**

**Verses 17-19** *And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth;<sup>18</sup> knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,<sup>19</sup> but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*

The Greek term rendered as, *fear*, is φόβος (phobos). This term is used to communicate two different concepts:

- The first is, *terror, being afraid of something or someone*. This use of the term is encountered in I Peter 3:14 *But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear (φόβος) their intimidation, and do not be troubled,*
- The second is, *respect or reverence*. This use of the term is seen in Ephesians 5:33 *Nevertheless let each individual among you also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see to it that she respect (φόβος) her husband.*

There are many Scriptural statements concerning the Christian's lack of terror of God. Here are two that cannot be misunderstood.

- *And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.<sup>17</sup> By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.<sup>18</sup> There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love. (1 John 4:16-18)*
- *"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be afraid. (John 14:27)*

Many other examples could be cited concerning God's love for us and the resulting lack of terror in the Christian's heart. Because of this, we must conclude that Peter is stating that we should conduct ourselves with reverence and respect for God, who someday will judge each of us.

Relevant to our understanding of I Peter 1:17 is the passage in Revelation 20:11-15

*And I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them.<sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds.*

<sup>13</sup> *And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds.*

<sup>14</sup> *And death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire.*

<sup>15</sup> *And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

This picture of the Great Day of Judgement describes two groups:

- Those whose names are in the Book of Life.
- Those whose names are not in the Book of Life.

The Lamb's Book of Life is mentioned eight times in the New Testament (Phil. 4:3; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19).

Each person whose name is not in the Book of Life will be judged by his/her personal book, i.e., the record of that person's life. None of these will qualify for eternal life in heaven, because *all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God* (Romans 3:23).

However, even those whose names are in the Book of Life will also be judged.

- *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.* (II Corinthians 5:10)
- *But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of God.* (Romans 14:10)

The Great White Throne is the place in which it is determined who will be thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:11). As noted, it is those whose names are not in the Book of Life, who will be cast into the lake of fire.

For those whose names are in the Book of Life the throne before which they will be judged is a βῆμα (*bayma*). This is the term used in II Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10, cited above in reference to all having to stand before the *judgment seat of God/Christ*.

A βῆμα is a raised platform mounted by steps and usually furnished with a seat. The βῆμα was the platform where officials sat while overseeing athletic competition. This is the term that is used in several passages of the New Testament for a judgment seat.<sup>23</sup>

Those whose names are in the Book of Life will not be judged to determine their eternal fate, but rather, to determine their reward in heaven. (Matt. 5:12, 46; Matt. 6:1, 2, 5, 16; 10:41, 42; Mark. 9:41; Lk. 6:23, 35; I Corinthians 3:8, 14;. 9:17, 18; Colossians 3:24; Heb. 10:35; 11:26; II John 1:8; Revelation 11:18; 22:12)

Of passing interest is the fact that in the expression, *impartially judges*, the term rendered as *judges*, is κρίνοντα (*krinonta*), which is the present, active, masculine accusative participle of the verb, κρίνω (*krinoh*). This form of the verb indicates that God the Father is impartially judging us, now. Because of this, it is appropriate to assume that, as is true of any loving Father, He is involved in the circumstances of our lives – what He allows, what He causes, etc., to move us more and more into His likeness, ***You shall be holy, for I am holy.***

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<sup>23</sup> Matthew 27:19; John 19:13; 18:12, 16, 17; 25:6, 10, 17; Romans 14:10; II Corinthians 5:10. Another use of the term is to describe a *step, a stride, a foot of ground* (Acts 7:5) This term also is used in Acts to describe a speaker's platform (Acts 12:21)



The price paid for the redemption of those whose names are in the Book of Life is the greatest price ever paid for anything - *with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ.*

**Verses 20-21** *For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you <sup>21</sup> who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.*

Peter continues to focus on the Father. In this chapter, two purposes for Christ's coming are highlighted:

- Atonement for our sins (verses 18-19)
- Belief in the Father and looking to Him for our ultimate hope (verse 21)

### **An Obvious Contrast 1:22-25**

**Verse 22** *Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart,*

Two Greek words for *love*, are employed in this verse:

- Φιλadelphία (*Philadelphia*), *brotherly love*.<sup>24</sup> This is a word that implies deep emotion, flowing back and forth between two siblings.
- ἀγάπη (*agape*), one-directional, unconditional, love.

Emotions cannot be commanded, one either experiences emotion or he does not. Such is the case with *brotherly love*.

Ἀγάπη, however, not only one-directional, it also is volitional. One can choose to ἀγαπή. It also often implies action. Such is the case in the use of the term in John 3:16, which literally states, *God loved the world in this manner, He gave.*

Thus, Peter states that not only is a purpose for purifying the soul the achieving of sincere φιλαδελφία, but also to be sincere (*from the heart*) in ἀγάπη.

This passage brings to mind the writing of Tertullian (155-220 AD), who was an influential church leader in Carthage. When Christianity had spread throughout the Roman Empire, the non-Christian populace became suspicious about this new religion. When Christians ceased practicing the pagan lifestyle of their neighbors, Christians became the object of curiosity. Wild rumors began to circulate about what Christians taught and did in their meetings.

To defend the good name of Christianity, Tertullian, a church leader in Carthage, wrote a very lengthy, *apology*. At one point he wrote,

But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. They say, "See, how they love one another," for themselves are animated by mutual hatred; and, "how they are ready even to die for one another", for they themselves will sooner put to death. And they are wroth with us, too, because we call each other brethren; for no other reason, as I think, than because among themselves names of consanguinity are assumed in mere pretense of affection.<sup>25</sup>

**Verses 23-25** *for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.* <sup>24</sup> *For, "All flesh is like grass, And all its*

<sup>24</sup> Φιλadelphία is the merging of two Greek terms, φιλή (philay), *affection*, and ἄδελφος (*adelphos*), *brother*.

<sup>25</sup> Tertullian, *The Apology*, chapter 39

***glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, And the flower falls off, But the word of the Lord abides forever." And this is the word which was preached to you.***

Peter here reflects the same concept that he displayed in the opening verses. The sowing of seed, as we saw earlier, was the description of the purpose of their being scattered (διασπείρω). The seed (σπορά - *spora*), that caused the spiritual rebirth of the recipients of the letter is the same imperishable seed that they were to sow in their scattering among the nations.

This seed produces an eternal existence for those who are born again through the reception of that seed.

### **Eliminate the Negative, Accentuate the Positive 2:1-3**

***Verse 1 Therefore, putting aside all malice and all guile and hypocrisy and envy and all slander...***

The term rendered, *malice*, (κακία - *kakia*), is used in Acts 8:22, to describe Simon the ambitious sorcerer. In the Acts passage the term has the sense of *scheming to get ahead*.

The word carries that sense in the passage before us. Some people, eager to elevate themselves, seek to do so by lowering others (*guile*), through gossip, slander, etc.

***Verses 2-3 like newborn babes, long for the pure milk of the word, that by it you may grow in respect to salvation,<sup>3</sup> if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord.***

Instead of such negatives motivated by ambition, begin to accentuate the positive – cultivate a passionate hunger for the word of God.

21<sup>st</sup> Century Christians, have an advantage over those to whom Peter wrote. At that time, the Canon of Scripture had not been developed. Churches quickly began sharing the apostolic letters between church and church, but the individual Christian did not have a Bible. They had to listen to the reading in the Sunday morning service. We have an advantage over them - we can set aside time to read and meditate on the Scriptures. Doing so, will develop in us the traits that Peter encouraged.

### **Christ, the Stone 2:4-8**

In these verses, three truths concerning Christ are presented, using the metaphor of a stone.

#### **A Living Stone, verses 4-5**

***And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God,<sup>5</sup> you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.***

This is a very unusual image, because unlike a tree, a stone is inert and lifeless. Yet, Christ is described as a *Living Stone*.

This brings to mind the episode in Numbers Chapter 20. The Israelites had arrived in the wilderness of Zin and there was no water to be found. The congregation began to complain and were on the verge of rebellion. God instructed Moses to go to the rock that was located in front of the Tent of the Meeting and take the rod that had been held aloft at the crossing of the Red Sea, and speak to the rock. God said that when he did this, the rock would begin to gush forth water. Moses did as God had instructed, except he struck the rock when he spoke, and by the words that he spoke, he implied that he and Aaron were providing the water.

*"Take the rod; and you and your brother Aaron assemble the congregation and speak to the rock before their eyes, that it may yield its water. You shall thus bring forth water for them out of the rock and let the congregation and their beasts drink."*

*So Moses took the rod from before the LORD, just as He had commanded him;<sup>10</sup> and Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly before the rock. And he said to them, "Listen now, you rebels; shall we bring forth water for you out of this rock?"*

<sup>11</sup> *Then Moses lifted up his hand and struck the rock twice with his rod; and water came forth abundantly, and the congregation and their beasts drank. (Numbers 20:8-11)*

In spite of this disobedience, God caused the rock to gush forth water for the people and their livestock.<sup>26</sup>

In I Corinthians Chapter 10, Paul referred to this incident and declared that it was not just a physical rock that provided the water.

*For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea;<sup>2</sup> and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea;<sup>3</sup> and all ate the same spiritual food;<sup>4</sup> and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.<sup>27</sup> (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)*

Of course, there was not a physical rock with supernatural powers that followed the Jews everywhere they went during the rest of their journey in the wilderness. It was their Messiah, who had yet to be manifest to them and to the world, that provided for them in their wilderness experience.

When the Messiah did come into the world, He was rejected by the Jews because He did not immediately establish a kingdom and rule the world from Jerusalem.

Peter continued to use the figure of a stone, stating that Christians are living stones that are being used to construct a spiritual building. Furthermore, Christians are a priesthood, functioning within that structure, to offer spiritual sacrifices. This is in contrast to the Mosaic Covenant in which only the ordained priests of the Aaronic family, could offer sacrifices.

The fact that the sacrifices are spiritual, also is in contrast to the Mosaic Covenant, in which the sacrifices were animals, birds, etc.

Paul describes himself in that priestly role in Romans 15:15-16, in which he describes his bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles is an offering of the Gentiles to God.

*But I have written very boldly to you on some points, so as to remind you again, because of the grace that was given me from God,<sup>16</sup> to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles, ministering as a priest the gospel of God, that my offering of the Gentiles might become acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.*

The Epistle to the Hebrews speaks of two things that all Christians should do that comprise a spiritual sacrifice.

*Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name.<sup>16</sup> And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased. (Hebrews 13:15-16)*

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<sup>26</sup> Because of this misconduct, both Aaron and Moses were not allowed to enter the promised land (Numbers 20:12, 23-29; 27:12-14; Deuteronomy 3:26-27; 32:48-52)

<sup>27</sup> The Messiah

Thus, under the New Covenant, two sacrifices are specified:

- Verbal praise of God
- Good deeds

This brings to mind Paul's exhortation to the Colossians

*And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through Him to God the Father.... Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men; (Colossians 3:17,23)*

#### **A Corner Stone Verse 6-7**

***For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone, And he who believes in Him shall not be disappointed." This precious value, then, is for you who believe. But for those who disbelieve, "The stone which the builders rejected, This became the very corner stone,"***

In his Letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote, *So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints, and are of God's household,*<sup>20</sup> *having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone,*<sup>21</sup> *in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord;*<sup>22</sup> *in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)*

Traditionally, the chief cornerstone of a building set its parameters. The building, right, left, and vertical, all aligned with the cornerstone. Such should be true of the life of the individual Christian and the local Church, wherein dwells the Holy Spirit.

#### **A Stumbling Stone verse 8**

***"A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense"; for they stumble because they are disobedient to the word, and to this doom they were also appointed.***<sup>28</sup>

This quote from Isaiah, which was aimed at both the Jews of the Southern Kingdom and those of the Northern Kingdom, spoke of the coming of the Messiah, who would be rejected by many Jews. Those Jews who rejected Jesus as the Messiah, were doomed, i.e., condemned to hell.

Thus, in these verses, Jesus is described as:

- *a living stone* (verse 4)
- *the cornerstone* (verse 6)
- *The stone which the builders rejected* (verses 4 &7)
- *A stumbling stone* (verse 8)

### **Living Exemplary Lives as Citizens of a New Nation 2:9-12**

#### **Verses 9-10**

***But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;***<sup>10</sup> ***for you once were not a people, but now you are the people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.***

Peter, writing to Jewish Christians, is reflecting the statements made in Jeremiah and Hosea, concerning God's rejection of idolatrous Israel (Jeremiah 3:8; Hosea 1:4-9).

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<sup>28</sup> Quoting Isaiah 8:13-14

The Greek word rendered as *race*, in the promise, *you are a chosen race*, is ἔθνος (*ethnos*, from which is derived the English word, *ethnic*).

Jesus used this language as recorded in Matthew 21:43, referring to the Jews who would become constituents of a new race called, *Christians*.

*"Therefore, I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and be given to a nation (ἔθνος i.e. race) producing the fruit of it.*

This is reflected in Paul's writing to the Church at Rome,

*I say then, God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! For I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin.<sup>2</sup> God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel?<sup>3</sup> "Lord, they have killed Thy prophets, they have torn down Thine altars, and I alone am left, and they are seeking my life."<sup>4</sup> But what is the divine response to him? "I have kept for Myself seven thousand men who have not bowed the knee to Baal."<sup>5</sup> In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. (Romans 11:1-5)*

Since Peter's letter is sent to the Jewish Christians scattered throughout the remote provinces, the recipients of the letter were not a race/nation/people, in their Gentile surroundings. They were exiles. However, now that they had come to Christ, they had an identity that had nothing to do with earthly citizenship. They were a part of a new race and members of a new Kingdom.

Of course, this truth applies to all who have entered the Kingdom of God through faith in Jesus Christ – such are a new chosen race that did not exist prior to the coming of Christ and His atonement for the sins of mankind.

An object's worth can be determined by the identity of the one who owns it. If I had the Bible that Martin Luther owned when he began the reformation, it would be worth vastly more than any of the most expensive Bibles that I could purchase today.<sup>29</sup> Thus, being God's possession makes this special race the most valuable race on the earth, regardless of the ethnicity or the earthly nationality of the individuals involved.

The members of this new race are called to the priestly task of making known to all the world the ***the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;*** Christians are seed sown in whatever culture they find themselves, with the task of bringing the Gospel and the truths about God to that culture. Failing to be dedicated to that task is to fail to fulfill one's purpose for existence.

Although the direct audience for this letter was the Jews of the *diaspora*, those who have been sown as seed in these hostile environments, this truth applies to all who have been born again into the glorious Kingdom of Christ.

All who are in this newly born kingdom, both Jew and Gentile, are a Kingdom of Priests.

*and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood,<sup>6</sup> and He has made*

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<sup>29</sup> This analogy is suggested by Harold L. Fickett, Jr, *Peter's Principles*, (Glendale, Ca. G/L Publications) 1974, page 73.

*us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:5-6)*

It is the role of priests to offer sacrifices, and once again we quote Hebrews 13:15-16,

*Through Him then, let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that give thanks to His name. <sup>16</sup> And do not neglect doing good and sharing; for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

Following this section in the epistle, Peter next embarks on a lengthy presentation of principles that should be displayed in the lives of those who are a part of the new race.

### **Verses 11-12**

***Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul. <sup>12</sup> Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may on account of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.***

James wrote,

*But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. <sup>15</sup> Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death. (James 1:14-15)*

Not only does fulfilled lust result in spiritual death, but Peter emphasizes another truth – the fulfillment of lustful desires gives credence to the unbelieving Gentiles accusation of Christians’ being evil doers. On the other hand, the example of holy living would cause the Gentiles that surrounded these Jewish Christians to change their view of the followers of Jesus Christ and, hopefully, cause them to begin to glorify God.

Peter pictures the conflict between Christians and the surrounding hostile community to be won, not by aggressive action, but by good conduct and good works, which he will define more specifically in the next sections of the letter.

*the day of visitation* refers to the eschatological end of the age – the return of Christ in which many of those who observed the lives of Christians and became converts would thank God for sending these Jewish Christians into their community.

## **Examples of Excellent Behavior That Would Have a Positive Influence On The Gentiles 2:13-25**

### **Respect for governmental authority verses 13-17**

***Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, <sup>14</sup> or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. <sup>15</sup> For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. <sup>16</sup> Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as slaves of God. <sup>17</sup> Honor all men; love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.***

This is the same truth presented by Paul in Romans:

*Let every person be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. <sup>2</sup> Therefore he who resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. <sup>3</sup> For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to*

*have no fear of authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same;* (Romans 13:1-3)

If a Christian violates the law of the country in which he is living, he has sinned. The only time that a Christian is justified in violating the law, is when that law contradicts the command of God. Such an example is seen in the behavior of the apostles recorded in Acts 5.

In obedience to Christ, the apostles were presenting the Gospel in the temple environs and were arrested for doing so. When they were arrested, the crowd was on the side of the apostles, and the apostles could have resisted arrest and a riot would have ensued. Instead, they submitted to the arrest, respecting the authorities who had sent the officers to arrest them. Then, when they appeared before the court, Peter and the apostles stated to the court,

*But Peter and the apostles answered and said, "We must obey God rather than men. (Acts 5:29)*

Thus, they set the example of respectful disobedience, which is justified when civil authorities oppose a Christian's obedience to God.

### **Respect and submission to one's earthly master verses 18-19**

*Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable.<sup>19</sup> For this finds favor, if for the sake of conscience toward God a man bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly.*

The term rendered as, *servants*, is οἱ οἰκέται (*hoi oiketai*), which literally is *the house servants*.<sup>30</sup> These either were slaves, or employed house servants who lived in the house of those whom they served,

Paul, in Ephesians 6:5 and Colossians 3:22 gave the same injunction, only he used the term, δοῦλος (*doulos*), meaning, *slave*.

The important point that Peter makes is that even those masters who are unreasonable and demanding should be respected and obeyed. When a believer conducts himself in this manner, because of a God-formed conscience, he receives favor from God, and perhaps, even from the unruly master.

### **Those who suffer unjustly are following the example of Christ verses 20-25**

*For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God.<sup>21</sup> For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,<sup>22</sup> who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth;<sup>23</sup> and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;<sup>24</sup> and He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; for by His wounds you were healed.<sup>25</sup> For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.*

There is no spiritual benefit received when one endures punishment for bad behavior. After all, the recipient is getting what he/she deserves.

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<sup>30</sup> Young's literal translation renders this as *the domestics*. The English Young's Literal Translation of the Holy Bible 1862/1887/1898, by J. N. Young. ASCII version Copyright © 1988-1997 by the Online Bible Foundation and Woodside Fellowship of Ontario, Canada.

However, when one suffers because he/she is doing right, and endures it patiently, without resisting, and does this because of the example of Christ – such an attitude finds favor with God.

### **Proper Conduct In The Marital Relationship 3:1-7**

**A wife's conduct toward her husband and her modest attire verses 1-6<sup>31</sup>**

*In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, <sup>2</sup> as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. <sup>3</sup> And let not your adornment be merely external-- braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; <sup>4</sup> but let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. <sup>5</sup> For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands. <sup>6</sup> Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.*

Even as the hostile Gentile community was to be influenced by the respectful behavior of the Jewish Christians, by the same token, an unbelieving husband could be brought to faith by the respectful manner in which the believing wife conducted herself. Preaching to one's husband might generate resentment and even, alienation, but if a wife submissively honored her husband such behavior might open his heart and result in his accepting the faith displayed by his wife.

Peter cites the example of Sarah as recorded in Genesis 18:11-12, when she laughed within herself, upon hearing the angel say she and Abraham were to have a son.

*Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age; Sarah was past childbearing. And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old, shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"*

Note that Peter does not say that a wife should be unconcerned about her appearance. In Peter's injunction, there is no prohibition against seeking to be physically attractive. However, more important than physical attractiveness is the heart of the woman: *hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands.*

Peter closes by stating that women should not be afraid of their husbands. Of course, we assume that he was not addressing a situation in which a husband is physically abusive and a danger to his wife and children.

### **The husband's conduct and attitude toward his wife verse 7**

*You husbands, likewise live with your wives in an understanding way, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman; and grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.*

Only one verse is aimed at husbands, but it is a direct challenge to the views of the Roman world of that era. The idea of any reciprocity in a marriage was foreign to the Roman mind. A woman had no rights. She was virtually a slave.

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<sup>31</sup> Several times in his epistles, Paul addressed the relationship between husbands and wives: Ephesians 5:22-28; Colossians 3:18-19; Titus 2:3-5



The ancient view – and still the view in some cultures – that the husband is the lord, and the wife exists only to do his bidding, is far from the picture painted by Peter. The wife is to be honored as a fellow-heir with her husband, of the wonderful God-given grace of life.

Peter strongly contradicts that mentality and places two responsibilities on husbands, then closes with a promise.

First, the husband is commanded to dedicate himself to understanding his wife. Male and female perceptions, values, and means of expressions are not the same. A godly husband will make it a lifetime career to learn how his wife thinks and feels, and in time, can even come to anticipate how she will respond to various circumstances and stimuli.

Wives are more vulnerable to emotional wounds than are husbands, and a good husband will understand this and seek to protect his wife from such wounds – especially seeking to avoid being the means of inflicting those wounds.

Peter instructs husbands to *grant her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life*. There is no distinction between male and female, when it comes to one's importance in the Kingdom. In this respect, wives are equal to their husbands.

Peter then closes his injunction to the husbands by implying if a husband does not conduct himself in this manner toward his wife, his prayers will not carry much weight with God.

### **The Character Of The Relationship Between Christians 3:8-12**

*To sum up, let all be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit;<sup>9</sup> not returning evil for evil, or insult for insult, but giving a blessing instead; for you were called for the very purpose that you might inherit a blessing.<sup>10</sup> For, "Let him who means to love life and see good days Refrain his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking guile."<sup>11</sup> "And let him turn away from evil and do good; Let him seek peace and pursue it."<sup>12</sup> "For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, And His ears attend to their prayer, But the face of the Lord is against those who do evil."*

Peter has addressed the relationship between slaves/servants and their masters, and the relationship between a husband and a wife in marriage. Now, he states, I want to sum it all up by addressing the relationship between Christians as a whole.

Being harmonious in relationships within the local church is the first character trait that Peter presents. The Greek term rendered, *harmonious*, is ὁμόφρονες (*homophrones*), literally, *being of one mind*. The plea is that brothers and sisters in Christ get along with one another and be united in spirit and in the Spirit.

This does not mean that Christians have to agree with one another on everything, but it does mean that a Christ-centered Christian is not a disagreeable and argumentative person.

The second character trait that he addresses is being sympathetic. The Greek term here is συμπάθης (*sumpathays*), meaning, *to share one another's feelings*. This is the same injunction that Paul gave to the Romans *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep*. (Romans 12:15)

The third character trait is being brotherly. The term rendered, *brotherly*, is the same term that we encountered in 1:22, φιλάδελφος (*philadelphus*), i.e. love between brothers. David and Jonathan were beautiful examples of this relationship (I Samuel 18:1; II Samuel 1:23-27)

The fourth character trait is being kindhearted. The Greek term here is ἔυσπλαγχνος (*eusplagchnos*), literally, *compassionate and tenderhearted*. In essence, this is another way of saying what he said in the second quality, being sympathetic.

The fifth character trait is being humble in spirit. The Greek term is τᾰπεινοφρον (*tapeinophron*), which means to have a modest opinion of oneself. Humility is a quality that if you think that you have it, probably means that you have lost that quality. It is important that we recognize our dependency on God, rather than our own ability to succeed and exceed. Peter stated earlier in 2:21 that Jesus is to be our example. Paul, in Philippians 2:5-8, describes this attitude in Christ.

*Have this attitude in yourselves, which was also in Christ Jesus,<sup>6</sup> who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,<sup>7</sup> but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, and being made in the likeness of men.<sup>8</sup> And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.*

The sixth character trait is having a forgiving spirit. If Christians are to have the relationship with one another that God intends for us to have, a forgiving spirit must be the atmosphere in which we live.

This brings to mind, Jesus' command, *bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.* (Luke 6:28)

Paul wrote the same thing to the Romans *Bless those who persecute you; bless and curse not.* (Romans 12:14)

Peter then summarizes his presentation of these six character traits with a closing comment on conciliatory speech and the importance of turning away from evil, especially evil toward a fellow Christian. Peter closes these exhortations with the warning, that anyone who pursues evil will find God to be his/her enemy.

### **Further Exhortation Concerning The Christian's Relationship To Unbelievers 3:13-17**

#### **The Christian's response to being unjustly mistreated verses 13-16**

*And who is there to harm you if you prove zealous for what is good?<sup>14</sup> But even if you should suffer for the sake of righteousness, you are blessed. And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled,<sup>15</sup> but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence;<sup>16</sup> and keep a good conscience so that in the thing in which you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame.*

These verses emphasize the truth presented earlier, in 2:20-25. One addition here is the exhortation to be ready to tell others about how the Christian can have hope, even in the midst of persecution. Once again, the attitude in the presentation is important, *with gentleness and reverence*. God is observing and listening to how one presents his/her defense. Therefore, it is appropriate to realize that the persecuted Christian is representing God and how the Christian describes the reason for this hope, must be an accurate presentation. The Christian had better get it right or else, when he/she faces God, the Lord will ask, "Why did you say that about me?"

An extremely important matter is presented in the statement, *sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts*. The term rendered, *sanctify*, is ἁγιόζω (*hagiadzoh*), meaning *to set apart*. The verb

here is in the aorist tense, implying a *once and for all* action that takes place before one enters into the situation described. The injunction is, *in the inner recesses of your being, set Christ apart as the Lord of your life, the object of your worship, and the basic reason for your life. Everything else must be secondary.* One who has done this will endure whatever good or bad comes his/her way as a result of his/hers unflinchingly following Christ.

The term rendered, *keep*, in the exhortation, *keep a good conscience*, is a present active participle, which would be better rendered, *having a good conscience*. Peter is stating that as long as you implement this exhortation in the spirit of meekness and respect, you will have a good conscience.

### **God determines whether or not the Christian will suffer for doing what is right verse 17**

***17 For it is better, if God should will it so, that you suffer for doing what is right rather than for doing what is wrong.***

Ultimately, the surrendered Christian accepts any suffering that comes his way, understanding it as being in God's permissive will and sometimes, perhaps, even God's active will, i.e. God causes something to happen because of His purposes.

### **The Purpose Of Christ's Death And His Announcement To The Spirits Of Those Who Were Disobedient In The Days Of Noah And The Ark's Illustration Of The Role Of Immersion In Salvation 3:18-22**

#### **The purpose of Christ's death Verse 18**

***18 For Christ also died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, in order that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit;***

In God's covenant with Israel, the High Priest, once a year, entered the room called, the Holy of Holies, with the blood of the atonement sacrifice and sprinkled it on the top of the Ark of the Covenant. In doing this, he was making atonement for the sins of the nation, for the year just passed. This was done every year on the Day of Atonement.<sup>32</sup>

The sacrificial atonement of Christ, accomplished through His death on the cross, was a *once for all* sacrifice.

The Epistle to the Hebrews states, *So, Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.* (Hebrews 9:28)

Similarly, Paul wrote to the Romans,

*He who was delivered up because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.* (Romans 4:25)

*knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him....For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.* (Romans 6:9,10)

The term rendered as, *bring*, in the phrase, *bring us to God*, is προσάγω (*prosagoh*). During the days when the Greek empire was flourishing every king had a προσαγάγευς (*prosagogeus*). He

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<sup>32</sup> They Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) is celebrated on the tenth day of the seventh Hebrew month of Tishri (corresponds to mid-September through mid-October).

was the *bringer*, or the *introducer*.<sup>33</sup> No one could have access to the king except by going through the *introducer*.<sup>34</sup> Christ is God the Father's προσαγάγευς. Jesus declared, *I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me.* (John 14:6)

### **Christ's activity following His crucifixion and prior to His resurrection verses 19-20**

***19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.***

The statement concerning Christ's activity following His death, and prior to His resurrection, as well as the one in II Peter 2:5, has produced many interpretations. One question relates to the location to which Jesus went and preached to the spirits that were disobedient in the days of Noah. Some confusion is the result of the so-called, Apostles' Creed which is recited every Sunday in some churches. The opening paragraph of the Apostles' Creed states,

I believe in God, the Father almighty, Creator of heaven and earth, and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended into hell; on the third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; from there he will come to judge the living and the dead.

The statement that Jesus descended into hell in this creed is misleading.<sup>35</sup> Hell will be the final doom of the damned, but at this time, no one is in hell. Unfortunately, the King James Version does not make a distinction between these two terms, but renders both of them as, *hell*.

- The Greek term that is rendered in English as hell, is γέεννα (*gehenna*). This was the garbage dump located in the Valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem. It was the garbage dump of the city, and a fire burned there, constantly day and night. In the New Testament, this is the term used for the eternal fate of the damned.<sup>36</sup>
- The Greek term used in the New Testament and rendered as *hades*, is ᾠδης (*hades*).<sup>37</sup> This term refers to the abode of the dead spirits, prior to the judgment day.<sup>38</sup> A study of the topic indicates that there are two regions of hades. One is the area where the departed

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<sup>33</sup> *A Greek-English Lexicon*, Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott (Oxford, Clarendon Press) 1992, page 1500, προσαγωγῆιον, προσαγογεύς, II, 2.

<sup>34</sup> "In Greek this had a specialized meaning. At the court of kings there was an official called the *prosagogeus*, the introducer, the giver of access, and it was his function to decide who should be admitted to the king's presence and who should be kept out. He, as it were, held the keys of access. It is Jesus Christ, through what he did, who gives men access to God."

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/dsb/1-peter-3.html>

<sup>35</sup> Some modern churches have revised the language.

<sup>36</sup> Matthew 5:22, 29, 30; 10:28; 18:9; 23:15, 33; Mark 9:43, 45, 47; Luke 12:15; James 3:6

<sup>37</sup> Matt. 11:23; 16:18; Lk. 10:15; Lk. 16:23; Acts 2:27, 31; I Cor. 15:55; Rev. 1:18; 6:8; Rev. 20:13-14

<sup>38</sup> The Greek's had a rather elaborate doctrine concerning hades. Although the New Testament does not present the picture of hades as did the Greek mythology, it does use that term as the abode the dead, awaiting the end of the age.

spirits of Christians fellowship with Christ, awaiting the end of the age. The other area is where the damned await the final judgement, and their final consignment to hell.

The region of hades that Christ occupies with those who are his, is described in the New Testament by various terms.

- To the thief on the cross, Jesus said, *Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise.* (Luk 23:43)
- In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, the area of hades occupied by those who will spend eternity if heaven is called, Abraham's bosom; *And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away, and Lazarus in his bosom.* (Luk 16:23)
- In his Epistle to the Philippians, Paul stated that it would be better for the Philippians if he continued in this life, but he said that it would be better for him to leave this world and be with Christ; *But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better;* (Philippians 1:23)
- To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, *we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord.* (II Corinthians 5:8)

We also are told in Hebrews 1:3 that after His ascension, Christ sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

*And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;* (Hebrews 1:3)

In the various passages of Scripture that speak of Christ's activity after His ascension, the context of the statement must be taken into account. In each passage, a point is being made and the terms and description of His activity relate to the point's being made in that passage. Therefore, we must admit that we can hold to general truths related to the topic, but that we cannot claim to have a clear understanding of the subject.

Another question raised by this passage relates to the identity of those to whom Christ made proclamation. Two identities are possible:

- angels who copulated with human women and thus were confined to a spiritual prison;
- humans who ignored the preaching of Noah.

The concept of angels copulating with human women and as a result, were imprisoned, is the Book of Enoch's interpretation of Genesis 6:2.<sup>39</sup> The Book of Enoch also declares that it was Enoch who went down to the place of the angel's imprisonment and announced to them that their doom was sealed.

The statement that it was Enoch who proclaimed their doom to the angels has no biblical basis. There is no reference to Enoch in Peter's text. Furthermore, the Book of Enoch is not in the canon, nor is it mentioned in this text.<sup>40</sup>

It is best to take this passage literally. Genesis 6:3,5 states,

*Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless, his days shall be one hundred and twenty years." ... Then the LORD saw that the*

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<sup>39</sup> *The Book of Enoch*, translated from the Ethiopic by Rev. George H. Schodde, Ph.D. (Andover, Warren F. Draper) 1882, pages 28ff

<sup>40</sup> We will encounter this issue again in II Peter 2:5, where we will address it more fully

*wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*

While building the ark, Noah pled with the people of his generation to follow the leadership of God, who, thus far, had been patient with them. II Peter 2:5 states, *and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;* (II Peter 2 raises questions with which we will deal when we are studying that text).

The reference here is to those humans who were disobedient in the days of Noah and, according to Genesis 6, that was the entire human race, with the exception of Noah and his family.

Therefore, taking this passage in I Peter literally, following his crucifixion, and prior to His resurrection, Christ visited the spirits of the humans who were disobedient in the days of Noah, and told them that their doom was sealed.

### **The role of immersion in the salvation of sinful humanity verses 21-22**

***<sup>21</sup> And corresponding to that, immersion now saves you-- not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience-- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, <sup>22</sup> who is at the right hand of God, having gone into heaven, after angels and authorities and powers had been subjected to Him.***

The ark was the only way for anyone to be saved from destruction during the days of Noah. It was not man's idea, but God's divinely given means of saving humans from destruction.

Likewise, Christ is our ark, and He is God's exclusive means of salvation - the only way that one might escape eternal damnation is to be in Christ – and immersion, following faith and repentance, is the biblical means of entering to that relationship.

*Or do you not know that all of us who have been immersed into Christ Jesus have been immersed into His death? (Romans 6:3)*

*For all of you who were immersed into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. (Galatians 3:27)*

Many passages describe the Christian as being, *in Christ*. For example, *There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. (Romans 8:1)*

Noah and his family were saved by being in the ark. According to these passages of Scripture (and others) Christians are saved by being immersed *into Christ* and continuing to live, *in Christ*.

This statement on the role of immersion in salvation is one of the strongest Scriptural statements on this subject. Even as the ark saved the family of Noah, so immersion into Christ is the means of entering into the spiritual ark that saves a person from eternal damnation.

Peter notes that it is not just the washing of water in immersion, which cleanses the flesh. A valid immersion requires a condition of the heart that is in agreement with what immersion represents i.e. repentance and a trust in the benefits obtained in the resurrection of Christ.

NOTE: The rendering of the New American Standard Version, quoted above, ***an appeal to God for a good conscience***, is not the best rendition of the Greek.

The King James Version ***answer of a good conscience***, and the New International Version, ***pledge of a good conscience***, are better renderings of the Greek.

The NAS implies that one is immersed in order to receive a good conscience from God.

However, the Greek indicates that a good conscience is involved in the convert's motivation for being immersed. Here is the Greek and its proper rendering: συνειδήσεως ἀγαθῆς ἐπερώτη εἰς θεόν (*suneidayseohs agathays eperohtay, eis theon*).

The third word in this statement, *eperohtay*, means, an *inquiry* or an *appeal*. The fourth word, *eis*, means *into*, or *toward*. It is just the opposite of the thought implied by the NAS, which can be understood to mean that the person being immersed is asking God for a good conscience. The idea in the Greek text is that a good conscience is appealing to God, and that immersion is an expression of that appeal.

The convert must have the right heart toward God or else the immersion is just dunking someone in water. A sinner can go into the water a dry sinner and come out of the water a wet sinner if the action is not based on a right heart's motivating the desire to be immersed.

All of this is in keeping with Peter's exhortation on Pentecost,

*And Peter said to them, "Repent, and let each of you be immersed in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38)*

Faith/repentance must precede and accompany immersion. Having a good conscience indicates one aspect of repentance i.e., having the right motive, accompanied by faith in the resurrected power of Christ, is essential.

The saving power of immersion is possible because Christ has been resurrected from the dead and now is at the right hand of the Father, where He makes intercession for us. Contrasting the Aaronic priesthood with that of Christ, Hebrews states,

*And the former priests, on the one hand, existed in greater numbers, because they were prevented by death from continuing,<sup>24</sup> but He, on the other hand, because He abides forever, holds His priesthood permanently.<sup>25</sup> Hence, also, He is able to save forever those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them. (Hebrews 7:23-25)*

## **The Life Of A Christian Contrasted With That Of A Pagan 4:1-6**

### **The first step – getting equipped to face life verses 1-2**

*Therefore, since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,<sup>2</sup> so as to live the rest of the time in the flesh no longer for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.*

The term rendered as, *arm yourselves*, is the imperative, middle voice, of the verb, ὀπλίζομαι (*hoplidzomai*).

The term for the full armor that was donned by Greek soldiers is πανοπλία (*panoplia*). This is the term used by Paul in Ephesians 6:11, *Put on the full armor (πανοπλία) of God, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.*

Peter, therefore, in this exhortation, is urging believers to put on the πανοπλία, i.e., *the whole armor of God*.

In Chapter 4, Peter is instructing Christians on how to live in the midst of persecution. His instruction begins by citing the example of Christ, who suffered in the flesh.

After putting on the full armor, then the Christian must commit himself/herself to having only one reason for existence – to fulfill the will of God. Jesus set the example. *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work. (John 4:34)*

When this is done, the Christian no longer will be living to gratify the lusts that are common to mankind.

### **The consequences of living for Christ in the midst of a wicked world verses 3-6**

*For the time already past is sufficient for you to have carried out the desire of the Gentiles, having pursued a course of sensuality, lusts, drunkenness, carousals, drinking parties and abominable idolatries.*

*<sup>4</sup>And in all this, they are surprised that you do not run with them into the same excess of dissipation, and they malign you; <sup>5</sup>but they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge the living and the dead.*

*<sup>6</sup>For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.*

Peter seems to assume that those to whom he is writing have lived a life governed by worldly lusts. One of the points that he is making is that if you are still living this sort of a lifestyle, then you are not a Christian. Your conversion experience was just some sort of emotional jag and you are still on the way to hell.

When a Christian forsakes the lifestyle of the world, he still must live in that world, and because of this, the fleshly dominated individuals who surround the Christian will speak evil of the Christian – mockery and all sorts of maligning comments are to be expected.

Those who heap such mockery on Christians will someday give account to God, who judges the living and the dead.

Recognizing that such is the normal condition of humans, the Gospel has been preached with the hope that many will accept the Gospel and forsake the ways of the world.

Verse 6 is one of the most difficult verses in the Bible. *For the gospel has for this purpose been preached even to those who are dead, that though they are judged in the flesh as men, they may live in the spirit according to the will of God.*

Many interpretations have been put forth.

Even so, it is clear that physical death is the judgment upon all members of the human race, both the good and the bad.

*And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, (Hebrews 9:27)*

This is because of Adam's sin<sup>41</sup> and such is the fate of everyone until Christ returns.

Yet, even though that judgment is upon all humans, it is possible, through the preaching of the Gospel, that one can be born again and live in the spirit, according to the will of God.<sup>42</sup>

Those who have experienced death in the flesh, are now living in the spirit according to the will of God. For those who were born after Christ's crucifixion and who heard and accepted the Gospel, they are in the presence of Christ (as noted above).

Those who lived before the ministry of Jesus, are judged according to their obedience to the revelation that was given to them in their lifetimes. (Romans 2:11-16)

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<sup>41</sup> Also note Genesis 2:17; 3:6, 19

<sup>42</sup> John 3:5,6,8



## **Five Principles To Live By As If The Return Of Christ Is Near 4:7-11**

### **Living as if the return of Christ, or one's death is eminent verse 7a**

#### **1. *The end of all things is at hand;***

Jesus said that no one knows the day, nor the hour of the end of the age. Only the Heavenly Father knows.

*"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. (Mark 13:32)*

It is important for the Christian to live as if, in the very next moment, he/she would be standing before God, preparing for the judgment.

As stated in verse 5, God stands *to judge the living and the dead*, and Christians should never forget that such a day is coming.

#### **2. *Let this impending end motivate us to develop the qualities that result in effective prayer verse 7b***

*therefore, be of sound judgment and sober spirit for the purpose of prayer.*

With this sense of time and eternity, the Christian should approach prayer without distraction, without frivolity, and with a calm and reverent spirit. It is a sobering thing to think that the God of the Universe invites us to communicate with Him.

#### **3. *Peter exhorts Christians to keep love for one another, as top priority verse 8***

*Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins.*

*Above all, i.e., of first importance.*

The word rendered, *keep fervent*, ἐκτενής (*ektenays*) literally means, *stretched out*. This is the word used for how a runner stretches out as he nears the finish line. He stretches out every fiber of his being, in his effort to break the tape before his competitors.

Christians are to extend themselves to the limit in their love for one another, not just in meeting one another's needs, but also, in love, forgiving one another – *love covers a multitude of sins*.

#### **4. *Hospitality should be a hallmark of every Christian verse 9***

*Be hospitable to one another without complaint.*

The Greek word rendered, *hospitable*, is φιλόξενος (*philoxzenos*), literally meaning, *lovers of strangers*. It is the term commonly used to refer to showing hospitality to strangers.<sup>43</sup>

However, here the exhortation is to show hospitality to one another. In the early days of Christianity, those embarking on missionary endeavors, usually were hosted by believers who already were in the area, or their early converts (Philip, Acts 21:8; Lydia, Acts 16:14-15)

#### **5. *Spirit-imparted gifts are to be used in serving one another in the Body of Christ verses 10-11***

*As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, let him speak, as it were, the utterances of God;*

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<sup>43</sup> Liddell and Scott, entry 45576

*whoever serves, let him do so as by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Peter emphasizes three important truths concerning spiritual gifts:

- every Christian has been given at least one spiritual gift;
- one's spiritual gift may be speaking or in some manner, serving;
- the gifts should be exercised with a sense of dependency on God and in a manner that brings glory to God, rather than in a manner that brings self-glorification.

This passage calls to mind Chapter Twelve, of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, in which he gives a thorough discussion of the Spirit-imparted gifts and how they are to be used. Later, in First Corinthians, Paul gives an injunction that is in harmony with Peter's exhortation.

*So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church. (1 Corinthians 14:12)*

### **Suffering, Because Of Our Christianity, Is To Be Expected 4:12-14**

**Whatever suffering comes upon us because of our faithfulness to Christ, is a test  
Verses 12-13**

*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you; <sup>13</sup> but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing; so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation.*

Suffering on the part of Peter's audience has been a frequent theme in this epistle. Here, Peter indicates that one reason that God allows suffering because of one's faith, is that it is a test.

Whatever suffering is imposed on the Christian because of his faith, constitutes suffering with Christ. When an attack is launched against the Christian because of his faith, ultimately, it is an attack on the person of Christ.

When one is attacked for his faith, and he faces the suffering with the right spirit, he can look forward to a great blessing at the return of Christ.

**To a special degree, the Spirit of Glory and God will rest upon those who willingly endure persecution because of their faith Verse 14**

*If you are reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you.*

### **The Christian Must Be Certain That The Suffering Imposed Is Because Of His Faith, Not For Any Immoral Behaviour 4:13-16**

*By no means let any of you suffer as a murderer, or thief, or evildoer, or a troublesome meddler; <sup>16</sup> but if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not feel ashamed, but in that name let him glorify God.*

Although a Christian may not be a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, he/she may be guilty of something that might be more common among Christians - being a *troublesome meddler*. The term so rendered is, ἄλλοτπιεπίσκοπος (*allopiepiskopos*). This is a very rare word, so rare that some lexicons don't even list it. As best as can be determined, it literally means, *one who*

*interferes in the affairs of others.* This is a trait that makes those to have it, to be a nuisance to all who relate to them.

Certainly, those who try to tell other how to live their lives, or give advice when it is not asked for, or in some way or other actually interfere to the point of altering the outcome – such behaviour always results in hostility and sometimes, retaliation.

When suffering is the consequence of non-Christian, behaviour, shame is an appropriate response.

On the other hand, there should be no shame for suffering as a Christian, and when one experiences such suffering, let the Christian give glory to God for the privilege of bearing His Name to the degree that the suffering was the result.

### **The Church Will Be Judged 4:17-19**

*For it is time for judgment to begin with the household of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? <sup>18</sup> And if it is with difficulty that the righteous is saved, what will become of the godless man and the sinner? <sup>19</sup> Therefore, let those also who suffer according to the will of God entrust their souls to a faithful Creator in doing what is right.*

The history of Israel demonstrates that when God brings calamities and judgments on whole nations, it often begins with His own people.

*So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, "I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness." (Isaiah 10:12)*

*"For behold, I am beginning to work calamity in this city which is called by My name, and shall you be completely free from punishment? You will not be free from punishment; for I am summoning a sword against all the inhabitants of the earth," declares the LORD of hosts.' (Jeremiah 25:29)*

*"Utterly slay old men, young men, maidens, little children, and women, but do not touch any man on whom is the mark; and you shall start from My sanctuary." So they started with the elders who were before the temple. (Ezekiel 9:6)*

This passage in I Peter should motivate every leader in every local church to make certain that the doctrines and practices of the church, and the doctrines and practices demonstrated in the lives of the members, is in harmony with the heart of God. Thus, when God's judgment comes, that church will not receive chastisement from God.

In order to escape suffering imposed by the enemies of the Church, a Church may be tempted to compromise and accept the views and standards of the surrounding culture. However, it is important that when such things come upon the Church and the individual believer, the people of God must be firm in *doing what is right*.

When calamities come, let the Christians understand that this is a testing and that one should commit his/her soul to God, so that come what may, Our Lord will be pleased and a reward for such commitment will be forthcoming.

## **An Exhortation And Encouragement To Elders 5:1-6**

### **Peter presents his credentials Verse 1**

*Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed,*

Peter establishes his right to present this exhortation to the elders,. He personally witnessed Our Lord's suffering and agony and therefore, he had unquestioned authority to communicate what he knew to be the Will of Christ.

Furthermore, he is certain that he will partake of the glory that will be revealed when Our Lord returns.

### **Specific duties of elders and how they are to be exercised Verses 2-3**

*shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;<sup>3</sup> nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.*

Paul gave a similar exhortation to the elders from Ephesus, emphasizing the shepherd's duty to protect his flock.

*"Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.<sup>29</sup> "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;<sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore, be on the alert (Acts 20:28-31a)*

Elders are shepherds, and as shepherds, it is their role to protect the flock from false doctrines, and those who would cause division in the flock – especially those who want to create their own church within the church.

As a shepherd who loves the sheep, a man who truly is an elder will not assume this responsibility because he is ordered and compelled to do so, but he will do so willingly – because he cares for the sheep.

Neither will he undertake the role in order to achieve financial gain. He is not a professional doing a job for a fee.

A true elder will not rule as some sort of autocrat, but will humbly serve, being an example for the flock to emulate.

### **An elder who fulfills the role in this manner, will receive a special reward when Christ returns for His Church Verse 4**

*And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.*

## **Advice On How To Survive In A Hostile World 5:5-10**

### **Advice to the young verse 5a**

*You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders;*

Elders who truly love the flock will do all that they can to protect and guide the younger members of the church. The elders, being older men, have scars that they have earned as a result of the vicissitudes of life and, therefore, can guide the younger generation in how to avoid the scars that they have received.

### **Everyone's responsibility verses 5b-9**

*and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. <sup>6</sup> Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, <sup>7</sup> casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you. <sup>8</sup> Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. <sup>9</sup> But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.*

Echoing the spirit that has been expressed throughout the epistle (3:8), humility is to be a characteristic of the life of every true Christian. Those who humble themselves before God, and cast their anxiety upon Him, acknowledging that He is in control, will receive a reward.

Every Christian needs to be aware of Satan's efforts to destroy them. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *in order that no advantage be taken of us by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his schemes.* (II Corinthians 2:11)

As has been stated often in this epistle, the suffering being imposed on Peter's audience was not unique to their situation. All Christians will experience suffering of one sort or another, in the battle with our enemy.

### **The suffering is temporary and ultimately, God will lift heal all wounds verse 10-11**

*And after you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you. To Him be dominion forever and ever. Amen.*

Here is the reminder that this life is temporary and the suffering therefore, is temporary. In time, an existence beyond our imagination awaits those who are in Christ. God is in charge, forever and ever.

### **Closing Remarks 5:12-14**

#### **As noted in the Introduction, Silvanus is identified as Peter's amanuensis verse 12**

*Through Silvanus, our faithful brother (for so I regard him), I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God. Stand firm in it!*

#### **Peter indicates his location from which he dispatched the letter verse 13**

*She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark.*

There is some disagreement as to the identity of the *she*. Some consider this to refer to Peter's wife. I Corinthians 9:5 makes it clear that Peter had a wife and that she accompanied him on his ministry trips.

*Do we not have a right to take along a believing wife, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?*

Others believe that the *she* refers to the church in the city where Peter found himself when he wrote the letter. The Babylon referenced in Revelation 17 and 18 referred to Rome. This undoubtedly is the meaning of the term here. The godlessness, lust, and the sensuous luxury of ancient Babylon characterized Rome in New Testament times.

Many New Testament passages mention Mark, giving us substantial information concerning him. Several passages inform us that his full name was John Mark (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37)

- His mother opened her home to the group that met to pray for Peter’s release from prison (Acts 12:12-17)
- After Paul and Barnabas had completed their mission of taking financial aid from the Antioch Church to the Jerusalem Church, they left Jerusalem and took Mark back to Antioch with them (Acts 12:25)
- John Mark went with Paul and Barnabas on their missionary trip to the Galatian region (Acts 13:5)
- Mark abandoned the mission and went home to Jerusalem when the team put out to sea to move forward into new regions (Acts 13:13)
- Following the Jerusalem conference, concerning the salvation of Gentiles, Barnabas and Paul planned to revisit the churches they had founded on their first journey. Barnabas wanted to take Mark with them, but Paul objected because Mark had abandoned them on their first trip. (Acts 15:37-39)
- Under Barnabas’ tutelage, Mark matured to the extent that Paul sought his company and he became a companion to Paul (II Timothy 4:11; Colossians 4:10; Philemon 24;)

Papias, who lived in the Second Century, earnestly sought to make certain that he knew the truth. Therefore, whenever possible, he interviewed those who had firsthand knowledge of the activities and teaching of the apostles.

“But if I met with anyone who had been a follower of the elders anywhere, I made it a point to inquire what were the declarations of the elders. What was said by Andrew or Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the Lord’s disciples; which things Aristion and the presbyter John, the disciples of the Lord, say.”<sup>44</sup>

Papias stated that Mark, recalling all that Peter had told him, wrote the Gospel to which his name is attached.

“Mark, who was Peter’s interpreter, wrote down accurately, though not in order, all that he recollected of what Christ had said and done. For he was not a hearer of the Lord or a follower of His; he followed Peter.”<sup>45</sup>

It is not unusual that Peter came to refer to Mark as his son. Paul had a similar relationship with Timothy, and he referred to him as his child/son (I Timothy 1:2; II Timothy 1:2; I Corinthians 4:17).

Unfortunately, we do not have any biblical information concerning when, where, or the nature of the activities in which Mark was involved with Peter.

#### **The closing exhortation blessing, verses 14**

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

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<sup>44</sup> Eusebius, page 125

<sup>45</sup> *The Apostolic Fathers*, Fragments of Papias, Lightfoot, Marner, Holmes (Grand Rapids, Baker Book House) 1992 page 569

# THE EPISTLE OF II PETER

## THE AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE

Two statements in the epistle relate to the identity of the author:

- *Simon Peter, a bond-servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, (1:1)*
- *This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you (3:1)*

Based on the first statement's identity of the author, the second reference would refer to the First Epistle of Peter.

Peter's authorship of the epistle has been debated on several levels. One of the most frequent arguments presented is the significant stylistic differences between I Peter and II Peter.

As noted in the study of I Peter, the Greek writing of the First Epistle is stylistically excellent, indicating that it was penned by someone skilled in literary matters. Whereas II Peter's style is complicated, repetitive, and perhaps a bit grandiose.

This argument does not hold water. As noted in our study of I Peter, Silvanus was Peter's amanuensis (I Peter 5:12). In such a situation, Silvanus did not merely take down dictation, but put into writing what Peter communicated. No doubt, when the letter was finished, Peter would have read the document and suggested any corrections.

II Peter does not refer to an amanuensis.<sup>46</sup>

An interesting fact, related to vocabulary - II Peter uses fifty-seven words that occur nowhere else in the New Testament.<sup>47</sup> Only twenty-five of these words are found in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the *Septuagint*. This has no influence on the identification of the author. It is only a matter of interest.

Although the external evidence is sparse, and not without doubt, the majority of the early Church Fathers did accept this book as being authored by Peter and included it in the canon. As noted in the Introduction to I Peter, Eusebius listed II Peter as being among *those that, though disputed by some, were still recognized as authentic by the church as a whole and were familiar to most Christians* (e.g., II Peter).<sup>48</sup>

Early Church Fathers their reference to or comment on the canonicity of the epistle.<sup>49</sup>

- Cited or alluded to by Pseudo-Barnabas (c. 70-130)
- Cited or alluded to by Clement of Rome (c. 95-96)
- Named as disputed but not rejected by Origen (c. 185-254)
- Named as authentic by Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-86)
- Named as disputed but not rejected by Eusebius (c. 325-40)
- Named as authentic by Jerome (c. 340-420)
- Named as authentic by Augustine (c. 400)

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<sup>46</sup> This is the defense for Petrine authorship presented by Jerome (347-420). In Jerome's day, there were many agnostic documents being circulated that claimed to be written by Peter. Jerome noted the stylistic differences between I & II Peter and accepted the explanation that Peter had used two different amanuensis and thus they had employed different styles.

<sup>47</sup> Technically, this is called, *hapax legomena*.

<sup>48</sup> Eusebius, page 64

<sup>49</sup> <https://bible.org/article/introduction-book-2-peter>

A list of the early canons and their inclusion or exclusion of the epistle.

- This epistle is omitted in the Muratorian Fragment (AD 200)<sup>50</sup> but the fragment also omits Matthew, Mark, Hebrews, James, I Peter and III John. It is only a fragment. Therefore, its present text is incomplete. It also includes three documents that have been proven to be pseudepigraphal.<sup>51</sup>
- Named as authentic by the Codex Bezae Cantabrigiae (c. 206)
- Named as authentic by Apostolic Constitutions (c. 300)
- Named as disputed by Cheltenham (c. 360)
- Named as authentic by Athanasius (c. 367)

Here is a list of early church councils that commented on II Peter::

- Named as disputed by council of Nicea (c. 325-40)
- Named as authentic by the council of Hippo (393)
- Named as authentic by the council of Carthage (397)
- Named as authentic by the council of Carthage (491)

Given the above information, and since II Peter has been included in all documents containing the canon, since the Fourth Century, we will approach it as a Holy Spirit inspired document, given through the Apostle Peter. As was true of I Peter, modern liberal scholars have attempted to discredit the validity of Peter's authorship of the document. None of the arguments presented are new and were addressed by those in the early church.

### THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE

Dating the epistle is based on the same information as was used to date I Peter. Clearly, this epistle was written after I Peter, since it references the first epistle (II Peter 3:1). How much time passed between the writing of the two cannot be determined. That being true, II Peter would have been written between 65 and 68 AD.

### The salutation and spiritual identity of the letter's recipients 1:1

*Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours, by the righteousness of our God and Savior, Jesus Christ:*

Before describing himself as an apostle, Peter describes himself as a slave. Note that most English versions render the term as servant, or bondservant.<sup>52</sup> The word is δούλος (*doulos*), which literally is rendered as, *slave*.

Peter recognized that above and beyond all else, he was a slave of Jesus Christ, who had been purchased by the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ.<sup>53</sup>

Peter calls attention to the fact that every Christian's faith is equal before God, *to those who have received a faith of the same kind as ours*.

<sup>50</sup> It receives its name from its discoverer, The Muratorian fragment was discovered in the Ambrosian Library in Milan by Father Ludovico Antonio Muratori (1672–1750), the most famous Italian historian of his generation. Realizing its significance and antiquity, he published it in 1740

<sup>51</sup> Wisdom of Solomon, Apocalypse of Peter, Shepherd of Hermas

<sup>52</sup> For example, the KJV, NAS, NIV, NKJV. The NET and NLT render the term literally, as slave.

<sup>53</sup> Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 6:20; 7:23; I Peter 1:18ff; Revelation 5:9



When a sinner receives Christ, he receives the same faith as Paul, Peter, James, John, or any other apostle.

Note that Peter declares the divinity of Jesus Christ – *our God, and Savior*.

This reflects the opening of John’s Gospel,

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)  
And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only  
begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)*

### **A prayer with a promise 1:2-3**

***Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord;<sup>3</sup> seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence.***

Grace is the act of giving without consideration as to whether or not the recipient deserves it or has earned it. *For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; (Ephesians 2:8)*

When a person accepts Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour, Christ’s sacrifice on the cross establishes peace between that person and the Heavenly Father, *Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, (Romans 5:1)*

The term rendered as *knowledge/true knowledge*, is ἐπίγνωσις (*epignohsis*). This term refers to *precise and correct knowledge*.<sup>54</sup> Peter uses this term four time in this epistle (1:2, 3, 8; 2:20). It is interesting to note that the translators render the term somewhat differently at the beginning of verse two than they do in verse 3.

Peter states that grace and peace, as well as everything pertaining to life and godliness is the result of the Christian’s having true and full knowledge of Jesus Christ. Such knowledge cannot be obtained without having a believing relationship with Christ.

An important blessing that God has given us, enabling us to have a true knowledge of Jesus Christ is the Bible. Our Lord responded to his enemies, *"You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; (John 5:39)*. An important element in having a true knowledge of Jesus is to saturate our minds and spirits with the Holy Writings.

### **Through these grace-given gifts, we may become partakers of the divine nature 1:4**

***For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.***

This is one of the most striking verses in the Bible. That through the grace gifts, not only are we granted *everything pertaining to life and godliness*, but as a result we can become partakers of the divine nature. Peter then makes clear what that means – i.e., that the lusts of the world no longer control us.

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<sup>54</sup> Joseph H. Thayer, *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, Massachusetts, Hendrickson Publishers) 2000, page 237

The term rendered as *godliness* throughout this section is εὐσέβεια (*eusebeiah*), which refers to reverence and piety. As a pious person reverently worships and ponders the person of God, one of the results is that the worshipper's life and character begins to be an expression of the God who is the focus of that person's life.

Every human has a bent toward sinning. When we surrender our heart to Christ, the Lord, the lusts of this world no longer control us. As noted in the sense of term, εὐσέβεια, the worshiper's life is changed. This does not mean that all Christians are free of temptation, but that fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, no longer is the driving force of one's life.

### **The path of spiritual progress 1:5-7**

*Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge;<sup>6</sup> and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love.*

<sup>8</sup> *For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

Even though the promise is, *that we might become partakers of the divine nature*, the believer must diligently commit himself to pursuing and adding those qualities in his life that are consistent with that nature. These are:

- moral excellence
- knowledge
- self-control
- perseverance
- godliness
- brotherly kindness
- love

The term for knowledge in this list is not ἐπίγνωσις (*epignohsis*), but the more common term, γνῶσις (*gnohsis*), which is the usual term for wisdom or knowledge.

The terms, *brotherly kindness* and *love* are the same terms that we encountered in I Peter 1:22 and the same comment made on that verse applies here.

### **Further exhortation to persist in the path of spiritual progress 1:9-11**

*For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble;<sup>11</sup> for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.*

Anyone who claims to be a Christian, but who does not possess and pursue these qualities, is somewhat suspect in his claim to that title. However, if one pursues and, by the empowerment of the Holy Spirit manifests these qualities, heaven is his assured possession.

### **Peter's personal responsibility of reminding believers what they already know 1:12-15**

*Therefore, I shall always be ready to remind you of these things, even though you already know them, and have been established in the truth which is present with you.*

***13 And I consider it right, as long as I am in this earthly dwelling, to stir you up by way of reminder, 14 knowing that the laying aside of my earthly dwelling is imminent, as also our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. 15 And I will also be diligent so that at any time after my departure you may be able to call these things to mind.***

Peter realizes that the time of his death is not far off and so he, as a good steward of the mysteries of God, is seeking to make certain that his readers do not forget what they already know. This passage helps us to identify the date of the Epistle.

A primary reason for his writing the Epistle was so that after his death, they would have this document to read over and over in order to not forget Peter's exhortations.

**As he did in the First Epistle, he assures his readers that the truths that he has declared did not come to him second hand, but that he personally saw and heard from the Lord all that he has declared – verses 16-19**

***For we did not follow cleverly devised tales when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty. 17 For when He received honor and glory from God the Father, such an utterance as this was made to Him by the Majestic Glory, "This is My beloved Son with whom I am well-pleased "-- 18 and we ourselves heard this utterance made from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain. 19 And so we have the prophetic word made more sure, to which you do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your hearts.***

Peter personally saw fulfilled the Old Testament prophetic words concerning the Christ and His ministry. Therefore, he was able to *have the prophetic word made sure*.

That being true, his hearers should pay attention to these things as they become a light in the darkness, as they await the return of the Lord.

**The supernatural origin of Old Testament prophetic writings – verses 20-21**

***But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, 21 for no prophecy was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.***

We face an interesting situation in the rendering of the Greek in this passage. The term, *scripture*, in the Bible has its origin Jerome's production of the *Vulgate Bible*, which he began in 382 AD. Jerome was commissioned by Pope Damasus I to undertake the revision of existing Latin versions of the Gospels. On his own initiative, Jerome translated almost the entire Bible. He used the Latin of the common man, and thus, the version came to be known as the *Vulgate Version*. The term, *vulgate*, refers to the form of Latin that the average Latin speaker used in daily conversation.

The only Greek the term for, *writing*, is γραφή (*graphay*). When Jerome encountered this word, he literally rendered it by the Latin word for writing, which is *scripturam*. When the Bible was first being translated into English,<sup>55</sup> in order to distinguish between all writing and Holy Spirit inspired writing, the translators took the liberty of using Jerome's Latin term for Holy Spirit

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<sup>55</sup> Tyndale's New Testament (1534); The Bishop's Bible (1595); The Geneva Bible (1599); The King James Bible (1611);

inspired writing - which became, *Scripture*. However, in the New Testament, the word always is, γραφή (writing).

There are those passages in the New Testament in which the context identifies the writings as being a sacred text..

For example, II Timothy 3:16 literally states, *All writing is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;*

The writings to which Paul refers would be those mentioned in the previous verse, *and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus.* (II Timothy 3:15)

In the same manner, the writings to which Peter referred in the text before us are defined by the previous sentences - the writings of the Old Testament Prophets, which were fulfilled in Christ.

Peter recognized the importance of reminding and reemphasizing, over and over, the important truths that are familiar to every believer. He was committed to this task. Not only that, but the writing of this letter was his means of making certain that after his death, these things could continue to be called to mind.

He declared that Christians should pay attention to the prophetic writings, which are as a lamp shining in a dark place. Moreover, they should be diligent in this until Christ returns.

What he has to say about prophecy revolves around three pivotal terms: inspiration, verification, and admonition.

**INSPIRATION:** None of the prophetic writing was of human origin. The prophets did not ponder the circumstances of their time and interpret them to mean what occurred to them. The prophets spoke and wrote as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance.

**VERIFICATION:** By his experience with Jesus and, especially the experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, Peter witnessed validation of the prophecies.

**ADMONITION:** Peter admonished his hearers to live by the sacred teachings of the prophets until God rings down the curtain on history and the heavenly day dawns. When this happens, those Christians that are still in this world will experience the full revelation in their hearts.

### **The warning against false prophets 2:1-22**

In this section, Peter warns against the rise of false prophets and identifies eight characteristics of false teachers: subtle, sensual, greedy, despise authority, self-willed, daring, meaningless, dishonest. He concludes by describing the ultimate destruction of false prophets/teachers.

**Even as there were false prophets in former times, so there will be false prophets among the churches, who will introduce destructive heresies- verse 1**

***But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves***

The term rendered, *introduce*, is παρεισάγω (*pareisagoh*), which literally means to *bring in secretly*. These false teachers will be subtle and clever. Using their soft sell approach, they will use subtle pressure and deceit in order to attempt to get the believers to accept their heresies.

This is the same technique that Satan used in the Garden of Eden in his enticement of Eve (Genesis 3:1ff)

**Many of the false teachers will manifest a seductive sensuality in their heresies – verse 2**

*And many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;*

In verse 14, Peter describes these teachers as *having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls...*

Tragic, indeed, is the increasing number of sexual misdeeds being discovered among some of the most prominent ministry leaders. This is a very present danger in America's contemporary culture, which the church too often mirrors.<sup>56</sup>

As a result of such misconduct, the surrounding culture is able to mock the church.

**For some, greed will be the driving force of their ministry – verse 3**

*and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.*

The term rendered, *false words*, is πλαστός (*plastos*), from which we have the English term, *plastic*. The term literally means, *molded*. The implication is that because of greed, these false teacher/prophets will mold words to fit what his audience wants to hear, in order to take financial advantage of them.

Again referencing verse 14, *enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;*

**God is aware of this ploy and those who practice it are bound to certain eternal disaster – verses 4-9**

*For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment;<sup>5</sup> and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;<sup>6</sup> and if He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly thereafter;<sup>7</sup> and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men<sup>8</sup> (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day with their lawless deeds),<sup>9</sup> then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,*

Note that along with the certainty of judgement for these deceivers, is the certainty of God's presence and deliverance for the godly. Peter, again, uses the Greek term *πειρασμός* (*peirosmos*), which he used in I Peter 1:6, which in that passage most English versions render as trial. This does not necessarily refer to enticement, but more of a situation that tests the faith of the Christian. The surrounding culture was that for Peter's readers.

**Many of these false teachers/prophets, despise authority – verses 10-13a**

*and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,<sup>11</sup> whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.<sup>12</sup>*

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<sup>56</sup> Ministrywatch.com is a daily podcast reporting on challenges faced by American churches as well as misdeeds on the part of individual church leaders. Sadly, financial shenanigans and sexual misconduct are frequently in their reporting.

***But these, like unreasoning animals, born as creatures of instinct to be captured and killed, reviling where they have no knowledge, will in the destruction of those creatures also be destroyed, <sup>13</sup> suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong.***

These false teachers/prophets are daring and self-willed. An example of their sense of self-importance, and self-interest, is their not respecting angelic majesties.

There is a hierarchy in the satanic kingdom (described in Ephesians 6:12), even as there is in the angelic realm. An illustration of this is seen in Daniel 10. Daniel prayed for three weeks, pleading for revelation from heaven, concerning Israel's future. Finally, an angel arrived with the answer. He told Daniel that he had been sent to Daniel, when Daniel first began praying, but that he could not get past the satanic territorial spirit (the *Prince of the Kingdom of Persia*). The angel that brought the message to Daniel was not of the same level in the hierarchy as this territorial spirit. Therefore, the angel could not force the territorial spirit to allow the angel passage to Daniel. Then Michael, one of the chief princes in the angelic hierarchy, came and pushed the satanic territorial spirit aside so that the angel with the message to Daniel could get through. Michael was high in the angelic hierarchy and thus equal to or superior to the satanic territorial spirit.

This situation is encountered again in Jude, in which Michael, even though he is high in the angelic hierarchy, dared not bring an accusation against Satan, because he is not of Satan's level. So, he replied to Satan, *the Lord rebuke you.* (Jude 9).<sup>57</sup>

**The ultimate destruction of these false teachers/prophets is assured – verses 13b-17**

***They count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime. They are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you, <sup>14</sup> having eyes full of adultery and that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children; <sup>15</sup> forsaking the right way they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness, <sup>16</sup> but he received a rebuke for his own transgression; for a dumb donkey, speaking with a voice of a man, restrained the madness of the prophet. <sup>17</sup>These are springs without water, and mists driven by a storm, for whom the black darkness has been reserved.***

These false teachers/prophets may party and carouse with those whom they have seduced, but their future is as dark as it could get.

**For those Christians who are seduced by these false teachers/prophets, it would have been better for them to never have heard the Gospel, than having known it, abandoned it – verses 18-22**

***For speaking out arrogant words of vanity they entice by fleshly desires, by sensuality, those who barely escape from the ones who live in error, <sup>19</sup> promising them freedom while they themselves are slaves of corruption; for by what a man is overcome, by this he is enslaved. <sup>20</sup> For if after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. <sup>21</sup> For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment delivered to them. <sup>22</sup> It has happened to them according to the true proverb, "A dog returns to its own vomit," and, "A sow, after washing, returns to wallowing in the mire."***

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<sup>57</sup> Jude's account is based on the *Book of Enoch*, which is discussed in our study of Jude.

This passage reminds us of Hebrews 10:26-27 *For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,<sup>27</sup> but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.*

Because of this horrible threat, it is important for the elders of each church to be men of sound doctrine, who are on the alert for any false teaching that might seek to creep into the church. It especially is important for them to be aware of any false teachers/prophets who try to entice church members to become their disciples. As Paul instructed the Ephesian elders,

*And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church.... "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; (Acts 20:17, 28-29)*

## **The last days and the end of the present creation 3:1-18**

### **Peter reminds his readers of the exhortation in his first letter verses 1-2**

*This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder,<sup>2</sup> that you should remember the words spoken beforehand by the holy prophets and the commandment of the Lord and Savior spoken by your apostles.*

Again, the reminder of what they already knew. This is a lesson for those who preach in the Sunday service. There is no need to always be looking for some new revelation to present to the congregation. It is, perhaps, more important to remind the saints what they already know, and thus, strengthen their commitment to these things.

Note that Peter puts the commandments of Jesus, communicated to the world through the apostles, as being on the same level of authority as the Old Testament prophets.

**As the years go by, and Christ has not returned, evil-doers will make mockery of the teaching that Christ is returning and the end of the present creation will take place – verses 3-7**

*Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts,<sup>4</sup> and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all continues just as it was from the beginning of creation."<sup>5</sup> For when they maintain this, it escapes their notice that by the word of God the heavens existed long ago and the earth was formed out of water and by water,<sup>6</sup> through which the world at that time was destroyed, being flooded with water.<sup>7</sup> But the present heavens and earth by His word are being reserved for fire, kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.*

The implication is that these mockers are living lustful lifestyles and a motivation for their mockery is to justify their sins. They argue that things are as they has always have been, since the beginning and so why argue that some change is coming.

Peter counters their charge by reminding his hearers that things are not as they always have been but that there was a universal flood, which changed the entire earthly situation. One result was the recreation of the human race through eight people, whose descendants populated the world.

Although mockers exist today, the evidence for a world-wide flood is seen in many ways.

- One is the existence of oceanic fossils on mountain tops.
- Another is the evidence that millennia ago, continents were of different formation. At one time, some that are now separate were one continent, then some sort of hydraulic event occurred that, when it receded, continents were reformed.

Peter then strongly declares what his hearers know, that the present heavens and earth are going to be destroyed, as it were, by fire. When that happens, the day of judgment for ungodly men will have dawned.

**Peter, again reminds them of what they know, and exhorts them to be in anticipation of that final event verses 8-13**

*But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.<sup>9</sup> The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.<sup>10</sup> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.<sup>11</sup> Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness,<sup>12</sup> looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, on account of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat!<sup>13</sup> But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.*

God's perspective on time is not the same as the human perspective. Humans think in terms of *linear time*, i.e., a sequence of time which moves in one direction, similar to a group of dominoes falling in line, one after the other.

It seems that to God, time is non-linear – as if everything is occurring or connected at the same time.

Whether or not God thinks in terms of linear or non-linear, He is a God without beginning or ending and does not think in terms of time as do humans. To him, a thousand years is but a day or a day as a thousand years. This is a concept impossible for humans to grasp, other than to accept it as being true.

Peter then states that the reason God has patiently allowed things to continue without His intervention was so that more and more humans would have the opportunity to repent and enter into a relationship with their Heavenly Father.

The term rendered as *wishing* (not wishing for any to perish) is βούλομαι (*boulomai*). It implies more than just wishing. The term means *to have a deliberate will*, or, *have a purpose*.

The Greek verb that refers to wishing is θέλω (*theloh*). The noun is θέλημα (*thelaymah*).

Therefore, what Peter states is that God has not orchestrated the history of the world/mankind, in such a manner as to result in the damnation of souls. That has not been His motivation.

The end will be sudden and without warning. As we noted in our study of I Peter, Jesus indicated that not even He knew the day nor the hour. Only the Heavenly Father knows.

*"But of that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.* (Mark 13:32)

Therefore, a wise Christian is ready for that event to occur at any moment.

**Peter's closing exhortation -verses 14-18**

*Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless,<sup>15</sup> and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation; just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you,<sup>16</sup> as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which*



*the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.* <sup>17</sup> *You therefore, beloved, knowing this beforehand, be on your guard lest, being carried away by the error of unprincipled men, you fall from your own steadfastness,* <sup>18</sup> *but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

**Spotless and blameless..** Even though we are under grace and no longer under the law,<sup>58</sup> there still are standards of conduct and attitude that the Christian will display. Many of these have been in the exhortations contained in I Peter & II Peter.

Peter closes by reiterating what he has just declared. Then, surprisingly, he quotes Paul and puts his writing in the same category as - *the rest of the Scriptures* i.e., the Old Testament Scriptures.

Paul's writings were already in circulation when Peter wrote II Peter, which assists in dating some of Paul's writings.

In a way, Peter comforts us in that if we have difficulty in fully grasping some things that Paul stated in his writings, well.... So did Peter - *in which are some things hard to understand.*

Throughout the history of the Church, and that includes our present generation, there are people who twist Scripture to mean what they want it to mean. Peter stated that those who do this are guaranteeing their own destruction. This should be a warning to all students of the Bible, to very cautious and meticulous in practicing sound hermeneutical principles.

What a fitting close:

*but grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.*

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<sup>58</sup> Romans 6:14; This is the underlying message of Paul's writing to the Romans and Galatians.

# THE EPISTLE OF I JOHN

## THE AUTHOR AND DATE OF THE EPISTLE

I John and the Epistle to the Hebrews differ from all of the other epistles, in that they are anonymous. The author does describe himself as having been an eyewitness to the Word of Life and throughout the epistle writes with a tone of apostolic authority. There is an abundance of ancillary evidence, ancient and credible, that the author of the epistle was John, the beloved disciple of Jesus and the last surviving member of the Twelve Apostles.

### EVIDENCE FROM THE TITLES ATTACHED TO THE EPISTLE IN EARLY MANUSCRIPTS:

Manuscripts A (5<sup>th</sup> Century) and B (4<sup>th</sup> Century) Ἰωνάου (*iohnaou*) i.e. *of John*

Manuscript **Ⲙ** (4<sup>th</sup> Century) Ἰωάννου ἐπιστολή (*iohannou epistolary*) i.e. *John's epistle*

Manuscript L (8<sup>th</sup> Century) ἐπιστολή καθολκή τοῦ ἁγίου ἀποστόλου Ἰωάννου (*epistolah katholkay tou agiou Apostolou iohannou*) i.e. *catholic*<sup>59</sup> *epistle of the holy apostle John*

Manuscript P (9<sup>th</sup> Century) Ἰωάννου τοῦ εὐαγγελιστοῦ καὶ ἀποστόλου ἐπιστολή (*iohnnou tou euangelistou kai Apostolou epistolary*) i.e. *of John the evangelist and apostle's epistle*.

Other later manuscripts have similar interesting titles.

### PATRISTIC EVIDENCE

Polycarp knew several of the apostles and had been a disciple of the Apostle John. John ordained him as a primary leader in the Church of Smyrna. In Polycarp's letter to the Philippians, Chapter viii, he wrote πᾶς γὰρ ὅς ἂν μὴ ὁμολογῇ Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐν σαρκὶ ἐληλυθέναι ἀντιχριστός ἐστιν (*pas gar hos an may omologay Iaysoun Christon en sarki elayluthenai antichristos estin*) i.e. *for all who do not confess Jesus Christ having come in the flesh is the antichrist*.

This is almost a word-for-word quote of a portion of I John 4:2-3.

Irenaeus<sup>60</sup>, a disciple of Polycarp quoted I John 2:18, 19, 21, 22; 4:1, 3; 5:1, and states that he is quoting from the Epistle of St. John.<sup>61</sup>

Eusebius wrote that Irenaeus described Papias<sup>62</sup> as, *a hearer of John and a comrade of Polycarp, an ancient man, who used testimonies from the first epistle of John*.<sup>63</sup>

In addition to these primitive quotes, there are those from Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Jerome, Augustine, Athanasius, etc., which describe John as the author of the epistle.

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<sup>59</sup> The term, *catholic*, is the Greek term for *universal*, meaning that the epistle was not for one particular group, but for the whole Church.

<sup>60</sup> 130-202 AD

<sup>61</sup> Irenaeus, *Adversus Heresies*, Book III, xvi, 8; xvii, 3.

[https://archive.org/stream/SaintIrenaeusAgainstHeresiesComplete/Saint%20Irenaeus%20Against%20Heresies%20Complete\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/SaintIrenaeusAgainstHeresiesComplete/Saint%20Irenaeus%20Against%20Heresies%20Complete_djvu.txt)

<sup>62</sup> 60-130 AD

<sup>63</sup> Eusebius, III, 39

As the testimonies mount, there is no reason to doubt the ancient tradition that the Gospel of John and the First Epistle of John are from the same pen.

John died in Ephesus (in present day, Selcuk, Turkey), between 98 and 100 AD. In the Fourth Century, the Ephesian Church built a mausoleum over the traditional site of John's grave. Then in the Sixth Century, Justinian I erected a basilica over the site.

All of John's writings (the Gospel of John, I, II, III John, Revelation) were written late in life. The three other Gospel accounts had been written and were circulating among the churches, before John's writings. John's Gospel reflects deep, Holy Spirit inspired thought, that fills in the gaps that left in the first three Gospels, especially adding deep spiritual details.

The traditional date of the writing of John's epistles is 90-95 AD. There is no reason to doubt this dating.

### **The Preface 1:1-4**

*What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life--<sup>2</sup> and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us--<sup>3</sup> what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, that you also may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup> And these things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.*

Throughout this epistle there are similarities of thought with that expressed in the Gospel of John. This preface states what is declared in John 1:1-4 – that Jesus was/is the word of life, and that the Word of Life became man and dwelt among us.

John wrote to a later generation that had not seen Jesus. These may have been inclined to doubt some things that they had heard about Our Lord. John declares that he can write of the Christ, with absolute certainty, because he was an eyewitness.

The amazing result is that because of these truths, every believer can have fellowship with the Father and with the Son, Jesus Christ – a staggering thought.

### **The Message Of The Incarnation And The Duty Which It Brings 1:5-10; 2:1**

**As Christians, we are to walk in the light, as a reflection of the light of God – verses 5-7**

*And this is the message we have heard from Him and announce to you, that God is light, and in Him there is no darkness at all.<sup>6</sup> If we say that we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth;<sup>7</sup> but if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

The figure of darkness, to describe sinfulness and hopelessness, as well as Satan's kingdom, is found often in Scripture. The same is true of the figure of light, to describe the blessing that comes through God's blessing. A familiar example is Isaiah 9:1-2, which Jesus declared to be a prediction of the Gospel age (Matthew 4:14).

*But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.<sup>2</sup> The people who walk in darkness Will see a great light; Those who live in a dark land, The light will shine on them.*

Paul's letter to the Colossians uses this figure to contrast the kingdom of Satan from which Our Lord has delivered us.

*For He delivered us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, (Colossians 1:13)*

Three times in Paul's letter to the Ephesians, he uses this figure.

- *for you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:8)*
- *And do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; (Ephesians 5:11)*
- *For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)*

The message of John in this passage is clear: if someone claims to be a Christian, but still lives a life of worldliness, that person is a hypocritical liar and is not a Christian.

As noted earlier, even though we live in the Age of Grace, there still are standards of behaviour. A Christian will live a life that is consistent with the Character of God and the Will of God, as revealed in Scripture.

On the other hand, if we live a holy life, we are in fellowship with all others who walk in the light, and we share together the wonderful truth that *the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.*

**Even if a Christian lives an admirably moral life, he/she will commit sin and need to confess one's sins to Christ, resulting in forgiveness – verses 8-10; 2:1-2**

*<sup>8</sup>If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup>If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup>If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us. <sup>1</sup>My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; <sup>2</sup> and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.*

Any Christian, regardless of how mature or how faithful to God he/she may be, will sin because of the fallen nature of humanity – and that includes everyone. Anyone who claims to be perfect and sinless, is calling God a liar.

Often a Christian has sins in his/her life that even he/she is not aware of. For that reason, it is important to be faithful to ask God to audit one's life so that such sins can be confessed and thus, forgiven.

Acknowledging one's continual need for forgiveness, and confessing personal sins, is one of the most important aspects of the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper. Paul wrote a scathing note to the Corinthians for the lack of reverence and awe that they displayed in observing the Lord's Supper. In conclusion, he stated,

*For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; <sup>24</sup>and when He had given thanks, He broke it, and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." <sup>25</sup>In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."*

<sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

<sup>27</sup> Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.

<sup>28</sup> But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not discern<sup>64</sup> the body.

<sup>30</sup> For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. <sup>31</sup> But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged. (1 Corinthians 11:23-31)

What marvelous promise that, *If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

John echoes what he has written before, that he is exhorting the Christians to not sin, but should sin be committed, confession results in the blessing of having Jesus Christ as our advocate before the Father. Our Advocate is the one who paid the price to redeem sinful humans.

### **Another Exhortation To Live A Life That Is Consistent With One's Confession 2:3-6**

*And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup> The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; <sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him: <sup>6</sup> the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.*

John presents the principle that it is not enough to understand the various teachings about Christ. The proof of such knowledge and understanding is how a believer conducts his/her life. It is important that the Christian look to the example of Christ in facing the issues of life – both the good and the bad.

### **John States that the Commandment Which He Is Calling To Their Attention Is Both An Old Commandment And A New Commandment 2:7-11**

*Beloved, I am not writing a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you have had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard. <sup>8</sup> On the other hand, I am writing a new commandment to you, which is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining. <sup>9</sup> The one who says he is in the light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. <sup>10</sup> The one who loves his brother abides in the light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. <sup>11</sup> But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes.*

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<sup>64</sup> The word rendered, *discern*, and in the NAS, *judge*, is διακρίνω, which refers to *discern, distinguish, evaluate the difference between things*. Therefore, Paul clearly is referring to seeing the body of the Lord in the elements of the Lord's Supper. For the meaning of this Greek term, see Friberg *Analytical Greek Lexicon* (entry 6297), Gingrich *Greek NT Lexicon* (entry 1552). Thayer's *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (entry 1318)

Prior to his exhortation to love, John begins with his favorite style,<sup>65</sup> using the word, ἀγαπητοί (*agapaytoi*), i.e. *beloved*. He begins the exhortation by expressing love.

This is not a new commandment, because it is a commandment that they had heard from the beginning of their Christian life.

However, in another sense, the commandment is not new in itself, but from another point of view and in our recognition of it, a new commandment – *the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining*. As never before, love is the paramount necessary ingredient to a Christian's walk.

Anyone who claims to be a Christian, but harbors hate in his/her heart for a fellow Christian is self-deceived, and a hypocritical Christian.

### **John Declares His Motivation For Writing This Letter 2:12-17**

**John, in a somewhat repetitive manner, states three reasons for his writing this epistle – verses 12-14**

*I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for His name's sake.<sup>13</sup> I am writing to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I have written to you, children, because you know the Father.<sup>14</sup> I have written to you, fathers, because you know Him who has been from the beginning. I have written to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.*

John wrote with a father's heart. He began the epistle with the same sentimental expression, which included all of his readers, *My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin...* (1 John 2:1)

Then, he turns to mature believers, who have a long and ever-deepening experience behind them.

He then addresses the young men, who, even through the grace of Christ have overcome the temptations and tendencies that are common to youth.

The term, *children*, is somewhat confusing at this point in this passage. Commentators are divided as to the identity of those whom John addressed when he wrote, *I have written to you, children, because you know the Father*. Ideas range all the way from John's addressing rubescent children. Others see this as a bit of a literary exercise.

In my opinion (JWG – the operative word is opinion), he is addressing the entire church, since he began by using this language (verse 12- *I am writing to you, little children*) and since he concludes, in a rather puzzling and redundant manner, by repeating, word for word, what he has just written to fathers and young men.

**John identifies the characteristics of things in the world, which must not be the object of a Christian's love – verses 15-17**

*<sup>15</sup> Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. <sup>16</sup> For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. <sup>17</sup> And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever.*

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<sup>65</sup> 3:2, 21; 4:1, 7, 11

The comprehensive statement concerning all that is in the world, brings together statements that are addressed in other writings of the New Testament. For example,

- *But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.* (Romans 13:14)
- *Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.* (Ephesians 2:3)
- *Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul.* (1 Peter 2:11)
- *but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her has committed adultery with her already in his heart.* (Matthew 5:28)

John then reminds his readers that everything in this life is temporary, but those who do the will of the Father look forward to an eternal existence. This is an important truth that should be in the consciousness of every Christian, every hour of every day.

## **The Increasing Presence Of Those Who Deny The Presence Of Christ And The Assurance Given To Those Who Are Faithful To God 2:18-29**

**The identity of the Antichrist and how his identity contrasts to that of true Christians – verses 18-26**

*Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.*

<sup>19</sup> *They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.* <sup>20</sup> *But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you all know.*

<sup>21</sup> *I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it, and because no lie is of the truth.* <sup>22</sup> *Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son.* <sup>23</sup> *Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also.*

<sup>24</sup> *As for you, let that abide in you which you heard from the beginning. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you also will abide in the Son and in the Father.* <sup>25</sup> *And this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.* <sup>26</sup> *These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you.*

Again, John begins this section by addressing his audience as, *children*.

Interestingly, John says that rather than the Antichrist's being a single individual, several individuals wear that label. Clearly, these are those who are controlled by the Antichrist.

- One of these heresies that had arisen in the church was the cult of the Nicolaitans. Tradition says that the cult was initiated by Nicolas, one of the seven deacons of the Church at Jerusalem (Acts 6:5). According to Clement of Alexandria, he was jealous of the apostles and began the cult, which had the expression, *we must abuse the flesh*, as a motto. The followers of this sect committed fornication without any restraint.<sup>66</sup> In the letters to the seven churches of Revelation, the Church at Ephesus was commended because it hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:6). On the other hand, the Church at Pergamum was chastised because some of the church accepted the teaching of the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:15)

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<sup>66</sup> Eusebius, III, page 29

- Another of these heresies was birthed by Cerinthus. Cerinthus was Antinomian.<sup>67</sup> He stated, “The world had not been made by the First God, but by a power which is separate from the Authority which is over the universe, and ignorant of the God is over all.” He further stated, “Jesus had not been begotten of a virgin, but had been born of Joseph and Mary as a son, in like manner to all the rest of men...and that after the baptism of Jesus, the Christ was imparted to Jesus by this First God. Then, the Christ departed from Jesus before His death. Jesus had been born and resurrected, but the Christ was without any sympathy for the suffering of Jesus, because the Christ was spiritual.”<sup>68</sup>
- Gnosticism became a serious heresy toward the close of the First Century. It would have been present during John’s lifetime. Gnosticism (based on the Greek term, γνῶσις (*gnosis*), meaning, *knowledge*). The underlying doctrine of the Gnostics was that there was a secret/higher knowledge. It was mystical, rather than intellectual, and this secret knowledge had been given by the apostles to certain individuals. This secret/higher knowledge revealed the key to salvation.  
A key element of Gnosticism was the teaching that all spiritual creation was the product of a primary god, called, The Urge, who had no concern or relationship with physical matter.. All physical matter was the product of another lesser god, called, The Demiurge. The Demiurge and his Archons kept mankind imprisoned in the physical world and the only hope of escape was to possess the secret/higher knowledge, the *gnosis*, that allowed them to escape and experience salvation.  
Another aspect of their teaching was that all material matter was evil and all true spiritual matter was pure and holy. Therefore, some Gnostics denied the incarnation, and declared that Jesus was a spirit who only appeared to have a human form, but in truth, was only spirit. Other Gnostics, like the Cerinthus, declared that the Holy Spirit entered Jesus at his immersion and departed before the crucifixion.

These fatal heresies denied the possibility of any relationship that mankind could have with the Father and the Son.

John declares that this presence of the Antichrist, in these heresies and immoral practices, is a sign that the end is at hand. Regardless of various attempts to explain this statement by anything than the end of the world and the return of Christ, verse 28 puts beyond doubt that this is what John meant. Some have argued that what John saw as evidence that the end was at hand, really were growing pains, not the pangs of dissolution. According to those who hold this view, John misinterpreted the signs.<sup>69</sup>

Acts 2:17 declares that the Gospel Age constitutes the last days. That being true, the last hour is a very long hour.

With the growing heresies and apostasies of our current generation, we do have to wonder if this means that the end is drawing near.

John stated that he did not write to them because they did not know the truth, but because they knew it. Furthermore, if they continued to abide in the truth that they knew, heaven awaited them.

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<sup>67</sup> Eusebius III, page 28

<sup>68</sup> David Smith, M.A., D.D., *The Expositors Greek New Testament, volume V* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Printing Company) 1976, page 157

<sup>69</sup> Smith, page 179



**John stated the ground of the confidence he had in his readers – verses 27-29**

*And as for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.*

*And now, little children, abide in Him, so that when He appears, we may have confidence and not shrink away from Him in shame at His coming. <sup>29</sup> If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.*

The illumination that they received at the hour of their conversion and immersion (the gift of the Holy Spirit – Acts 2:38) was teaching them and making them sensitive to the spirit behind false teaching. Therefore, they should faithfully abide in Christ.

**Believers In Christ Are Children Of God And Their Lives Are in Contrast To Those Who Are Children Of The Devil 3:1-18**

**The love of God is manifested in the fact that we are children of God and the great hope that is the result of this truth – verses 1-3**

*See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.*

- Our Lord taught us to pray, *Our Father, who art in Heaven* (Matthew 6:9)
- John declared in the prologue to his Gospel, *But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name,* (John 1:12)
- Paul wrote to the Galatians *For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. <sup>7</sup> For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.* (Galatians 3:26-27)

John refers to Christians as children of God, four times in this epistle, (3:1, 2, 10; 5:2). This is one of the most wonderful truths of Scripture, but also one of the most stunning truths, when one reverently contemplates all of the implications of this fact.

Christians must accept the fact that this incomprehensible high dignity, as children of God, involves a level of alienation in a world alienated from God.

Being children of God, Christians can look forward to a day when Christ returns and every Christian will be like Christ, in a resurrected body. At this time, no one knows exactly what the appearance of that body will be.

Because of this astounding hope, every Christian seeks to lead a life of purity that reflects the holy/pure character of Christ.

**The lifestyle of a child of God will be drastically different from a child of the Devil – verses 4-10**

*Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness. <sup>5</sup> And you know that He appeared in order to take away sins; and in Him there is no sin. <sup>6</sup> No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.*

*<sup>7</sup> Little children, let no one deceive you; the one who practices righteousness is righteous, just as He is righteous; <sup>8</sup> the one who practices sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the*

***beginning. The Son of God appeared for this purpose, that He might destroy the works of the devil.<sup>9</sup> No one who is born of God practices sin, because His seed abides in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.<sup>10</sup> By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.***

Paul clearly taught that Christians are delivered from being slaves to the Law of Moses, yet the principles of the Law prevail, because they reveal the will of God. He treats this at length in Romans 6:14; 7:7-25 and elsewhere.

Sin is an act that is at odds with God's standards for how Christians are to live. This principle is elucidated throughout the Four Gospels and all of the epistle.

Verse 6, *No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him*, appears to contradict the message of 1:8-2:2, *If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us....If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us*, etc.

However, there is no contradiction. John employs the Greek terms with exact precision. In the earlier passage (1:8-2:2), John states that there is indwelling sin in every believer. The sinful principle (ἁμαρτία - *hamartia*) remains in the believer and it manifests its presence by occasional lapses from holiness – definite, isolated acts, of sin. This is the force of the aorist tense, which John uses 1:8-2:2 - (ἁμαρτήτε [*hamartayte*] and ἁμαρτή [*hamartay*]).

Paul wrote about this struggle in his own life.

*But if I am doing the very thing I do not wish, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.<sup>21</sup> I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wishes to do good.<sup>22</sup> For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man,<sup>23</sup> but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind, and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.<sup>24</sup> Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?<sup>25</sup> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of God, but on the other, with my flesh the law of sin. (Romans 7:20-25)*

On the other hand, in the opening verses of Chapter 3, John employs the present tense (ἁμαρτάνειν [*hamartanein*]) which implies an ongoing lifestyle. Therefore, even if the believer, because of his human nature may stumble into sin, he will not walk in it. Sin will not be the character of his lifestyle.

The same is true of verse 9b *and he cannot sin, because he is born of God*. Literally, the Greek (using the present infinitive ἁμαρτάνεις [*hamartanein*]) reads, *he does not have the power to continue to sin*.

David Smith has described the situation in this manner,

“The reason of the impossibility of a Child of God’s continuing in sin *is because* the germ of divine life has been implanted in our souls, and it grows – a gradual process and subject to occasional retardations, yet sure, attaining at length to full fruition. The believer’s lapses into sin are like the mischances of the weather which hinder the seed’s growth. The growth of the living seed may be checked temporarily; if there be no growth there is no life.”<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> David Smith, page 185

### **Brotherhood in the Church is evidence of Divine Sonship – verses 10-12**

*By this the children of God and the children of the devil are obvious: anyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor the one who does not love his brother.<sup>11</sup> For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another;<sup>12</sup> not as Cain, who was of the evil one, and slew his brother. And for what reason did he slay him? Because his deeds were evil, and his brother's were righteous.*

John reiterates the *old commandment* (2:7-11) as not only being a paramount duty of believers, but that it is dominant evidence of their divine sonship.

He declares that the evidence lies in *doing righteousness*, and he defines an important trait of that righteousness, love of the fellow believer.

John cites Cain and Abel as illustrations of this truth.

### **Genuine love is not merely words or feelings, but it involves action – verses 13-18**

*Do not marvel, brethren, if the world hates you.<sup>14</sup> We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.<sup>15</sup> Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.<sup>16</sup> We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.<sup>17</sup> But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him?<sup>18</sup> Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*

It should be no surprise to believers that in every generation, when Christians display a lifestyle and actively promote their faith, they will be hated by the surrounding culture. Often, this results in violence and often is slanderous mockery.

The Greek term rendered as *love* in these passages is the verb, ἀγαπάω (*agapaoh*),<sup>71</sup> As noted earlier, this is a volitional word, requiring a choice, and usually indicating some sort of action. Earlier we noted that the literal rendering of John 3:16 is, *God loved the world in this manner, He gave*. Such is the case in the illustration of Jesus in this passage, *we know love by this, that He laid down His life for us*.

In like manner, Christians manifest love to one another by their actions – *little children, let us not love with word or tongue, but in deed and truth*.

### **The Ultimate Evidence Of Our Abiding In Christ – Verses 19-24**

*We shall know by this that we are of the truth, and shall assure our heart before Him,<sup>20</sup> in whatever our heart condemns us; for God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.<sup>21</sup> Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence before God;<sup>22</sup> and whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight.<sup>23</sup> And this is His commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.<sup>24</sup> And the one who keeps His commandments abides in Him, and He in him. And we know by this that He abides in us, by the Spirit whom He has given us.*

This somewhat convoluted passage concludes with the ultimate evidence of our being in Christ.

The foregoing section may have caused misgivings in one's mind as we become aware of our failures in duty and service and *our heart condemns us*. John then gives the assurance that God

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<sup>71</sup> The verbal form of the noun, ἀγάπη (*agapay*)

knows the worst things about us and still, in spite of our shortcomings, He cares and desires to be in fellowship with us.

Therefore, even though our conscience may initially condemn us, when we realize that God know us, inside and out, and we begin to trust in his loving forgiveness and redemptive work, then our conscience no longer condemns us.

The Greek term rendered as, *confidence*, is *παρρησία* (*parraysia*), which primarily means, *freedom of speech*, then, in a secondary sense, *confidence*, *boldness*.

*...we have confidence before God; and whatever we ask we receive from Him*, Once there is an open conversation between the child of God and his father, prayer is a reality and there is a trusting exchange in the conversation.

God will always hear the prayer from the heart of a true believer. The answer is not always what one might expect, but the answer, ultimately, will be better than the prayer.

This trust always involves - *because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight*.

This leads to a summing up of God's command, *to give our allegiance to His Son, Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as he commanded us*. These two conditions, *faith* and *love* are the dominating traits of the true child of God.

This condition also is marked by the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit, which is evidence of our being a child of God.

### **The Spirit Of Truth And The Spirit Of Error – 4:1-6**

*Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*

<sup>2</sup> *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;* <sup>3</sup> *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.*

<sup>4</sup> *You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.* <sup>5</sup> *They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them.* <sup>6</sup> *We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

There were many false prophets that had gone out into the world, in the First Century. It seems that many in the churches were so focused on spiritual manifestations that they were taken in by these prophets, what were inhabited by the spirit of the antichrist, rather than the Spirit of Christ.

The test that was appropriate for these First Century prophets was, *does the spirit in the prophet confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh?*

Interestingly, in I John 2:18-19, the statement is made, *Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour.* <sup>19</sup> *They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.*

The Chapter 2 passage describes those who at one time were in fellowship with the apostles and the Church, but they departed from the Church to embark on their heretical profession.

Possibly, their early connection to the Church gave them some credibility among the believers.

There may be other tests in future generations, but in the First Century, the ultimate test was, *By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God;*<sup>3</sup> *and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world.*

As noted earlier, *Gnosticism*, in its various iterations, denied the orthodox doctrine concerning the incarnation. This still must be a basic test, but, as stated earlier, through the generations since the First Century, there have been other heresies to which other biblical tests must be applied, in addition to the one cited here.

John then turns the discussion toward giving his readers confidence and hope, *You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.*

John asserts that his readers are a part of God's family and thus, they listen to the inner voice of God.

That contrasts with those who are from the world. Those from the world listen to the false prophets, who are from the world that lies under Satan's influence.

John then asserts his personal authority as an apostle and how their recognizing his apostolic authority is essential, *We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.*

This statement of apostolic authority is important in the present generation. The New Testament documents are given to us by the apostles, and thus, carry apostolic authority. Any teaching that contradicts these apostolic documents is heretical and from the spirit of the Antichrist.

### **John Reiterates The Old/New Commandment 4:7-12**

*Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.*<sup>8</sup> *The one who does not love does not know God, for God is love.*

<sup>9</sup> *By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him.*

<sup>10</sup> *In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.*

<sup>11</sup> *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*<sup>12</sup> *No one has beheld God at any time; if we love one another, God abides in us, and His love is perfected in us.*

This truth is so important that John does not hesitate to repeat it over and over, even if his readers might have become tired of hearing it.

The underlying truth in this passage is that when we are born again, we become partakers of the Divine Nature,<sup>72</sup> and one of the defining characteristics of that Nature is love.

Those who truly are born again, will be filled with love for one another, and even for the lost world.

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<sup>72</sup> *For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. (2 Peter 1:4)*

On the other hand, sadly, in our present age, the concept of love has been distorted so as to become an excuse for tolerating ungodly behavior – i.e. we must not judge anyone, regardless of what they espouse, or their lifestyle.

In response to this, we must remember that God, many times in Scripture, is described, not only as love, but also as holy.<sup>73</sup>

The prologue to the Gospel of John states, *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of **grace and truth*** (John 1:14). Some people tend to be graceless legalists, while others are so emotional that they are devoid of biblical standards.

Concerning judging the behavior of church members, Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

*I wrote you in my letter not to associate with immoral people; <sup>10</sup> I did not at all mean with the immoral people of this world, or with the covetous and swindlers, or with idolaters; for then you would have to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup> But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he should be an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler-- not even to eat with such a one. <sup>12</sup> For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church? <sup>13</sup> But those who are outside, God judges. Remove the wicked man from among yourselves.* (1 Corinthians 5:9-13)

Regardless of what Christians must put up with in the world (as Paul notes, in this world we will have to put up with a lot of ungodly behavior), a church that is true <sup>74</sup>to the Word of God will judge the lives of its members and excommunicate those whose lives are in open violation of the pattern of life prescribed for followers of Christ.

Sadly, in this present age, this principle is ignored by many, under the guise of *inclusion*.

Verse 12 presents an interesting truth: We have not seen God, but when God indwells the Christian and love becomes a defining quality of the Christian's life, we are beholding the character of God in one another.

### **Godly Love Depends On Faith 4:13-16**

*By this we know that we abide in Him and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.*

<sup>14</sup> *And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*

<sup>16</sup> *And we have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*

The Greek in the opening statement literally says, *out of (or from) His Spirit He has given to us.*<sup>75</sup> The point being that God would not have granted to us the precious relationship with Him if He were not in an intimate relationship with us and that he had a steadfast purpose of grace toward us. This language also intimates that if we have the indwelling Holy Spirit, our spirits will mirror that of God.

John also asserts the authority for his statements – he could make these statements because of his experiential knowledge – *we have seen and beheld*.

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<sup>73</sup> Examples: Isaiah 6:1-4; Luke 1:49; John 17:11; Revelation 4:8

<sup>74</sup> I John 3:24

<sup>75</sup> ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος αὐτοῦ δέδωκεν ἡμῖν (*ek tou pneumatos autou dedohken haymin*)

## Love Brings Confidence, But It Must Be Genuine Love 4:17-21

*By this, love is perfected with us, that we may have confidence in the day of judgment; because as He is, so also are we in this world.* <sup>18</sup> *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, use fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.* <sup>19</sup> *We love, because He first loved us.* <sup>20</sup> *If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.* <sup>21</sup> *And this commandment we have from Him, that the one who loves God should love his brother also.*

John continues in his repetitive theme of love, but he now develops it along new lines. The presence of godly love in a believer gives him a confidence that cannot be shaken, even though he believes that the day of judgment is coming.

This perfected love within us causes us to reflect the character of God while we are still in this world – *as He is, so also are we in this world.*

God's love which flows through us, reaches its climax when it flows through us to other believers. John indicates that it is impossible to love the unseen God and at the same time to not love our brother whom we have seen. Anyone who claims to love God but does not have godly love to his/her fellow believers, is an outright liar.

It is important to note that the Greek term rendered, *love*, in this entire section is the Greek term, ἀγάπη (*agapay*). As noted earlier (pages 17 & 59), this is a volitional word, that does not necessarily involve emotion, but it does require one to make a decision. Therefore, I can display ἀγάπη toward someone, even if I do not feel affectionate to that person. It is a matter of attitude and behavior.

Whether or not one manifests love toward his/her brother/sister is evidence as to whether or not one, in truth, loves God.

## Christian Faith Is The Source Of Love And Victory 5:1-5

*Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God; and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.* <sup>2</sup> *By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and observe His commandments.* <sup>3</sup> *For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.* <sup>4</sup> *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world-- our faith.* <sup>5</sup> *And who is the one who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?*

This section opens with a reiteration of the doctrine that love for God = love for the brethren. Where one is, the other is also. Love for God is the inner principle, and love for the brethren is the outward manifestation of that principle.

The interesting declaration that loving God's children and loving God Himself is demonstrated in keeping His commandments is a declaration that the mark of true Divine Sonship is that the will of God and the will of the Christian coincide. If we love God, we will keep His commandments and those who keep His commandments will love whom He loves, which is all of His children.

John then faces the question, "can we keep His commandments?" The answer is, "yes, we can," because they are not burdensome. Every child of God is a victor over his hostile environment. This victory is achieved because of the deep faith that characterizes the Christian. The apex of that faith is belief that Jesus is the Son of God.

## Divine Testimony That Credential Jesus As The Son Of God 5:6-12

*This is the one who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood.* <sup>7</sup> *And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth.* <sup>8</sup> *For there are three that bear witness, the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement.* <sup>9</sup> *If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for the witness of God is this, that He has borne witness concerning His Son.* <sup>10</sup> *The one who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar, because he has not believed in the witness that God has borne concerning His Son.* <sup>11</sup> *And the witness is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.* <sup>12</sup> *He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.*

Verses 6-8 declare:

- Christ Jesus came both by water and blood.
- The Spirit, which is truth, bears witness of this.
- The Spirit, water, and blood all unite to give one unified testimony.

To what does the statement refer, *this is the one who came by water and blood*?

Augustine understood the passage to refer to the crucifixion of Christ, and the flow of water and blood from the side of Jesus when the soldier pierced him with a spear. An event that John declares he witnessed.

*but one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately there came out blood and water. And he who has seen has borne witness, and his witness is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you also may believe.* (John 19:34-35)

A problem with this view is that the order of water and blood are reversed in John's account of the crucifixion. Furthermore, the account in the Gospel of John gives this description to express the historical truth that Jesus really did die. Perhaps there is some validity in this view, since the subject in I John 5:6ff is the reality and truth of the incarnation. However, it takes some imagination to make this connection with the statement in I John.

Luther and Calvin gave a sacramental interpretation to the expression. They argued that the water and blood referred to the two sacraments of baptism (water) and the eucharist (blood). The problem with this interpretation is that John is referring to the historic presence and incarnate life of Jesus on earth, not with his continuing manifestation in the sacramental life of the church.

This is clearly seen in John's use of the term ὁ ἐλθὼν (*ho elthohn*), which is the aorist tense of ἔρχομαι (*erkomai*). Literally, the Greek states, *the one who came*. John refers to a definite point in history.

A more natural explanation of John's thought is that the reference is to the beginning of Jesus' ministry when he was immersed in the River Jordan by John, then closing his purpose for coming into the world by shedding his blood on Calvary. John is speaking of the terminal points in Christ's ministry – the beginning and the end.

The gnostic (and specifically Cerinthian) heresy had gained ground in the Christian community with which John was associated. As stated earlier, this heresy stated that the heavenly Christ descended on Jesus at his immersion but withdrew from Him before his death<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Irenaeus, *Adv. Her.* 3. 3. 4



John refutes this by his somewhat mysterious statement, i.e. that Jesus Christ who came, not in water only, but in water and in blood. The heavenly Christ was the Christ who was present in both experiences.

It must be noted that the Gospel of John covers precisely this span. It does not begin with the infancy narrative found in Matthew and Luke.

John then indicated that the Holy Spirit, who *bears witness* (present tense) in the present lives of John's readers is contemporary evidence.

Not only are these facts true, but the Father Himself bore witness to the Sonship of Jesus by making that pronouncement more than once. Here are two examples that were witnessed by John the Immerser and Peter, James, and John.

- *Now it came about when all the people were immersed, that Jesus also was immersed, and while He was praying, heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in bodily form like a dove, and a voice came out of heaven, "Thou art My beloved Son, in Thee I am well-pleased."* (Luke 3:21-<sup>77</sup>)
- *And six days later Jesus took with Him Peter and James and John his brother, and brought them up to a high mountain by themselves. <sup>2</sup> And He was transfigured before them; and His face shone like the sun, and His garments became as white as light.... While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and behold, a voice out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"* (Matthew 17:1-2, 5)

True life is found in fellowship with the Son, and that fellowship opens the door to fellowship with the Father. To declare otherwise is to call God a liar, because He has made the declaration that this is true.

### **The Epilogue, Giving The Purpose Of The Letter And The Role Of Prayer In The Believer's Life 5:13-17**

*These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, in order that you may know that you have eternal life. <sup>14</sup> And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. <sup>15</sup> And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. <sup>16</sup> If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this. <sup>17</sup> All unrighteousness is sin, and there is a sin not leading to death.*

John closed his Gospel account of the life of Christ by stating that the purpose of his Gospel was so that his readers might believe in the Incarnation, resulting in their having eternal life.

*Many other signs therefore Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name.* (John 20:30-31)

The purpose of this epistle is that we not only have eternal life by believing, but that that we *may know that we have it*. John presents some experiential means of knowing this truth.

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<sup>77</sup> Also described in Matthew 3:16; Mark 1:10; John 1:32

As David Smith has stated, “The Gospel exhibits the Son of God, the Epistle commends Him.”<sup>78</sup>

The statements in verses 14-15, concerning prayer according to God’s will, require some investigation. Many statements about answered prayer are found in Scripture. Here are two from the Gospel of Matthew:

- *“Keep asking, and it shall be given to you; keep seeking, and you shall find; keep knocking, and it shall be opened to you.”<sup>8</sup> “For everyone who keeps asking receives, and he who keeps seeking finds, and to him who keeps knocking it shall be opened.”<sup>79</sup> “Or what man is there among you, when his son shall ask him for a loaf, will he give him a stone?<sup>10</sup> “Or if he shall ask for a fish, will he give him a snake, will he?<sup>11</sup> “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! (Matthew 7:7-11)<sup>80</sup>*
- *“And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you shall receive.” (Matthew 21:22)*

John adds a caveat, *ask anything according to His will*. This statement immediately brings to mind Jesus’ prayer in the Garden,

*And He went a little beyond them, and fell on His face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.” (Matthew 26:39; Luke 22:42)*

Also, in the model prayer, *“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, On earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10)*. We cannot expect God to grant something that is not according to His will and in harmony with His purposes.

Similarly, in Jesus statements concerning asking in His name (John 14:13-14), it is important to realize that doing so means to ask in His behalf. He would not authorize us to use His name in a request, even to Himself, if the request were not something that He would authorize.

Many of the best prayers of even the most devoted Christians are not answered as they wished. That must be because we do not see the big picture – everything that is involved in the situation and how God’s purposes are being worked out, somewhat behind the scenes.

Another factor involved in answered and unanswered prayer is one’s motive for asking. The Epistle of James states,

*You do not have because you do not ask.<sup>3</sup> You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. (James 4:2b-3)*

John then addresses and commends a particular category of prayer that receives a positive response from heaven. *If anyone sees his brother committing a sin not leading to death, he shall ask and God will for him give life to those who commit sin not leading to death. There is a sin leading to death; I do not say that he should make request for this.*

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<sup>78</sup> David Smith, page 197

<sup>79</sup> The verbs in this promise are present tense, active, which imply ongoing activity.

<sup>80</sup> In Luke’s record of this promise, the last line reads, *“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?” (Luke 11:13)*

First, it must be noted that John points out that there are two types of sin,

- Sin not leading to death
- Sin that leads to death

Although we cannot be too precise in determining the sin that leads to death, there are New Testament statements that there is sin that cannot/will not be forgiven.

- Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit *"Truly I say to you, all sins shall be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they utter; <sup>29</sup> but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin "* (Mark 3:28-29; Luke 12:10)
- Falling away, after experiencing the blessings of salvation: *For in the case of those who have once been enlightened and have tasted of the heavenly gift and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, <sup>5</sup> and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, <sup>6</sup> and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.* (Hebrews 6:4-6)
- Obstinate sin, even after receiving knowledge of God's will: *For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, <sup>27</sup> but a certain terrifying expectation of judgment, and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries.* (Hebrews 10:26-27)

John states that it is a waste of time and words to pray for one who has committed sin leading to death. He does not prohibit doing so, but he does instruct us to do so: *I do not say that he should make request for this*

On the other hand, when we see a brother committing a sin, and we pray for such a brother, John gives the assurance that such intercession will receive a positive response. Note that John does not refer to one who is living a sinful lifestyle, but a brother who has stumbled in his walk with Christ. The sin referenced is an isolated problem, not characteristic of the brother's life.

### **Three Things That We Know, As Believers 5:18-21**

*<sup>18</sup> We know that no one who is born of God sins; but He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him. <sup>19</sup> We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one. <sup>20</sup> And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. <sup>21</sup> Little children, guard yourselves from idols.*

John closes with three great assertions, all prefixed with the statement, *we know*, then closes with a warning.

**The first**, *we know that no one who is born of God sins*, picks up on the topic just discussed.

This clarifies some of the questions that might arise in what has just been stated. The verb in this statement is indicative present active, indicating an ongoing lifestyle. No one born of God will continue to live a sinful lifestyle, but, has been noted in earlier sections of the epistle, even the best of us may stumble in our walk from time to time.

The statement, *He who was born of God keeps him and the evil one does not touch him*, is reminiscent of the request in the model prayer, *'And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver (i.e. rescue) us from the evil.* (Matthew 6:13) Although most English version do not include the

definite article (*the evil*), a literal rendering of the Greek must include it. It is not inappropriate to render this as, *the evil one*.

**The second**, *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies in the power of the evil one*, declares the sharp division between the Church and the surrounding population. The Christian has a sense of security in that he is in God's embrace.

**The third** *And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him who is true, and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.*

This is the primary assertion of every orthodox Christian creed: *we know that the Son of God has come*.

This coming has resulted in a Christian's knowing of the true God, the Father.

Then, the closing exhortation, *Little children, guard yourselves from idols*. This exhortation was especially relevant in the First Century, when Christians were surrounded by a culture that worshipped a host of idols. Regardless of community commemorations of this god or that god, which, in order to be a part of the surrounding community a Christian might be tempted to participate, Christians must absent themselves from such activity. Today, Christians must ask themselves, which contemporary celebrations are a form of idolatry and in which ones is it appropriate for Christians to participate.

## THE EPISTLE OF II JOHN

### THE AUTHOR AND CANONICITY OF THE EPISTLE

The epistle does not name the author, but describes himself as, *the elder*. There are three views presented as to the identity of the author:

1. John the Elder
2. An unknown Elder
3. The apostle John, the son of Zebedee

Realizing that my bias probably has impacted my judgement, I (JWG) accept the third of these.

Here are some of the reasons for my reaching this conclusion:

#### External Evidence:

Of signal interest is the Fourth Century letter of Athanasius.. In 367 AD, Athanasius, the bishop Alexandria, wrote the following in his 39<sup>th</sup> Festal Letter to the churches under his care. Following his discussion of the Old Testament, he comments on the New Testament canon. His list of the books of the New Testament is identical to the twenty-seven books that we have in our contemporary Bibles. As such, he includes all three of the letters of John in his canon and indicates that John is the author.

Continuing, I must without hesitation mention the scriptures of the New Testament; they are the following: the four Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, after them the Acts of the Apostles and the seven so-called catholic epistles of the apostles -- namely, one of James, two of Peter, then three of John and after these one of Jude. In addition there are fourteen epistles of the apostle Paul written in the following order: the first to the Romans, then two to the Corinthians and then after these the one to the Galatians, following it the one to the Ephesians, thereafter the one to the Philippians and the one to the Colossians and two to the Thessalonians and the epistle to the Hebrews and then immediately two to Timothy , one to Titus and lastly the one to Philemon. Yet further the Revelation of John.

These are the springs of salvation, in order that he who is thirsty may fully refresh himself with the words contained in them. In them alone is the doctrine of piety proclaimed. Let no one add anything to them or take anything away from them... <sup>81</sup>

II John is not quoted as often in early Church documents as is I John. One obvious reason for the scarcity of quotes is the brevity of II John. The epistle consists of only 13 verses. This short document touches upon only two themes, which are covered more fully in other portions of holy writings. Therefore, it would not readily come to mind when an author would be writing on some topic covered more fully elsewhere.

Here is some of the external evidence to be considered:

- Cited or alluded to by Polycarp (c. 110-50)
- Cited or alluded to by Irenaeus (c. 130-202)
- Cited by Clement of Alexandria (150-215)
- Disputed by Origen (c. 185-254)
- Named as authentic in the Old Latin (c. 200)

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<sup>81</sup> <http://ntcanon.org/Athanasius.shtml>

- Named as authentic by Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-386)
- Eusebius states that II & III John are disputed by some, but accepted by most (c. 325-340)
- Named as authentic by Jerome (c. 340-420)
- Named as authentic by Augustine (c. 400)
- Named as authentic by almost all of the early canons: Muratorian (c. 170), Barococcio (c. 206), Apostolic (c. 300), Athanasius (c. 367)
- Named as authentic in all of the early councils except for Nicea (c. 325-40), Carthage (397), and Carthage (419)].

### **Internal Evidence:**

The strongest internal evidence involves the relationship of the letter to I John, and the Gospel of John. All three epistles (I, II, and III John) share common characteristics with the Gospel of John (see Introduction on I John).

Many phrases in both II and III John are either identical to or reminiscent of phrases in I John. (I John 2:7 with II John 5; I John 2:18 & 4:1-3, with II John 7; I John 2:23 with II John 9; I John 3:6, 9, with III John 11).

### **THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE**

There is very little internal evidence related to the date of the composition. However, if we assume that it is linked with I John, we assign a date of 85-95 AD (John died 98-100 AD).

### **THE PURPOSE AND GENERAL THEME OF THE EPISTLE**

The two topics addressed in this epistle are::

- love for the brethren, which is a theme in all three of the Johanan epistles,
- the exhortation to be faithful to truth and to reject the gnostic heresy that was gaining ground in the early church.<sup>82</sup>

### **The Identity of the recipients and general purpose of the epistle verses 1-2**

*The elder to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth,<sup>2</sup> for the sake of the truth which abides in us and will be with us forever:*

Three views have been put forth as to the identity of *the chosen lady and her children...*

1. An individual woman, her natural children, and her sister (1, 4, 13)
2. This is a figurative way of designating a particular church. The term, *chosen sister*, would refer to a church and *children* would refer to spiritual children (parishioners) of the church. Support for this view is seen in the plural terms used in the epistle:

- She is loved by *all who know the truth*.

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<sup>82</sup>Statements made in the epistle clearly indicate that John was writing to combat Docetic Gnosticism (Christ was not really a divine person in human flesh (v 7) He was only a phantom playing the human role. He only appeared to have real humanity. This heresy advocated a dualism emphasizing that everything physical is evil and everything spiritual is good. The statements in II John correlate with I John 2:18-27 and especially 4:1-6 (in particular 4:2).

- The use of the second person plural pronoun (*you plural*, verse 3, then verse 6 through verse 12) more naturally refers to a congregation rather than an individual woman and her children.
- There are portions of the letter in which the author uses second person, singular, but the majority of his pronouns are second person plural.
- The command to love one another (v. 5) fits a local church better than an individual family.

It would be extraordinary to say that a woman and her family were loved by *all who know the truth*. However, this would be an appropriate comment to make concerning a congregation of good standing in the primitive church.

The closing verse, *The children of your chosen sister greet you*, is an appropriate statement expressing one church's extended greetings to the members of another church.

3. Perhaps this is a both/and situation in that the church met at the home of the lady. Therefore, it could be addressed to both the hostess as well as to the church. This would fit the pattern of singular second person pronouns in the early section and then transitioning to plural pronouns in the body of the letter.

Furthermore, the exact geographical location of the intended audience cannot be determined.

### **The Greeting – verse 3**

***<sup>3</sup> Grace, mercy and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father, in truth and love.***

The trio here, *grace, mercy, and peace*, is the same trio found in I Timothy 1:2 and II Timothy 1:2. However, note the unusual nature of this greeting. It is not a prayer or wish, but it states a fact...*will be with us*.

As a prelude to his addressing the gnostic heresy, the author makes a point in stating that this blessing trio is not only from God the Father, but equally from *Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father*.

### **The Old/New Commandment, a theme at the heart of all of John's writings – verses 4-6**

***<sup>4</sup> I was very glad to find some of your children walking in truth, just as we have received commandment to do from the Father. <sup>5</sup> And now I ask you, lady, not as writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another. <sup>6</sup> And this is love, that we walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, just as you have heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it.***

An important emphasis is in the first statement. Not only is it important to walk in truth, but the Christian must also walk in love. This brings to mind the statement concerning Jesus in the prologue to John's Gospel, *And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.* (John 1:14)

As we noted in I John 4, where the same subject is presented, some people tend to be graceless legalists, while others are so emotional that they are devoid of biblical standards.

A faithful Christian and a faithful church will keep both grace/love in balance with truth. One must not replace the other. This especially important to remember in a culture that insists that to adhere to clear biblical doctrine and standards is to not show love to those who do otherwise.

### **False Teachers and How to Deal with Them – verses 7-11**

***<sup>7</sup> For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the antichrist. <sup>8</sup> Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. <sup>9</sup> Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. <sup>10</sup> If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; <sup>11</sup> for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.***

As noted earlier, the specific heresy that John was confronting was the gnostic heresy that plagued the church at the close of the First Century (see footnote 81).

No doubt the Antichrist had many agents who brought many heresies into the Church but the specific group being spotlighted in this epistle are the Gnostics.

The impassioned warning is that straying into such doctrines causes one to lose His relationship with both the Father and the Son, but the one who meticulously abides in the truth has both the Father and the Son. This is one reason why elders of a local church must be thoroughly acquainted with both the truth and the manifestations of error in their generation. This is the same assertion that is made in I John 2:22-23.

John then speaks a rather harsh word, *If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds.*

John stated that even to befriend one of these agents of the Antichrist makes the Christian culpable of promoting the heresy.

According to Polycarp, John the Apostle was in a bath-house when he heard that Cerinthus, the gnostic heretic had entered the bath-house and John fled in terror, *lest the building should collapse on such an enemy of the truth.*<sup>83</sup>

### **Closing words, expressing his desire to visit the recipients of the letter – verses 12-13**

***<sup>12</sup> Having many things to write to you, I do not want to do so with paper and ink; but I hope to come to you and speak face to face, that your joy may be made full. <sup>13</sup> The children of your chosen sister greet you.***

John indicates that he could have written a longer letter because he had much to say, but rather than writing a longer letter, he anticipated visiting the recipients and sharing with them the joy of one another's company.

The terms, *paper and ink*, are *χάρτης* (*chartays*), which refers to papyrus, and *μέλος* (*melos*) which was black ink.

*The children of your chosen sister*, clearly means the members of the church where John was located when he wrote the letter.

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<sup>83</sup> Eusebius, Book III, Chapter XXVIII, page 114



# THE EPISTLE OF III JOHN

## THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE

The same reasoning and facts concerning the date of the First Epistle apply here also. The Epistle would have been written shortly before John's death. There is nothing in the epistle that would indicate a significant passage of time between the composition of II and III John. The date most commonly assigned to this epistle is c.95 AD.

## THE AUTHOR AND CANONICITY OF THE EPISTLE

What evidence is available, points to John, the son of Zebedee and one of the twelve apostles as the author.

**External Evidence:** This evidence is not as strong as that for 2 John, yet, as is true of II John, its brevity may account for some of this.

The letter of Athanasius (367 AD), quoted in the introduction to II John, asserts that the apostle, John, is the author of the epistle and is a part of the New Testament canon.

Here is the list of several early Church responses to II John.

1. Disputed by Origen (c. 185-254)
2. Named as authentic by Cyril of Jerusalem (c. 315-86)
3. Eusebius states that II & III John are disputed by some, but accepted by most (c. 325-340)
4. Named as authentic by Jerome (c. 340-420)
5. Named as authentic by Augustine (c. 400)
6. Named as authentic by all of the canons (Muratorian (c. 170), Baroccio (c. 206), Apostolic (c. 300), Athanasius (c. 367). The single exception is the Marcion canon (c. 140)
7. Named as authentic in the Old Latin (c. 200)
8. Named as authentic in all of the councils except for Nicaea (c. 325-40) [ Hippo (392), Carthage (397) and Carthage (419)].<sup>84</sup>

### Internal Evidence:

1. As in II John the writer introduces himself as 'the Elder', and so the decision reached with respect to II John should apply here.
2. Similarities Between II John and III John:
  - a. Much emphasis is placed upon the 'truth.' The language of III John would lead us to conclude that both epistles were dealing with the same false teaching.
  - b. Both speak of hospitality: John forbids hospitality for false teachers, but commends hospitality for the true believer.
  - c. Both rejoice over others who walk in the truth (II John 4; III John 3)
  - d. In both the author intimates his intention to visit the recipients (II John 12; III John 13)
  - e. In both the author intimates that he has much to write but would rather not write in "paper and ink" (II John 12)), with 'pen and ink' (III John 13)

As was stated concerning II John, realizing that my bias probably has impacted my judgement, I (JWG) believe that John, the son of Zebedee, and one of the twelve apostles was the author of this epistle.

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<sup>84</sup> <https://bible.org/article/introduction-book-3-john>

## The Destination – verse 1

### *The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.*

In this short letter, John refers to three individuals: Gaius, Diotrophes, and Demetrius.

Who was the Gaius, to whom the letter was addressed?

The identity of Gaius is uncertain. Several possibilities arise from the mention of a Gaius, in other New Testament passages. Here are the possibilities:

- A Macedonian traveling companion of the Apostle Paul on his third missionary journey. This Gaius, along with Aristarchus, was caught up in the riot in Ephesus and hauled into the theatre by the out-of-control mob (Acts 19:29).
- Another Gaius who traveled with Paul on his third missionary journey. This Gaius was from Derbe, a city in Cilicia. (Acts 20:4)
- A Corinthian whom Paul baptized (I Corinthians 1:14).
- Paul's host in Corinth from which he sent the letter to the Church at Rome (Romans 16:23). This could be the Gaius referenced in I Corinthians, whom Paul baptized.
- It is possible that this is another Gaius, about whom we have no other information than that contained in III John. This Gaius, whoever he was, had an intimate relationship with John.

Honesty requires us to admit that it is not possible, with any degree of certainty, to determine the identity of Gaius.

Nether are we able to identify the geographical location of the church with which Gaius was associated.

### **The testimony of many witnesses assured John that Gaius had a healthy soul. John prayed that Gaius' physical health would match the health of his soul – verses 2-6a**

*Beloved, I pray that in all respects you may prosper and be in good health, just as your soul prospers. <sup>3</sup> For I was very glad when brethren came and bore witness to your truth, that is, how you are walking in truth. <sup>4</sup> I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth. <sup>5</sup> Beloved, you are acting faithfully in whatever you accomplish for the brethren, and especially when they are strangers; <sup>6</sup> and they bear witness to your love before the church;*

Christians from Gaius home church, as well as itinerant ministers who had visited Gaius' church gave a glowing report of Gaius' life. His faithful commitment to the truth and his life which reflected that commitment, was evidence for his having an exceptionally healthy soul.

John prayed that Gaius physical health would equal that of his healthy soul.

Note that the term John uses is ψυχή (*pseuchay*), which is rendered in English as *soul*. This is not the same thing as the πνεῦμα (*pneuma*), which is rendered in English as, *spirit*. The soul has many shades of meaning, but essentially it refers to the non-corporeal being of individuals.

Freiberg summarizes the term as, "nonmaterial inner life of human beings for which the body serves as a dwelling place *soul, inner self* (for example, Matthew 11:29; 20:28)"<sup>85</sup> Such an

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<sup>85</sup> Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, *Analytical Greek Lexicon* (California, Trafford Publishing), 2005, entry 28987

understanding would include the activity of the brain. At death, the brain dies and undergoes decay.

The πνεῦμα refers to that part of our existence that does not die, when the physical body dies. The spirit does not die, but lives on.

In his discussion of the resurrection, contrasting Adam with Christ, Paul wrote, *So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.* (1 Corinthians 15:45)

Paul's reference to the first man, Adam is a quote of Genesis 2:7 *Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*<sup>86</sup>

On this side of the grave, we cannot fully grasp the distinction, but when our spirit leaves our earthly body, we will have a full understanding.

### **John emphasized the importance of supporting faithful itinerant ministries – verses 6b-8**

*and you will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.* <sup>7</sup> *For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles.* <sup>8</sup> *Therefore we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers with the truth.*

The early church practiced the support of traveling Christian teachers and missionaries by providing food and lodging for them. An example of this is seen in Acts 21:8, when Paul and his traveling band stayed in the Caesarean home of Philip.

John commends Gaius for outstanding service in this regard. When these itinerant missionaries left Gaius' church, the church should send them on their way with blessings, and possibly some physical/financial assistance.

### **John castigates Diotrephes, who is obsessed with being the most important man in the Church – verses 9-10**

<sup>9</sup> *I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say.* <sup>10</sup> *For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, neither does he himself receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so, and puts them out of the church.*

It has been said that for some people who are obsessed with self-elevation, they seek to elevate themselves by lowering others. Diotrephes seems to have been of that ilk.

John previously had written something to Gaius' church, and Diotrephes had rejected John's letter, which, no doubt had contained some things that would have challenged Diotrephes' role.

In contrast to the beloved Gaius, Diotrephes had refused to show such hospitality to the emissaries sent from John. He even went so far as to excommunicate the church members who did receive the emissaries and show them hospitality. John promised that if he could pay the church a visit, he would confront Diotrephes and hold him accountable for his wicked words and deeds.

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<sup>86</sup> Most modern English version render the term in Genesis 2:7, *living being*. However, the literal rendering of the term is, *soul*. (Hebrew: *enephes*; Jewish Greek version, the Septuagint, *pseuchay*.)

### **Gaius is exhorted to continuing following the good, in spite Diotrephes' threats – verse 11**

***11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.***

This truth recurs over and over again in all three of John's epistles. A person's behaviour is an indicator as to whether or not a person really is a Christian, i.e. is *of God*.

### **The third person mentioned in the letter, Demetrius, receives commendation from John – verse 12**

***12 Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone, and from the truth itself; and we also bear witness, and you know that our witness is true.***

There is no information as to the identity of Demetrius. He may have been the person who carried the letter to Gaius.

The statement, *and from the truth itself*, is a rather perplexing declaration. How can the truth give a good testimony to Demetrius? A number of somewhat far-fetched explanations have been given. One plausible explanation is that Demetrius gets a favorable testimony from the whole congregation that is animated by the truth.

### **The hope of a personal meeting – verses 13-14**

***13 I had many things to write to you, but I am not willing to write them to you with pen and ink; 14 but I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face. Peace be to you. The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name.***

John closes this epistle with the statement that he has much more to say, but he chooses to not write them with pen and ink. Note the similarity to the closing of II John, but there is a slight difference. As noted earlier, John closed II John with the terms, *papyrus and ink*.

Here, he closes with *pen and ink*. The term rendered as, *pen*, is κάλαμος (*kalamos*), which refers to a reed-pen, as contrasted with a stylus. A stylus was used when writing (engraving) on a wax tablet, which was a very common means of writing at that time. Here, however, John indicates that he is writing with μέλος (*melos*), which, as noted in II John, was black ink.<sup>87</sup> He obviously was writing on papyrus, as he stated he was doing with when writing II John.

John's friends, at the site from which John was writing, sent their greetings to Gaius.

The expression, *greet the friends by name*, was a common colloquial expression, meaning to *greet one by one*.

It is possible that John suspected that this letter would not be accepted by everyone in the church, especially by those under the influence of Diotrephes. If that is true, he was encouraging Gaius to give a special greeting from John to those in the church who remained John's friends, in spite of the threat of Diotrephes' excommunicating them.

Thus, comes to a close a very short, but lovely epistle.

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<sup>87</sup> In ancient times, black ink was made from boiling Oak galls and then adding a pinch of iron filings. The ink was known as Oak Gall Iron Ink. Oak galls were produced by oak trees when insects inserted larvae under the tree bark. In defense, the tree created a pod, about the size of a ping pong ball, that encased the larvae. When the larvae exited the pod, the remaining pod contained residue and was brittle. This brittle pod was what was used in making ink.

## THE EPISTLE OF JUDE

### THE AUTHOR OF THE EPISTLE

The name of the author of the epistle in the Greek text is, Ἰούδας (*ioudas*) i.e. *Judas*. The Gospels refer to both the betrayer, Judas, and Jesus' half-brother by this name (either the youngest or the next to youngest). In English versions, the Greek name is rendered as both, *Judas* (literal anglicization of the Greek), and *Jude*. The reason for English versions' taking the liberty to render the name as Jude in some passages, rather than as Judas, is the desire to distinguish between the apostle who betrayed Jesus and the one who was half-brother to Jesus and full brother to James (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). Even so, the name of the author, rendered literally in English, is *Judas*.

### THE CANONICITY OF THE EPISTLE

Because Jude quotes or cites two apocryphal books (discussed below), there were some in the early church who questioned its canonicity. However, the majority of early testimonials attest to its canonicity.

**External Evidence:** There are traces of Jude in the following works, which attest well to its use in an early period of the Church. In addition to those listed below, the letter of Athanasius (367 AD) quoted in the introduction to II John lists Jude as the author of the epistle and that it was/is a part of the New Testament canon.

Pseudo-Barnabas (c. AD 70-130)  
 Clement of Rome (c. AD 95-97)  
 Polycarp (c. AD 110-150)  
 The *Didache* (c. AD 120-150)  
 Athenagoras (c. AD 177)  
 Theophilus of Antioch (died AD 183-185)  
 The Muratorian Canon (c. AD 170)  
 Tertullian (c. AD 150-220)  
 Clement of Alexandria (c. AD 150-215)  
 Origen (c. AD 185-254)  
 Synod of Antioch (c. AD 264)  
 Didymus of Alexandria (died, AD 394 or 399)  
 Eusebius (c. 260-340)  
 Jerome (c. AD 346-420)

### JUDE'S USE OF APOCRYPHAL BOOKS

Jude quotes two apocryphal books, *The Book of Enoch*, and *The Assumption of Moses*. It is important for us to be acquainted with these books, their origin, and whether or not there is any authority to be attached to them.

#### The Book of Enoch

*The Book of Enoch* consists of a number of sections:

- The Dream Visions,
- The Parables,
- The Book of the Courses of the Heavenly Luminaries,
- Dream Visions II,
- Conclusion.

I Enoch 6-8, describes angels copulating with women. In Enoch's account, the angels initially were led by Shemihazah, but as the story progresses, Azazel emerges as the ringleader. Two hundred angels take an oath to descend to Mt Hermon, find women to marry and have children with them.

The Hebrew original of the Book of Enoch is now lost.<sup>88</sup> It was translated into Greek, and, with the exception of a few fragments, the Greek version has been lost. It was translated into Ethiopic at about 600 AD. Three copies of the Ethiopic version were discovered in Abyssinia in 1773 by the famed English traveler, James Bruce, who brought them with him on his return to Europe. Since that time, other copies have been discovered in Abyssinia and brought to museums and scholars for study.<sup>89</sup>

Although frequently mentioned in the writings of the church fathers, none of them, with the possible exception of Tertullian considered the book to belong in the canon. To them, it was a non-inspired document, but an interesting piece of literature.<sup>90</sup>

Scholars who have done extensive research on the book state that it was composed over a number of years. According to their view, each section was composed by a different author.

One of the scholars who has done the deepest study of the book is Canon R. H. Charles. According to Charles, the earliest portions of the book probably were written in the pre-Maccabean period (the Maccabean period was 167 BC to 37 AD) and the latest portions were written just before the birth of the Church.<sup>91</sup> Most scholars would agree with Charles general dating.<sup>92</sup> No one, Jewish or Christian authority, considers the book to have been written by Enoch, the seventh from Adam.

### **The Assumption of Moses**

*The Assumption of Moses*, also known as the *Testament of Moses*, is a First Century Jewish apocryphal work.

The only surviving manuscript is a 6th-century Latin translation of the Greek text. The Latin manuscript was discovered by Antonio Ceriani in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana in Milan<sup>93</sup> in the mid-nineteenth century and published by him in 1861. The manuscript was incomplete, and the rest of the text is lost. From references in ancient works, it is evident that the missing text depicted a dispute over the body of Moses, between the archangel Michael and the devil.

In addition to his serious study and research on the Book of Enoch, R. H. Charles also conducted extensive investigation into this document. Charles states that the work is the composite work of two distinct books, *The Testament*, and the *Assumption of Moses*. Scholars who have studied the

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<sup>88</sup> For an extensive discussion of the history of the book, see Emil Schurer, *A History of the Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ* (Peabody, MA, Hendrickson publishers) 2008, Volume III, pages 54-73

<sup>89</sup> George H. Schodde, Ph.D., *The Book of Enoch, Introduction and Notes* (<https://www.holybooks.com/the-book-of-enoach-the-george-h-schodde-translation/>)

<sup>90</sup> Schodde, General Introduction, page 1

<sup>91</sup> *The Book of Enoch, Its Composite Parts and Date* (The Book of Enoch, by R. H. Charles - Complete text online - Global Grey eBooks)

<sup>92</sup> J. B. Mayor, Litt.D., *The General Epistle of Jude*, Volume V, *The Expositors Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Eerdmans Printing Company) 1976, page 234

<sup>93</sup> The Biblioteca Ambrosiana is a historical museum in Milan, Italy, established in 1609 A.D.

extant document, as well as scattered references to it in early documents, would agree with Charles view concerning its origin.<sup>94</sup>

Charles states that *The Testament* would have been written in Hebrew between 7 A.D. and 29 A.D. and the *Assumption*, also would have been written in the same general period. A Greek version of the entire work appeared in the First Century A.D. Only a few fragments of the Greek version have been preserved.

The editing and combining the two documents (*The Assumption* and *The Testament*) into a single book would have been done in the First Century. One manifestation of this is Judas' drawing upon both sections in his epistle: Jude 9 is derived from the *Assumption*, and Jude 16, from *The Testament*.<sup>95</sup>

Because the extant text does not describe any assumption of Moses to heaven, but simply purports to contain secret prophecies Moses revealed to Joshua before passing leadership of the Israelites to him, Charles suggests that the manuscript should be identified with the *Testament of Moses*, rather than *The Assumption of Moses*,. Thus, it would be characterized as a *testament*, meaning the final speech of a dying person.

As stated above, however, frequent references in ancient works indicate that the missing text did depict a dispute between Michael and Satan over the body of Moses, as mentioned in Jude.

### **Quoting Non-canonical, Apocryphal Literature**

Several of the early church Fathers do mention these documents, but with the exception of Tertullian (noted above), none considered them to be authoritative documents that were inspired by the Holy Spirit. Only Tertullian would have admitted either of these documents into the canon and he stated that many disagreed with him.

Quoting non-canonical books does not give them authority. Judas seems to have quoted these documents in the same manner that a modern preacher, in illustrating a point, might quote Shakespeare. For example, if I am illustrating the temptation to commit suicide that some troubled soul might be facing, I might quote Prince Hamlet's soliloquy, *To be, or not to be, that is the question*. Then at the end of the quote he halts in the direction of suicide because of the possible more horrible fate awaiting him in the spirit world, if he did commit suicide.

Or, illustrating a troubled conscience, I might cite Lady McBeth's troubled conscience, which was the result of having been a conspirator in the death of Duncan. Her conscience would not let her sleep, and when she finally did go the sleep, she had a horrible nightmare. Beginning to sleepwalk while having the nightmare, and imagining that there was blood on her hand, she cried out, *Out damned spot! Out I say!*

Should I use such illustrations, I am in no sense, attributing canonicity to Shakespeare.

Also, it is possible for a tradition concerning the origin of a document or saying to be incorrect. For example, the quote frequently attributed to St. Francis, *Preach the Gospel at all times, and if necessary use words*, was not spoken by Francis, even though over and over again, we have heard the statement that he is the one who said them. It appears that the source of this statement

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<sup>94</sup> Schurer, Volume III, pages 54-73

<sup>95</sup> Mayor, pages 235-236

is of modern origin.<sup>96</sup> However, the tradition that St. Francis said these words persists and modern preachers often give the quote, stating that it is a statement of St. Francis.

This seems to be the case with the Book of Enoch. The tradition said that Enoch the seventh from Adam wrote the document, but, as noted above, that isn't true.

### THE DATE OF THE EPISTLE

Given the identity of the author, Judas, the epistle generally is dated between 65-80 A.D. As noted earlier, Matthew 13:55 and Mark 6:3 would lead us to conclude that Judas was the youngest, or the next to the youngest of Jesus half-brothers.

#### The Author Identifies Himself and His Audience – verses 1-2

*Judas, a slave of Jesus Christ, and brother of James, to those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you.*

Judas (Jude) begins the epistle by identifying himself as a slave (δοῦλος – *doulos*) of Jesus Christ. It is unfortunate that most English versions shy away from the term, *slave*.

- KJV, ESV, RSV, & NIV *servant of Jesus Christ*
- NKJV, NAS, & NAU *bondservant of Jesus Christ*

The NET & NLT render the term literally, *slave*.

The term, δοῦλος, simply means, *slave*. The Greek term for *servant* is διάκονος (*diakonos*).

Even though Judas was Jesus' half-brother, he emphasized his self-identification as a *slave of Jesus Christ*. Therefore, it is not surprising that rather than stating that he was Jesus' half-brother, he identified his familial relationship with the well-known James, rather than his familial relationship with Jesus. Jesus' half-brother James was a dominant leader in the mother church at Jerusalem (Acts 12:16-17; 15:12-13; 21:18; Galatians 1:19; 2:9-12).

Concerning the topic of being *called, chosen, etc.*, see pages 8-9 of these notes.

The epistle does not contain the name of any specific church or geographical location of an addressee. Therefore, it is classed as one of the *catholic epistles*, i.e. *universal epistles*.<sup>97</sup>

The fact that Judas was writing to those *kept for Jesus Christ*, indicates that he was writing in response to the fact that some of the *called* had gone astray and thus, incurred the wrath of God – which is the major theme of the epistle.

#### The Reason for Writing the Epistle – verses 3-4

*<sup>3</sup> Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints. <sup>4</sup> For certain persons have crept in unnoticed, those who were long beforehand marked out for this condemnation, ungodly persons who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.*

<sup>96</sup> <https://www.christiantoday.com/article/if-necessary-use-words-what-did-francis-of-assisi-really-say/112365.htm>

<sup>97</sup> The Greek term for *universal*, is καθολικός (*katholikos*). In the Fourth Century, this term began to be applied to the seven epistles which did not contain the name of the specific addressee: James, I & II Peter, I, II, & III John, and Jude.



Judas had begun the epistle with the intention of writing about a topic which was of common interest to all Christians, the salvation that is ours through Christ. However, when news reached him concerning a special danger that was threatening the Gospel, he abandoned his original plan. He felt the pressing need to stir up the faithful to defend the faith against the insidious assaults that had been foretold in ancient prophecies.

Of signal interest is Judas' use of the term, ἅπαξ (*hapax*), *once for all time*. The Gospel truths delivered by the apostles, through the leading and guidance of the Holy Spirit, are unchangeable. Although cultures may have some influence on the externals of the church, the foundational doctrines do not change. The truths of the Gospel and the standards of behaviour that were established by the apostles in the First Century are the unchangeable truths and standards of behaviour for the Church of the Twenty-first Century.

The danger that threatened the Church was (and is) stealthy and appealing to the flesh. The particular evil that Judas was addressing was a heresy that took the Gospel of Free Grace to imply antinomianism – that there were no boundaries and so fleshly lusts were to be given free rein.

Not only that, but this evil danger also denied the one and only Master and Lord of the Church, Jesus Christ.

Throughout the epistle, Judas describes in more detail how these evils manifested themselves.

#### **A Description of the Sin and Consequential Judgment as Seen in the History of God's Judgment on Evil Doers – verses 5-13**

*<sup>5</sup> Now I desire to remind you, though you know all things once for all, that the Lord, after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe. <sup>6</sup> And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day. <sup>7</sup> Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example, in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire. <sup>8</sup> Yet in the same manner these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. <sup>9</sup> But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a railing judgment, but said, "The Lord rebuke you." <sup>10</sup> But these men revile the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed. <sup>11</sup> Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah. <sup>12</sup> These men are those who are hidden reefs in your love feasts when they feast with you without fear, caring for themselves; clouds without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees without fruit, doubly dead, uprooted; <sup>13</sup> wild waves of the sea, casting up their own shame like foam; wandering stars, for whom the black darkness has been reserved forever.*

The judgment awaiting these evildoers is borne witness to by the judgments of the past.

- God showed His mercy in delivering Israel out of Egypt, but that was no guarantee against their destruction in the wilderness when many turned to unbelief.
- The angels were blessed beyond all of God's created beings, but those who proved unfaithful to their trust were imprisoned in darkness, awaiting the judgment day.

- The people of Sodom who lived in a land of great abundance and had been rescued from captivity by Abraham, tragically followed the example of the fallen angels and as a result, their land received fiery judgment.

In spite of these warning examples, the heretics who were finding their way into the Church and influencing unsuspecting individuals, persisted in their wild hallucinations and gave themselves up to the lusts of the flesh. One manifestation of this is their despising all authority and even railing at angelic dignities.

The apocryphal description of Michael, the archangel's dispute over the body of Moses, set the proper example.

Thus, following the model of Cain and Balaam, these evildoers are bringing about their own destruction.

One of the customs that developed in some First Century churches was to have a weekly meal together, which they labelled, *a love feast*. In I Corinthians 11, Paul addressed the problem that developed when the Corinthian Church began to include the Lord's Supper as a part of their Agape (i.e. love feast). Jude addressed a similar situation. He declared that when these heretics whom he was describing were partakers in the love feasts of the local church, they caused a shipwreck of those in the congregation who are spiritually weak.

Their future is as bleak as it can get.

**Continuing to Cite the Apocryphal Account of Enoch, Judas States That the Judgments of the Past on Evildoers, is the Same Ultimate Judgment That Awaits Those Whose Evil He Addresses in this Epistle – verses 14- 15**

*<sup>14</sup> And about these also Enoch, in the seventh generation from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord came with many thousands of His holy ones, <sup>15</sup> to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their ungodly deeds which they have done in an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him."*

Again, a dire prophetic warning, that there is no uncertainty as to the fate of these heretics.

**The Motive Behind The Flattering Words of the Heretics is Addressed – verse 16**

*<sup>16</sup> These are grumblers, finding fault, following after their own lusts; they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage.*

The term rendered, *grumblers*, is γογύζω (*gogudzoh*), which refers to words that a person is afraid to speak out boldly – words spoken under one's breath. This is the same term used in I Corinthians 10:10, describing the murmurings of the Israelites in the wilderness.

These heretics flatter people, seeking to seduce the unsuspecting to fall in with them in their evil ways.

**Judas Turns to the Faithful Members of the Church, Reminding Them of the Words Spoken by the Lord and the Apostles that warned of Such Heretics – verses 17-19**

*<sup>17</sup> But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>18</sup> that they were saying to you, "In the last time there shall be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." <sup>19</sup> These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit.*

The Church had been forewarned that there would be mockers as the Church moved forward into the succeeding years. Several of such warnings were in the portions of the New Testament that preceded or were contemporary to Judas.

- *"I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock;<sup>30</sup> and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. (Acts 20:29-30)*
- *But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,<sup>2</sup> by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron, (I Timothy 4:1-2)*
- *But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come.<sup>2</sup> For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy,<sup>3</sup> unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self-control, brutal, haters of good,<sup>4</sup> treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God;<sup>5</sup> holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. (II Timothy 3:1-5)*
- *For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires;<sup>4</sup> and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths. (II Timothy 4:3-4)*
- *Know this first of all, that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, (II Peter 3:3)*

Since this was a prominent topic in the apostles' writings, we would assume that they had communicated this verbally, when they were establishing or visiting a church.

These mockers were/are devoid of the indwelling Holy Spirit. They are totally driven by worldly lusts and standards of the contemporary world.

### **The Devout are Exhorted to Continue to Grow in their Faith, Looking Forward to The Coming of Christ – verses 20-21**

<sup>20</sup> *But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith; praying in the Holy Spirit;*  
<sup>21</sup> *keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life.*

Praying *in the Holy Spirit* is an important means of growing and remaining faithful. It is important to note that the exhortation is to pray **in** the Holy Spirit, not **with** the Spirit. To pray *with the Spirit*, is to pray in tongues. As Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

*For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful.<sup>15</sup> What is the outcome then? I shall pray with the spirit and I shall pray with the mind also; I shall sing with the spirit and I shall sing with the mind also. (1 Corinthians 14:14-15)*

Similar exhortations are in Ephesians and Romans

*With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, (Ephesians 6:18)*

*And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words;<sup>27</sup> and He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes for the saints according to the will of God. (Romans 8:26-27)*

The principle presented is that whether praying with our native tongue, or praying with a Holy Spirit given unknown tongue, all prayer should be prayed **in** the Holy Spirit.

It is important when we are praying to seek and sense the presence of the Holy Spirit as we begin to speak our prayers to the Father.

Then, the further exhortation, to keep oneself in the love of God – i.e., do not depart from the *truths and practices that the apostles, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, imparted to the Church.*

One way for the Church to remain faithful is to always have an eager anticipation of the time when God rings down the curtain on the history of the world and with a trumpet and shout, Jesus returns for His people.

**Then, a Final Exhortation to do All That They can do to Pull the Doubters out of Clutches of the Devil’s Angels and to seek to restore Them to the Faith – verse 22-23**

*<sup>22</sup> And have mercy on some, who are doubting; <sup>23</sup> save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh.*

Rather than looking down on those who are struggling to keep their faith, Christians are urged to look upon these with pity and to do all that they can to bring these to a solid place in their relationship with Christ.

That does not mean that the faithful are to tolerate the practices that some of these doubters have fallen into. These sinful practices and attitudes are to be hated. This reflects the age-old motto, *love the sinner, but hate the sin.*

**A Closing Blessing and Prayer – verses 24-25**

*<sup>24</sup> Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, <sup>25</sup> to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.*

The description of God the Father and God the Son is a wonderful accolade – as we sincerely seek fellowship with God, through Spirit directed prayer and faithfulness to His goodness, we can anticipate His keeping us from falling into error and stumbling into sin.

What an amazing statement, that in spite of who we are as fallen creatures, we will stand in His Presence, blameless and in great joy. For those who have experienced great hardship in the vicissitudes of life, this is a destination greatly to be desired, and one that is assured.

Then, the closing praise to the King of King and Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ.

*Amen* means *verily*, or *truly*. In other words – with certainty and without doubt.

IN SUMMARY: The important message of this epistle is that the doctrines and practices that were declared by the apostles were declared, **once for all**. They cannot be changed or compromised. That being true, those who ignore, not only the literal truth but the spirit of that truth, taking the freedom to distort things for their personal benefit, have a certain very dark future.