



# 21 LETTERS FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

OPENING THE  
EPISTLES OF THE  
NEW TESTAMENT

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### PLEASE READ THIS

The articles dealing with the various epistles are simple summaries. They have been made as short as possible. The writer has tried to show the subject and the spirit of each letter, but it is not according to the purpose of this book to try to explain everything in all the letters. These summaries will, it is hoped, help the reader to understand the epistles, so that he may then study them for himself, with lasting pleasure.







through several times. Then read about it in this book, looking at the places to which it refers. Then read the epistle again and see if you understand it better. We would like to see Christians everywhere finding for themselves the wonderful spiritual riches which are to be found in these letters of the New Testament.

**Whether you are doing these lessons from a Course Book or directly from the website, you can send in your answers to us using the Exam Form on the website menu.**













































































































































































































King of peace. He atones for our sins in righteousness, and He makes peace for us with God. What the writer says about Melchizedek in verse 3 means only that the story of Melchizedek in Genesis says nothing about his father, mother, birth, or death. The writer takes that like a picture of Christ, who, as Son of God, has neither beginning nor end, but exists forever (as we saw in chapter 1).

Then he showed how great Melchizedek was, 7:4-10. Abraham, the highly honored father of the Jews, paid tithes to him, and Melchizedek blessed Abraham, 7:4-7. Levi, the father of the Old Testament priests, had not yet been born. It was as if he were still in Abraham's body when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. That, says the writer, is like a picture of Levi himself paying the tithes. In all this, he meant that, since God called Christ "a priest after the order of Melchizedek", it was like saying that Christ is greater than Abraham, and greater than the priests of the Old Covenant.

He then showed that, since God spoke of a priesthood of a different kind from that of the Levites, it meant that He was going to make a different covenant with His people, 7:13-15. Since Christ's priesthood is like Melchizedek's, it has nothing to do with the Law, which spoke of the priests descended from Levi, 7:16,17. That meant that God had set aside the old Law. The reason is that the Law could never make people perfect in God's sight, 7:18,19. That is because the sacrifices of the Law could not cleanse people from sin, as we see in chapter 9. Perfection comes to us as God's free gift in Christ, and so we can draw near to God in Him alone. You will notice that "perfection" is used in Hebrews like "justification" in Romans. It does not mean that God makes His people sinless in this life. It means that He blots out all their sins and forgets them, as we shall see later. God made Christ to be High Priest with an oath, according to Psalm 110:4, Hebrews 7:20,21. This shows that Christ brings us a covenant with God which is better than the old one, 7:22. His priesthood never changes (that is, it is never taken by anyone else) because He lives forever. And so He is able to save His people forever, 7:25-28.

In 7:22, the writer had mentioned the subject of the better covenant which Christ has secured for us, that is, better than the Law of Moses. Now he went on to speak more of that covenant.

Christ's service as priest is a better service than that of the Old Testament priests, 8:1-6. He serves in heaven, which is the true tabernacle, where God's glory really dwells. The tabernacle of the Old Covenant (which we read about in Exodus) was only a picture of things in heaven. But Christ has gone into heaven itself for us.

This new covenant rests on better promises, 8:6-13. The Law told what God wanted men to do, and promised them life if they did it. It could not make men want to do God's will. Under it, men always failed. But in Jeremiah 31:31-34, God spoke of a time when He would put His laws into His people's hearts, and when all of them would know Him. That has now been done. For when a man trusts in Christ and is born again, God gives him a new heart which wants to do God's will. That is what is meant by God's Law being in our hearts. Now all who trust in Christ are given eternal life, and they come to know God. See John 17:3. Finally, under this New Covenant, God promises never again to remember the sins of believers, 8:12. The blood of His Son cleanses us from them all forever. See 1 John 1:7.

Chapters 9 and 10 tell how the sacrifice which Christ offered for us is far better than all the sacrifices of the Old Covenant.

Under the Old Covenant, the way into the Most Holy Place, where God lived, was closed. No one but the high priest could go in, and he only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, 9:1-10. See Leviticus 16. That was because the sacrifices of the Old Covenant could never make the one who offered them to be free from sin, 9:9. But our Lord Jesus has offered one sacrifice for sins forever, and He has entered in once for all into the Holy Place. He has gone into God's very presence in heaven, 9:11,12. His blood can and does cleanse us from all sin, 9:13,14. It gives us a clear conscience, since we know that God has forgiven and forgotten our sins, just as He promised.

Christ's death has brought in the New Covenant, just as the blood (or death) of sacrificed animals brought in the Old, 9:13-22. But the things of the Old Covenant, which were only pictures of things in heaven, could be purified by the blood of animals (which was like a picture of Christ's death). Christ has gone into heaven itself; therefore, He had to offer a better sacrifice for us. This He did when He Himself died for us, 9:23,24. That sacrifice He never repeats like the priests of the Old Testament. That is because His one sacrifice puts away our sins forever, 9:25-28. We are not looking for another sacrifice. We are waiting for our Lord Jesus to come for us, not to judge our sins, but to take us to be with Him forever.

Under the Old Covenant, sins were always being remembered by repeated sacrifices. That was because the blood of animals could not really atone for sins, 10:1-4. God had something quite different in mind, as we see in Psalm 40:6-8. What God wanted was made clear when Christ came, 10:5-9. Christ became man and died for us sinners, and now we who trust in Him are sanctified (or saved) by His death forever, 10:10.

The priests of the Old Covenant stood every day and offered the same kind of sacrifices over and over. Those sacrifices could not take away sin, and therefore the priests' work was never done. But Christ offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, and then He sat down at God's right hand, as God said in Psalm 110:1. His work is finished, 10:11-14. He will never again offer Himself for sin. He will rise up again from His seat only when the time comes for Him to take His kingdom and to reign on the earth. The Holy Spirit spoke about this fact of a finished work of atonement. When He says that God will never more remember the sins of believers, it is like saying that there is no more need for another sacrifice for sins, 10:15-18. The work of atonement is forever finished. See John 19:30.

It is most important for Christians to read chapters 9 and 10 very carefully. There are some people today who would tell us that Christ still offers Himself in their churches to atone for people's sins. This is

a very great error and leads many people astray. Note the words “once” (literally, “once for all”) in 9:12 and 10:10; and “once” in 9:26,27,28; “one sacrifice forever” in 10:12; and “one offering” in 10:14. The meaning is very strong and clear for those who have hearts to believe. It should give us great confidence and joy before God.

This section closes with another passage of exhortation and warning, 10:19-39. Seeing that we now can enter into God’s presence boldly through Jesus’ blood, there are three things which we should do, 10:19-24. We should draw near to God, 10:22, we should hold fast what we have believed, 10:23, and we should think of one another and help one another to love and to do good, 10:24. In all of this, we should not forget to meet together and to exhort one another, remembering that Christ is coming for us, 10:25. Again, the writer warned them of the judgment which will come upon those who willfully reject Christ, 10:26-31. And he again reminded them of the joy they showed at the first, and exhorted them to stand fast until Christ returns, 10:32-39.

#### The importance of faith, chapters 11 and 12

He closed chapter 10 by saying that “We are of them that believe (have faith) to the saving of the soul.” Now, in chapter 11, he spoke of the importance of having faith, and in chapter 12 he again exhorted them to stand firm in Christ. If the Hebrews forsook Christ, it would be because of lack of faith. In order to stand fast, they needed to believe God and to trust Him.

First, he told what faith is, 11:1-3. It is the assurance in our hearts that things we hope for are really going to be ours. It is the conviction in our minds that things we cannot yet see are real, 11:1 (see the Revised Version). It is by faith that we believe that God made the world, which we can see, out of things which we cannot see, 11:3. You will notice that, in this chapter, faith is spoken about as believing God’s Word concerning things which we cannot yet see. The Hebrews had not yet seen Christ coming for them, nor the things in heaven. If they had faith, they would keep on believing even though they could not yet

see those things.

Some examples of faith in the Old Testament are then mentioned, from Abel's act in offering the sacrifice which God commanded, to Sarah's trusting in God's promise, 11:4-12. Each of these and those in following verses should be carefully studied. All of those who believed God looked for what was still future and trusted God for it. The writer said that it was as if they were looking for the promised blessings of heaven, which is what the Hebrews should continue to do, 11:13-16. He went on with other examples of those who believed God and trusted Him concerning things which they could not yet see, 11:17-38. Some of them suffered terribly because they trusted in God, but they continued to trust Him even to death. God mentioned their faith in His Word, and He praised them for it. But, even so, they did not receive the things which God had in mind. They did not enjoy the experience of the salvation which God had promised in Christ. These better things have now been given to us, 11:39,40. If they endured so much through faith, how much more should we!

Chapter 12 is all exhortation and warning, growing out of the examples of faith in chapter 11.

First, the writer said, we should follow the examples of those who trusted God in old times. And we should also follow the example of the Lord Jesus Christ. He also walked by faith while He was here in this world. He endured, trusting in God to the end, and is now in heaven at God's right hand, 12:1-3. He is our great Example in the life of faith.

Then he reminded them that God Himself had a purpose in allowing them to suffer. He was treating them as His children. He was seeking to train them to trust in Him and to do His will. Remembering that also should help them, 12:4-13. He warned them again against the danger of apostasy, 12:14-17. "Root of bitterness" in verse 15 means anyone who would lead others to leave Christ. See Deuteronomy 29:18. And he reminded them that ours is a far better part than that of those of the Old Covenant, 12:18-29. We come to God without fear

now, and we have received a kingdom which can never be shaken. It will never pass away. Therefore, we should serve God without being moved ourselves. Verse 29 is another reminder that we cannot play with the things of God.

#### Closing instructions and greetings, chapter 13

Chapter 13 closes the letter with instructions and greetings. General instructions are given in verses 1 to 6, dealing with love, hospitality, sympathy, purity, and freedom from covetousness. He told them to imitate their elders who had followed the Lord, since the Lord would bless them just as He had the elders, 13:7,8. He warned against being bound by Jewish laws about food and told them that we have a food to eat which the Jews cannot eat, 13:8-10. He meant that we benefit by the offering of Jesus for us, and the unsaved know nothing about that. He said that, just as some of the sin-offerings were burned outside the camp of Israel, so Jesus died outside the gate of Jerusalem. This is a picture of His being rejected by the Jews. Believers should still follow Him even though it means that they also would be rejected by their friends, 13:11-14.

We have no permanent city in this world, as the Jews had their Jerusalem. We look for the city of God which has not yet been revealed. The sacrifices which we should offer to God are not animals offered for sin. We should offer sacrifices of worship, that is, praise, confession of His name, 13:15, and giving help to others who are in need, 13:16. Believers should obey their elders in the faith, 13:17.

The writer then asked for prayer, 13:18,19, prayed for them, 13:20,21, and closed with greetings and a blessing, 13:22-25.

## TEST 9 Hebrews

*Choose the correct answer.*

1. God has spoken finally to us
  - a. in Christ.
  - b. through the law.
  - c. through the prophets.
  
2. In this letter we learn that Christ is really
  - a. a great angel.
  - b. a great man.
  - c. the Lord Jehovah.
  
3. The Son of God became the Saviour of men through
  - a. His power.
  - b. His wisdom.
  - c. His suffering.
  
4. The name Joshua means Jehovah is
  - a. Holy.
  - b. Mighty.
  - c. Saviour.
  
5. The two unchangeable things of chapter 6 verse 18 are
  - a. God's holiness and justice.
  - b. God's promise and oath.
  - c. God's love and promise.

*Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.*

6. This letter shows how Melchizedek is a picture of Christ.
7. The priesthood of Melchizedek is the same as the priesthood of the Levites.
8. The sacrifice of Christ is better than all the sacrifices of the Old Testament.
9. We have faith when we only believe in things that we can see.
10. The 'root of bitterness' could cause others to leave Christ.

### **WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

What was the writer to the Hebrews seeking to show to the recipients of his letter?

## JAMES

There were at least three men in the New Testament who were called James. One was John's brother, the son of Zebedee, Matthew 10:2; Tone was the son of Alphaeus, Matthew 10:3; and one was James the brother of our Lord Jesus, Matthew 13:55; Galatians 1:19. These brothers of the Lord were probably children of Joseph and Mary, born after the Lord Himself. While the Lord was still on earth, his brothers did not believe on Him, John 7:3-5. But after He rose from the dead, He appeared to James, 1 Corinthians 15:7. James and his brother Jude then believed on Him, Jude 1. Probably the others did too, but we do not know about them. James became the leader in the church at Jerusalem, Acts 15:13; Galatians 1:18,19; 2:9,12. History tells us that he was called "James the Just" (that is, the Righteous) and that everyone in Jerusalem respected him.

Verse 1 tells us that James wrote to the twelve tribes scattered abroad. That is to say, he wrote to the Jews who were living away from Jerusalem. That means, of course, to Jews who had accepted the Lord Jesus as the Christ. Most of these Jewish Christians were poor and were suffering because of the oppressions of rich men, 1:2; 2:6,7; 5:1-8. Some of them were grumbling and complaining and acting impatiently, 1:4,10-20; 5:7. Some of them also spoke much about "religion," but were not doing good works, 1:26,27; 2:14-26. And some were seeking for wealth on earth rather than for spiritual riches, 4:1-4,13-17. So James wrote to show them how necessary it is for a Christian to act like a Christian, and not just to talk

like one. This letter is valuable for all of us today. For there are still many people who forget that God wants His people to do what is good, and not just to go to meetings and to sing hymns!

We may outline this letter thus:

1. Greeting, 1:1
2. Trials, 1:2-12
  - a. The right attitude, 1:2-4
  - b. How to get wisdom, 1:5-8
  - c. The poor and the rich, 1:9-11
  - d. The result of trial, 1:12
3. Temptation and righteousness, 1:13-27
  - a. Temptation is from our own hearts, not from God, 1:13-18
  - b. We should avoid anger, 1:19,20
  - c. God wants goodness, not just talk, 1:26,27
4. The sin of treating some differently from others, 2:1-13
  - a. Their wrong attitude, 2:1-5
  - b. The rich oppress and oppose, 2:6,7
  - c. Partiality breaks God's laws, 2:8-12
  - d. God will treat us as we treat others, 2:13
5. Faith and works, 2:14-26
  - a. Words alone are useless, 2:14-20
  - b. Examples of faith-works, 2:21-25
  - c. Conclusion, 2:26
6. The tongue, chapter 3
  - a. The responsibility of teaching, 3:1,2
  - b. The power of the tongue, 3:3-6
  - c. The tongue is unruly, 3:7,8
  - d. The tongue is not consistent, 3:9-12
  - e. True wisdom, 3:13-18
7. Quarrels and worldliness, chapter 4
  - a. Where quarrels come from, 4:1-10
  - b. On speaking against one another, 4:11,12
  - c. On making plans apart from God's will, 4:13-17

8. Oppression, 5:1-11
  - a. The rich oppressors, 5:1-6
  - b. The believers who were oppressed, 5:7-11
9. Swearing, 5:12
10. Suffering, sickness, and prayer, 5:13-18
11. Restoring those who stray, 5:19,20

#### Trials, 1:2-12

After his greeting in 1:1, James began at once to speak of the things he had in mind, and mentioned the trials which they were going through, 1:2-12. You will notice that, in this chapter, James used the word “temptation” in two ways. In this part, he spoke of difficult, or hard, experiences. In 1:13-15, he spoke of temptations to sin.

Trials should cause them joy, not sorrow. That is because trials teach people how to be patient, or to stand firm, 1:2-4. Believers should not get impatient when they see troubles. Otherwise, the troubles will not be able to do their work in their souls. Compare Romans 5:3 and 2 Corinthians 12:9,10.

If we lack wisdom, we can receive it in answer to prayer in faith, 1:5-8. Wisdom does not mean being wise in the way that some people in the world think they are wise. It means fearing God and doing His will. See Job 28:28.

The poor man who is suffering can rejoice that God has made him to be His son, and so has exalted him. But the rich man should remember that he will soon pass away and leave all his riches behind, 1:9-11.

If we go through trials according to God’s will, they will result in our receiving a reward, 1:12. Compare 2 Corinthians 4:17.

#### Temptations and righteousness, 1:13-27

No man should ever say that it is God who tempts him to sin, 1:13-18. God has nothing to do with sin at all, 1:13. Temptations to sin come from our own evil hearts, 1:14,15. It is good to remember this. Some

people try to excuse themselves for sin by blaming God; others blame Satan. Both are wrong. We should blame ourselves, and know that our evil deeds show that we have evil hearts. God does not change, 1:16,17. He brought us to life, and He will not now tempt us to sin, which is what brought death at first, 1:18.

We should avoid anger, for our anger does not do God's work, 1:19,20. Anger is sin, and sin never does anything for God.

We should reject all evil and obey God's Word, 1:21-25. God does not want men just to listen to His Word. He wants them to obey Him when He speaks. His Word shows us where we are wrong in order that we may put things right by His help.

It is not enough just to think that we are religious. God wants His people to be kind and helpful to others and to avoid the world's evil things. He does not want them just to talk, 1:26,27.

The sin of treating some differently from others, 2:1-13

James then spoke of the sin of giving honor to people just because they are rich. Some of the Jewish believers were showing special favor to rich people who might come to their meetings, 2:1-4. God has chosen the poor rather than the rich, 2:5. Compare 1 Corinthians 1:26,27.

It was the rich people who were oppressing the believers and who were speaking against the Lord Jesus, 2:6,7. Just because a man is rich is therefore no reason for showing him special favor. And just because a man is poor is no reason for looking down on him.

Such partiality breaks God's Law, 2:8-12. He has told us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves, 2:8. To show favor to some and not to others breaks His Law just as much as killing people would, 2:9-12. It means that we love their money but do not love them.

God will treat us as we treat others, 2:13. Compare Matthew 7:1-3. If you are hard on others, God will deal the same way with you. If you are merciful to others, God will deal gently with you. To reject a man just because he is poor is being harsh, not kind.

## Faith and works, 2:14-26

He then dealt with the matter of faith and works. Some people have found difficulty in seeing how these words agree with the words of Paul in Romans. Paul told us that a man is justified (declared righteous) by God because of his faith, and not because of his works. James tells us that a man is justified by his works, and not by his faith alone. But there is no contradiction. Paul and James are not speaking of the same things. Paul tells us that a man cannot be saved by his own good works, but only by trusting in the Lord Jesus Christ. James tells us trusting in Christ does not mean just believing about the Lord Jesus Christ. Real faith is a strong belief which makes a man do something about it. It is the same thing which Paul calls "obedience of (or to) faith" in Romans 1:5. Now let us see what James said.

In the first place, he said, words alone are useless, 2:14-20. Merely to say that we believe, when we show no obedience to God, cannot save us, 2:14. It would not help to say to a person who was in need, "May your needs be supplied." That would not show that we really felt sorry for him. If we do feel sorry for him, we will do something to help him. And so a faith which only says, "I believe," and does not do anything about it, is a dead faith. Such a faith cannot help us. If we really believe that Jesus died for us and rose again to save us, then we will accept Him as our Lord. Otherwise our "faith" is an empty thing. See Philippians 2:9-11. Real faith results in salvation. And salvation changes the whole life and produces good works.

He then gave two examples of faith-works, that is, works which were the result and proof of true faith, 2:21-25. Abraham really trusted in God. Therefore, when God told him to offer up his son, he obeyed Him. See Hebrews 11:17. God praised him for his act of obedience, and his faith was proved by it. His faith was shown to be a true faith by what he did, 2:21-24. Rahab also did not only believe in her mind that God was going to give the land Canaan to Israel. She did something about it. She put herself on the side of the Israelites and asked to be saved,

2:24. So one who really believes what God has said will ask God to save him. He will turn his back on the world and will yield to Jesus Christ as Lord. The result of being saved by faith will be a life of obedience to God. See Ephesians 2:8-10, and read Hebrews 11 again.

James' conclusion is that faith without works is dead, 2:26. If you say, "I believe," but are not obeying God, you are just deceiving yourself. People who go to meetings and "worship God" on Sunday morning, and then serve the devil and live for themselves all the rest of the week, are not really believers at all. They are still on the way to hell.

### The tongue, chapter 3

In chapter 3, James spoke about the tongue. First, he warned the believers not to be anxious to become teachers or preachers, 3:1,2. The word masters is an old English word which means "teachers". Teaching God's Word is a great responsibility. If we teach wrong things, we shall have to answer to God for it. And all of us say things we should not. No one should become a teacher unless he is called by God. Then, of course, he should obey and trust in Him.

From that thought, he went on to talk about the power of the tongue, 3:3-6. It is a little thing in the body, but it talks great things. And it causes much trouble. It is like a little fire, which can start a very big fire.

It is unruly, that is, no man can make it obey, 3:4-8. We know, of course, that God can control it through Christ. But we need to realize that we cannot make our tongues obey, and so must trust Him to do it.

The tongue is not consistent, that is, it does not always say the same kind of things, 3:9-12. One minute it praises God, and the next minute it curses men. That shows that it is full of deceit.

Behind the tongue, there is the attitude of the heart, 3:13-18. If we have strife or fighting in our hearts, it is bound to come out of our mouths. We should seek the wisdom which God gives. This is beautifully pictured in verse 17. Study this whole passage carefully, and see what your own attitude is. Ask God that it may be like verse 17. (Some-

one has said that, when James wrote this passage on wisdom, he may have been thinking of how the Lord Jesus had lived in their home. He is the true “wisdom which comes from above”.)

#### Quarrels and worldliness, 4:1-17

Chapter 4 speaks of quarrels and worldliness. Worldliness means following the world’s pleasures and seeking its wealth.

Quarrels always come from selfish desires to possess things we do not own. And they come from being taken up with the things of the world, 4:1-10. If we would pray to God that He would give us what we need according to His will, and then trust in Him, we would never quarrel and fight with one another. Worldliness is like adultery, 4:4. That is because we who trust in Christ are as if we were married to God. The world hates God. So we should have nothing to do with its pleasures and its foolishness. Worldliness is of the devil, 4:7. In these days when so many Christians have fallen in love with the things of the world, we should remember this and should refuse to obey Satan.

We should not speak against one another, 4:11,12. It is not enough not to fight with one another, but we should also not talk about one another in a wrong way.

In all our plans, we should first think what God may want us to do, 4:13-17. Those who try to get rich in this world often make their plans for business without thinking of God’s will for them. This is wrong, for we live only by God’s permission. And we will not live forever down here. Actually, our life on earth is short. So we should live for God and not for ourselves.

#### Oppression, 5:1-11

Then James spoke of oppression, that is, of some who were causing others to suffer by not doing what was right for them. First, he warned the rich men who were oppressing others, 5:1-6. They were not paying the people who worked for them, but were just trying to get richer and richer. They were thinking only of themselves and only of this life. He

warned them that they would be judged for their evil deeds.

Then he comforted those who were being oppressed, 5:7-11. The Lord is coming, and He will reward those who endure, as he also said in 1:12. The Lord really pities His people who have to suffer now, and when He comes He will show His love to them, as He did to Job when Job's trials were ended.

#### Swearing, 5:12

Believers should not swear. They should say only "Yes" or "No". James was talking about the way some people swear in conversation, to try to make people believe they are telling the truth. Compare Matthew 5:34-37. We should always speak only what is true so that we may be believed without swearing.

#### Suffering, sickness, and prayer, 5:13-18

He gave advice to those who are suffering, that they should pray, and to those who are happy, that they should sing praises to God, 5:13. The sick are told what to do in verses 14 and 15. Note that James did not say anything about some man with a gift of healing. He spoke only of praying for the sick. In verse 16, we are told to confess our sins to one another and to pray for one another. This is because sometimes sickness is the result of sin, though it is not always so. Note that the writer did not say that we should confess our sins to a "priest". He only said that, if our consciences trouble us, we should tell our fellow-believers about it, and ask them to pray for us. He then spoke of the great power of prayer, 5:16-18.

#### Restoring those who stray, 5:19, 20

James closed the letter by showing the good which comes from restoring those who wander from the truth, 5:19,20. When a sinner is converted to Christ, his soul is saved, and his sins are "hid", or "covered". God blots them out and forgets about them. So the work of bringing people to Christ is a very great work indeed.

## TEST 10 James

*Choose the correct answer.*

1. James became the leader of the church in
  - a. Samaria.
  - b. Antioch.
  - c. Jerusalem.
  
2. Wisdom means
  - a. being wise in the things of the world.
  - b. fearing God and doing His will.
  - c. knowing all things.
  
3. When we sin we should blame
  - a. ourselves.
  - b. God.
  - c. Satan.
  
4. God wants us to
  - a. just listen to His Word.
  - b. just read His Word.
  - c. obey His Word.
  
5. A man is justified by God because of his
  - a. good works.
  - b. knowledge.
  - c. faith.

*Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.*

6. It is a good thing to show special favour to rich people.
7. When we obey God we show true faith.
8. It is a great responsibility to teach God's Word.
9. It is a good thing for a Christian to love the things of this world.
10. The Lord will reward those who endure in the faith.

### **WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

What does James mean when he says 'faith without works is dead'?  
Is your faith 'alive'?

## 1 PETER

This letter was written by the apostle Peter while he was in the city of Babylon. See 5:13. He wrote it to the churches of believers in Asia Minor, as we see in 1:1. In that verse he used the term the strangers scattered, or sojourners of the dispersion (see Revised Version). This usually meant the Jews scattered through the nations, as we saw in James 1:1. But it seems clear that in this letter Peter was writing to Christians who were mostly Gentiles. The places mentioned were places where Paul had preached the gospel. And in 4:3 we see that those to whom Peter wrote had followed Gentile things before their conversion. He called them strangers scattered because their real homeland is now heaven, as we shall see.

Silas was visiting Peter when this letter was written, and he took the letter to the churches. See 5:12, where Silvanus is just another way of writing Silas. You will remember that Silas had been Paul's companion for a long time in his work. See Acts 15:40; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1. and read the story in Acts. Some people think that, when Peter wrote this letter, Paul was either in prison or had already been killed.

Silas probably had told Peter how the Christians in those lands were suffering persecution. Many of them were slaves and were suffering at the hands of cruel masters, 2:18-20. Some of them were being

falsely accused of doing wrong, 3:16, and were being spoken against because they were Christians, 4:14. Peter was concerned lest they should become discouraged. So he wrote to remind them of the glory which is to come to those who know Christ. He knew that if they kept on looking for that glory, they would be filled with joy, and would not get discouraged in their sufferings.

The theme of the letter is thus Suffering and Glory. You will note that suffering is mentioned many times. See 1:6,7; 2:19-21, 23; 3:14,17,18; 4:1,12,13,16,19; 5:10. Glory is mentioned several times too, in 1:7,8,11,21,24; 4:13; 5:1,4,10.

In this letter you will also find Christ referred to as the Great Example of patient suffering, the One whom they and we should imitate. See 1:11; 2:21; 3:18; 4:1.

We may outline this letter thus:

1. Greeting, 1:1,2
2. The coming glory, 1:3-12
  - a. The explanation of the hope, 1:3-5
  - b. The experience of the hope, 1:6-9
  - c. The excellence of the hope, 1:10-12
3. Their conduct in view of the glory, 1:13 - 5:11
  - a. Regarding themselves, 1:13 - 2:10
  - b. Regarding others, 2:11 - 4:6
  - c. Regarding one another, 4:7 - 5:11
4. Conclusion, 5:12-14

Greeting, 1:1,2

As we have noticed, Peter spoke to them in his first words reminding them that they are like foreigners in the lands where they live. They have been chosen by God to be His own, and their home is now in another place. As he went on to show, this home is in heaven, and some day they will be in that land where all is glory. Here again we have, in a few words, a summary of what the writer has in mind to write about. It is good for us, too, to remember that earth is no longer our homeland.

## The coming glory, 1:3-12

First, Peter explained to them what their hope is like, 1:3-5. It is a living hope, 1:3. It is not a dead or worthless hope. It has to do with things which are real and which we will some day really see. The proof is in the fact that Christ rose from the dead. That is the ground of our hope. Our inheritance is incorruptible (that is, it will never pass away), undefiled (not stained by sin, as the things of earth are), and does not fade (it will never lose its first joy or its beauty). It is being kept in heaven for believers, 1:4. Meanwhile, the believers themselves are being kept for it by God's power, looking toward a salvation which is all ready to be revealed to them, 1:5.

You will note in the New Testament that salvation is spoken of in three ways. The Lord has already saved us, Titus 3:5. That is to say, He has already forgiven us all our sins, Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 2:13, and has already given us eternal life, 1 John 5:11. Then the Lord is saving us now, in making us more like Christ from day to day, 1 Corinthians 1:18 in the Revised Version; 2 Corinthians 3:18. And, as we see in this verse, we are yet to be saved. This will be when our Lord Jesus comes in glory and changes us to be just like Him in glory (see also Philippians 3:21).

Peter then spoke of the present experience of this hope, 1:6-9. The thought of it gives great joy, even in the midst of trials, 1:6. The reason why hard things are sent is to make faith more perfect. Then, at Christ's coming, believers may have more praise and honor from God, 1:7. They love Christ and rejoice greatly in Him, even though they have not yet seen Him, 1:8. And their faith in Him thus gives them an experience of salvation even now. The believer's home is in heaven, but he already enjoys a bit of heaven even here on the earth.

He showed them how excellent this hope is which they have in Christ, 1:10-12. The prophets who spoke of this salvation in old times were fascinated by it. After the Spirit of God had spoken about it through them, the prophets wanted to know more about it. But they were told that

it was not for them to know more about it then. It was for others who were still to come. This wonderful salvation has now been preached to us! Even the angels marvel when they see this salvation which we have in Christ, and they would like to know more about it.

Their conduct in view of the glory, 1:13 - 5:11

We now come to what takes up most of Peter's letter. He wrote of how they should act seeing that they have such a glorious hope in Christ, 1:13 - 5:11.

First, as regards themselves, 1:13 - 2:10. Seeing that they have such a hope, they should always remember it and should keep on looking for its appearing with all their hearts, 1:13. Girding up the loins of your mind means setting their minds on it. A man with a long cloth must "gird up" the cloth so that he may work well. It is a picture of getting ready to do a thing with all one's might. They should walk in holiness, avoiding evil things, so as to be like God who has called them, 1:14-16. They should remember that God will someday judge their works to see if they have earned the reward which He wants to give them. And they should remember the great price which was given by God to save them, 1:17-21. Such a great price paid for them should make them determine to act now according to God's will. Since they have all been born of God and of His Word, they should love one another very much, 1:22,23. And they should remember the great mercy and honor which God has shown them in making them to be His worshipers. They should live so as to praise Him in all that they do, 2:1-10.

Then he showed how they should act toward others, 2:11 - 4:6. In this part, the great thought is that of testimony to those who are not Christians. Christians should always remember to act so as to be good witnesses for Christ. They should avoid obeying evil desires, for their own sake, and should live good lives so as to draw others to the Lord, 2:11,12. They should obey those who rule the land and should give fitting honor to all men, 2:13-17. Slaves should obey their masters.

They should suffer patiently when punished for things they did not do. In this, they should follow the example set by Christ, 2:18-25. He also suffered for sins He did not commit (our sins), but He did not lose His patience and did not use bad words to those who made Him suffer. Wives should obey their husbands, and should dress carefully, not like women of the world who do not know Christ, 3:1-6. Husbands should treat their wives with love and consideration, 3:7. All believers should live together in love and kindness, and should not think of “getting even” with others, 3:8-12. All of them should do good, and, if in spite of that they still are made to suffer, they should take it quietly. This is so that their enemies may see their good lives and feel ashamed. In all of this, they have an example in Christ, who suffered though He did no wrong, and is now exalted in glory, 3:13-22. They should look on their sufferings not as a reason for sinning but as a reason for being holy, 4:1-6. Here again, Christ is an example for them, for He suffered for our sins, but now lives in holiness.

Finally, he showed how they should act toward one another as believers, 4:7 - 5:11. They should love one another and serve one another, 4:7-10, and seek to glorify God in their speaking, 4:11. They should rejoice when they suffer as Christians, but they should never do wrong so as to have to suffer for evil, 4:12-19. Elders should keep on caring for their fellow-believers, not for pay, but for love. Christ will repay them when He comes, 5:1-4. Believers should serve one another, not all trying to be masters, 5:5,6. They should keep trusting in God, 5:7, and should be on their guard lest Satan move them away from their faith, 5:8,9. Finally, Peter commended them to God, to whom he gave praise, 5:10,11.

He closed the letter in 5:12-14, mentioning Silas, the church in Babylon, and Mark. This was probably the Mark of whom we read in Acts, who also wrote the Gospel of Mark.

## 2 PETER

The first verse of this letter does not tell us to whom it was sent. But 3:1 would seem to show that it was probably sent to the same places as the first letter. The purpose of it, however, is different. In the first letter, Peter warned the Christians not to be moved away from the faith by the trials they were going through. In his second letter, he warned them not to be deceived by false teachers. See 3:17. The words in 2:1 sound as if those false teachers were going to appear at some future time. However, it is probable that they were already working. We have seen how false teachers have troubled Christians ever since the beginning. We saw the same thing in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. There, Paul wrote of some wrong-doers as if they were still to come, and then said, "From such turn away." Probably such teachers were already there, and also others like them were still to come. We see many such teachers even today. This letter was written only a short time before Peter was killed. See 1:14.

As we read this letter, we see that those false teachers were teaching two things. First, they were teaching that it was quite all right for a Christian to do bad things. See 2:10,13,14,18-22. Then, they were denying that the Lord Jesus would come again. See 3:3,4. It is these two things against which Peter writes. And since the same things are being said by some people today, we should study this letter well.

We can outline the letter thus:

1. Greeting, 1:1,2
2. The truth of the gospel, 1:3-21
  - a. Godliness is the end in view of salvation, 1:3-11
  - b. The coming again of Christ is sure, 1:12-21
3. The ungodliness of false teachers, chapter 2
  - a. Their behavior, 2:1-3
  - b. Judgment and deliverance, 2:4-9
  - c. Their character and punishment, 2:10-22
4. Their denial of the Lord's coming, chapter 3
  - a. Their challenge, 3:1-4
  - b. The certainty of judgment, 3:5-10
  - c. How believers should act, 3:11-18

#### Greeting, 1:1,2

In his greeting, Peter again used words which show what he had in mind to write about. He wrote to those who have received a faith like his through the righteousness of God. The false teachers were forgetting that God saves men in righteousness and for righteousness. Peter wanted to make that clear from the first.. Then, in verse 2, he prayed that grace and peace may be multiplied to them through the knowledge of God. Those who teach that Christians may live bad lives do not know God at all.

#### The truth of the gospel, 1:3-21

In the rest of chapter 1, Peter showed the teaching of the gospel concerning the two things those false teachers were saying.

First, he showed that the purpose of God in saving us is to make us godly people, that is, people who love God and who do the things which He loves, 1:3-11. The God who saved us has given us all we need so that we may now live godly lives, by His power. He has saved us out of the wickedness of the world so that we may now be like Him, 1:3,4. Since that is so, we on our part should keep on going forward in

knowledge and in goodness, 1:5-7.

If we keep on growing in godliness, several things will come as a result, 1:8-11. First, our knowledge of Christ will not be an empty thing, 1:8. That is, we will be pleasing to God in our lives, and will bring glory to Him. Second, we will have assurance that we are saved, 1:10. The man who is not doing God's will has no right to say that he belongs to Him. Pleasing God by good works shows that we have eternal life, as we shall see in 1 John. Third, if we keep on going forward, we shall never stumble, 1:10. Christians fall only when they grow careless. Fourth, we shall have a glad welcome when we go to heaven. Then the Lord Jesus will say to us, "You have done well," 1:11 (compare Matthew 25:23). And one thing is said about the one who does not keep going on. He is blind and has forgotten that when God saved him He purified him from his sins, 1:9.

The second thing he showed them is that Christ's coming again is sure, 1:12-21. Since Peter's death was near, he wanted to remind them of these things in writing, 1:12-15. When the apostles spoke of the coming again of Christ in power and glory, they were not just making things up. They themselves had actually seen that glory when they were with Him on the mountain, 1:16-18. See Matthew 17:1-8. That vision was like a picture of the second coming of Christ. Not only so, but there was the Word which God spoke long ago through the prophets, 1:19-21. They would do well to read God's Word because it was worthy of being believed. God had already fulfilled some of the prophecies in Christ's first coming. The rest would surely be fulfilled in His second coming. But the true interpretation of those prophecies could be had only by depending on the Holy Spirit, who gave them at first.

#### The ungodliness of false teachers, chapter 2

In chapter 2, Peter went on to speak of the ungodliness of the false teachers. As we have seen, he had that in mind when he wrote the first part of chapter 1, but he did not mention it. Now he mentioned it clearly.

He wrote about the behavior of the false teachers in 2:1-3. They would teach many false things, even denying the fact that Christ is God, 2:1. Many would follow their evil doings (as we see them doing today), and their bad lives would cause many people to say that Christianity was not true, 2:2. And they would be working to get money out of those whom they deceived, 2:3. Their end would be to be destroyed and condemned.

In 2:4-9, he showed that God judges ungodly people, and how He delivers His own. There were the angels who sinned when Satan fell. They were judged. The flood destroyed the old world, but Noah was delivered, 2:5 (compare Genesis 6 to 8). Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, but Lot Was delivered, 2:5-8 (compare Genesis 19:1-25). That shows how God keeps ungodly people for judgment, and keeps and delivers from that judgment those who love Him, 2:9. So He will judge those false teachers, even though they may not know or believe it.

Then he mentioned the character of those false teachers and their final end, 2:10-22. They love unclean things. They despise those who govern the lands. They are proud and self-willed. They do not know what they are talking about, 2:10-12. They shall entirely perish. They love drinking and adultery. They cannot stop sinning. They are covetous, like Balaam, and shall be punished for it, 2:13-16 (see Numbers 22 to 24). They are like things which promise to give help, but cannot really help anyone. They shall dwell in eternal darkness, 2:17. They promise people liberty (that is, liberty to sin). But they are really bringing people into slavery, 2:18,19 (compare John 8:34). And those who follow them bring judgment on themselves and show that they are not really the Lord's, 2:20-22. This chapter is a very strong word against false teachers of this kind. It shows us what God thinks of such wicked men, and it should make us to beware of them.

### Their denial of the Lord's coming, chapter 3

Peter next spoke of their denial of the Lord's coming. As we have seen, he had that in mind when he wrote the second part of chapter 1,

but he did not mention it. Now he mentions it clearly. People who love evil things do not like the thought of Christ coming again.

The challenge of the false teachers is referred to in 3:1-4, after an exhortation. Peter first told the believers to hold fast the words of the prophets and apostles, who spoke about the Lord's coming. These scoffers ridiculed the idea that Christ would come again. They said, "If He is going to come, why has He not come already?"

So Peter reminded the believers how God once judged the world, and that He will do it again, 3:5-10. Once He destroyed the world by a flood. That shows that He does do things out of the ordinary when He wishes to. He will finally destroy the world by fire, 3:5-7,10. The reason why the Lord has not yet come for His people is that He does not want to leave people to perish. He wants them to repent and to trust in Christ and to be saved, 3:8,9. Verse 8 means that time means nothing to God. It seems to Christians that they have to wait a long time for Christ, but it does not seem long to God. He lives in eternity. To Him there is no difference between one day and a thousand years.

How should believers act then, 3:11-18? Since they know that all the things they see will finally be destroyed, they should walk in holiness and live godly lives, 3:11. They are looking for a new Heaven and a new earth, where there will be no more sin. Therefore, they should desire that when Christ does come He may find them living in peace, and not sinning, 3:14. They should be patient, remembering the Lord has delayed the day of judging wicked men so as to save more people, 3:15. They should be careful not to be deceived by those wicked men, 3:17. And they should go on growing in grace, becoming more and more like Christ and knowing Him better and better, 3:18. These words are all for us too.

## TEST 11 1 & 2 Peter

*Choose the correct answer.*

1. Peter wrote his first letter while in the city of
  - a. Jerusalem.
  - b. Rome.
  - c. Babylon.
  
2. The theme of the first letter is
  - a. suffering and grace.
  - b. suffering and glory.
  - c. faithfulness and glory.
  
3. Our inheritance is incorruptible. This means that
  - a. it will never pass away.
  - b. it is not stained by sin.
  - c. it will never lose its beauty.
  
4. In the New Testament salvation is spoken of
  - a. in only one way.
  - b. in two ways.
  - c. in three ways.
  
5. Christians should look on their suffering as a reason for
  - a. sinning.
  - b. sadness.
  - c. being holy.

*Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.*

6. The purpose of God in saving us is to make us godly people.
7. Peter had already seen the glory of the Lord.
8. God judged the angels who sinned when Satan fell.
9. Lot was destroyed along with Sodom and Gomorrah.
10. People who love evil things love the thought of Christ's return.

### **WHAT DO YOU SAY?**

How did Peter encourage believers who were suffering for their faith?  
Is this relevant for today?

## 1 JOHN

This letter was written by the apostle John. He seems to have lived in Ephesus and to have written from there. History tells us that John used to preach and to teach in the churches in that district where Ephesus was.

This letter is very much misunderstood. It is not always explained in a right way. Some people think that it teaches that Christians can be perfect and sinless in this life. But that is because they do not really understand what John wanted to say.

In order that we may understand this letter, we must know why it was written. As we have seen, many false teachers appeared in the time of the early Church. John was thinking of some of those false teachers when he wrote this letter. They were teaching two wrong things. In the first place, they taught that a Christian could do sinful things. Some wicked men teach that way today, as we know. In the second place, they taught a wrong thing about the Lord Jesus Christ. They said that Jesus was a man, but that Christ was a spiritual being who came on Jesus when He was baptized. They said that the Christ remained in Jesus up until He was about to be crucified, and then left Him and went back to heaven. Thus, they said, it was Jesus who died, but Christ did not die. They taught that because they thought that God was too spiritual to have any real contact with the world and with suffering and

death. But their teaching was not the truth which God had revealed through the apostles. Therefore, John wrote this letter to show how wrong they were. He reminded the Christians of the teaching which they heard from the first. And he told them to hold that teaching firmly. He showed them that Eternal Life, which was seen in the Lord Jesus Christ, is a righteous life. Whoever has that Life will live a pure and righteous life on the earth, just as Christ did. Anyone who says that he is a Christian, and who does evil things, is a liar, 2:4. There are many such liars in the world today!

This letter, then, tells us how we may know whether a person is telling the truth when he says, "I have life." Note how many times John said, "Hereby we know": 2:3,5; 3:14,16,19,24; 4:2,6,13; 5:2. Note also the number of times he said "If we say" and the way he spoke of those who lie.

John's first letter was not sent to any one church, but to many, to warn them against false teachings.

It is not easy to outline this letter. We may suggest an outline like this:

1. The thing John wrote about, 1:1-7
  - a. The Life which he saw, 1:1,2
  - b. His reason for writing, 1:3,4
  - c. The message of the Life, 1:5-7
2. The proof of eternal life, 1:8 - 2:29
  - a. Confession of sin, 1:8-10
  - b. Doing righteousness, 2:1-6
  - c. Loving other believers, 2:7-11  
(Those to whom he writes, 2:12-14)
  - d. Not loving the world, 2:15-17
  - e. Holding to the truth, 2:18-29
3. The proof that we belong to God, 3:1 - 4:6
  - a. Doing righteousness, 3:1-10
  - b. Loving other believers, 3:10-24
  - c. Holding to the truth, 3:24 - 4:6

4. Importance of love, righteousness, and truth, 4:7 - 5:12
  - a. Love, 4:7-21
  - b. Righteousness, 5:1-5
  - c. Truth, 5:6-12
5. Conclusion, 5:13-21
  - a. John's reason for writing, 5:13-17
  - b. The things which we know, 5:18-21

The thing John wrote about, 1:1-7

He spoke first of how he himself, with other apostles, had seen the Eternal Life when it was manifested, 1:1,2. He was going to tell them about the Life which had been from the beginning, long before those false teachers began to deceive people. The false teachers were teaching out of their own imaginations. But John knew what he was writing about. He had heard, seen, gazed on, and even touched the Life. He was speaking about the Lord Jesus, of course, for He is the Life which has always been with the Father. And He was seen by men when He came into the world. Eternal Life is God's life, for He alone lives forever. Christ is God. When He came into the world it was Eternal Life which came, and which was seen by John. So John was an eye-witness. Christians should heed what he wrote.

John had three reasons for writing, and he mentioned one of them here, 1:3,4. He wanted the believers to have fellowship with him in his fellowship with God. That would cause them to know full joy. In order to have fellowship with God, we must know what His will is and obey it. And only when we have fellowship with Him will we know what real joy is. (The other two reasons why John wrote are given in 2:1 and 5:13.)

Then he told them what the message of the Life was, 1:5-7. As John watched the pure life of the Lord Jesus and listened to His words, he saw that God was Light. That is to say, he saw that God, who had revealed Himself in His Son, is the God of purest righteousness and love. There is no darkness in Him. That is to say, there is nothing evil

in God. John saw that, if we want to have fellowship with God, we must be like Him and must walk in the light of His pure righteousness. If we say we have fellowship with Him (and that is what eternal life is), but walk in darkness and do evil, we are just lying. If we walk in the light and do His will, then the blood of Christ cleanses us from all that would hinder fellowship with Him. These thoughts are deep, but they are very important. We should think much on them until they go down into our very hearts.

The proof of eternal life, 1:8 - 2:29

He then showed how the message of the Life applies to us now. Eternal Life will be seen in the one who has it. Where it cannot be seen, the person does not have it.

In the first place, he who has eternal life and walks in the light will confess his sin and his sins, 1:8-10. Anyone who says that he has not sinned is a liar. The first thing necessary to walking with God is to tell the truth about ourselves. We must confess that we are sinners, and also that our hearts and our acts are sinful.

But that does not mean that we shall do evil on purpose. For John wanted believers to know what Life was so that they should not sin, 2:1-6. (This is his second reason for writing.) If any believer should stumble and sin, then Christ will be his advocate before God. And His death is the atonement for our sins. But we can know that we know God only if we keep His Word, 2:3. This is the second proof of life. If we say that we know Him, but do not obey His Word, then we are telling a lie, 2:4. We show that we love God when we obey Him. That is how we know we are in Him, 2:5. Any man who says that he is in God should live a righteous life, as Christ did when He was on the earth, 2:6.

In the third place, he who has eternal life will love other believers, 2:7-11. This is an old commandment, but it is also new. Those who are in Christ have been made to be new people (that is, "born again"), 2:7,8. Any one who says that he is in the light of God, and hates his brother, is really in darkness. It is the one who loves other believers

who is really in the light, 2:9-11.

Verses 12 to 14 are all by themselves, describing those to whom John was writing, as fathers, young men, and little children. He was not speaking of their ages. The fathers are those who are experienced in the things of Christ. The young men are those who have found how to be strong in Him. And the little children may mean those who have recently trusted Christ, or he may call all believers little children, as he does in other places.

In the fourth place, he who has eternal life will not love the world, 2:15-17. He will not love the world's pleasures or its possessions or its pride. He will not follow after these things and forget God. Pride of life means pride because of our tribe or because of our wealth or because of our wisdom or because of our importance. All of the things mentioned in verse 16 are of the world and are not of God. And if a man loved these things, it would show that he did not really love God at all.

Lastly, he who has eternal life will hold to the truth which God revealed through the apostles, like John, 2:18-29. Many false teachers had gone forth into the world. They had called themselves Christians, but had left those who followed the apostles. That was because they were not really Christians at all, 2:19. True Christians have the Holy Spirit dwelling in their hearts. So they are able to know what is true, 2:20,21. Anyone who said that Jesus and the Christ were really different, as those teachers were doing (and as some teachers do today), was a liar. Anyone who denies the Son does not have the Father either. We can only know the Father in the Son, 2:22,23. Therefore, John exhorted them to hold fast the teaching which they had heard from the first, 2:24,25. This is the teaching which gives them eternal life.

Christians are not dependent on others to teach them, 2:27. This does not mean that God has not given us human teachers, for we know that He has. But if anyone tells us, "You cannot know the truth unless you let us teach you, for we alone know what is right," he is lying. All true Christians have the Holy Spirit to teach them. So they should test everything they hear by God's Word and should accept only what is of Him.

We should hold His truth fast, otherwise we shall be ashamed before Him when He comes, 2:28,29. And one thing we know is that it is only those who do what is right who have really been born of God, 2:29.

The proof that we belong to God, 3:1 - 4:6

Now when John spoke about being born of God, he was reminded what a wonderful thing it is to be a child of God. So he went on to speak of the proof that we really belong to God.

The first proof is that those who are God's do righteousness, 3:1-10. We look forward to the Lord's coming, to make us like Himself. But if the hope of His coming is really ours, then we shall be like Him now. Otherwise, we have no part in that hope, 3:2,3. Sin is lawlessness, that is, not being obedient to God's will. Christ came to save us from sin, 3:4,5. The man who really is in Christ does not live a life of sin, 3:6. The one who has been declared righteous by God will live a righteous life, 3:7. The one who lives a life of sin belongs to the devil, not God, 3:8. Anyone born of God cannot go on sinning, for the new life which is in him will not let him do so, 3:9. That is how we can know who are really God's children, and who are Satan's, 3:10.

The second proof that we are God's is that we love our fellow-believers, 3:10-24. People of the world hate Christians, because their own works are evil and Christians' works are good, 3:12. Therefore, we should not be surprised if evil men hate us, 3:13. The fact that we love our fellow-Christians is a proof that we have passed from death to life. If we hate them, it is because we are still dead, 3:14,15. Love is an attitude which leads us to help our brethren when they are in need. It is not just something to talk about, 3:16-18. Our great Example is Christ, who laid down His life for us. We should love others like that. If we love other believers and serve them, it will give us confidence before God, and power in prayer, 3:19-24.

The third proof that we belong to God is that we hold to the truth which God has revealed through His apostles, 3:24 - 4:6. There are many spirits of evil in the world. These inspire false prophets who

teach false things. Therefore, we should test everything we hear by God's Word, and not believe everything we are told, 4:1. Those who are teaching that Jesus was not the Christ and that Christ had not come as a man are enemies, 4:2,3. True believers will not be led astray by such false teachers. The Holy Spirit keeps them, 4:4 (see John 10:5). Of course, we must keep close to God for this to be true in us. False teachers belong to the world, not to God. They say things which the world likes to hear, and the people of the world follow them, 4:5. John and the other apostles were of God, and all who know God listen to them, not to what other men say, 4:6. That is how we may know those who have God's Spirit, and those who have not. See John 10:26,27. We today have the apostles' words in their writing in the New Testament. It is these which we should "hear", or obey.

#### Importance of love, righteousness, and truth, 4:7 - 5:12

The next section, which deals with the same things we have already noted, is not easy to describe in a few words. But it speaks again of the importance of love, righteousness, and truth.

First, John spoke again of love, 4:7-21. It is love which shows that we are really born of God. Love comes from Him, and we can see what it is in Christ's death for us, 4:7-10. Since His love for us is so great, we should love one another. If we do, it will show that we are one in Him, 4:11-13. Love is God's very nature. So it is impossible to be in God without showing love, 4:16. The fact that we love other believers will be a ground for our having confidence when we think of the Day of Judgment. That is because, since we are like Him in loving, we know we are His, 4:17. Then too, one who loves will not be afraid of Him. One who loves others is like Him and finds it easier to trust Him, 4:18. Any man who does not love his brother shows that he does not really love God, 4:20,21. Our brothers, of course, are those whom Christ has saved, as He has saved us.

Then he spoke of righteousness, 5:1-5. To love God is to keep His commandments, one of which is to love others, 5:1-3. His commandments

are not difficult to one who believes in the Lord Jesus according to God's Word, 5:4,5. His faith gives him power to obey. That is because the Lord strengthens him as he believes. So the world does not control him.

Finally, he spoke of the truth of Christ, 5:6-12. Jesus Christ is One, and He came both by water (in His baptism) and by blood (in His death). This was to answer those who said that the Divine Christ did not die when the man Jesus died, 5:6. God has testified to His Son, and we should believe His witness rather than the word of men, 5:7-9. The person who believes Him has the witness in himself, 5:10 (see Romans 8:16). He who does not believe God acts as if he said, "God is a liar, and men tell the truth." That is exactly the opposite thing to what is true. God's testimony is that He has already given us eternal life. This life is in His Son. The person who has the Son of God already has eternal life, in Him. He who does not have Him has no life, 5:11,12.

#### Conclusion, 5:13-21

First, John gave his other reason for writing this letter, 5:13-17. It is because he wanted believers to know that they already have eternal life. He wanted them to know how life works in men. He wanted them to see it working that way in themselves. This will let them know that they really do have life in Christ. This knowledge comes through doing God's will, and that will give us confidence in prayer too. The sin unto death in verse 16 means some sin which is so serious that God will take the sinner away in death. John did not say what sin it is. It may mean that he was thinking of those who denied that Jesus was the Christ. He had already called such people antichrist, 4:3. Salvation is only given to those who give Christ His right place.

He then mentioned the things which we know, 5:18-21. We know that one who is born of God does not live a life of sin, 5:18. We know that we who do God's will in Christ are His, and that the world is lost in sin, 5:19. We know that the Son of God has come, that He has given us hearts to understand, and that we are in Him who is the Truth and the Life. We should beware of everything which is not according to Him, 5:20,21.

## 2 JOHN

John's second letter was written to a Christian woman, probably a widow, who had grown children. John had met some of her children, who had come to Ephesus where he was. They were still "walking in the truth", v.4. That is, they were walking in righteousness and in love and were holding to the truth about Christ, as we read in John's first letter. Some people say that it is not possible to live for the Lord in cities. That is not true. Some people do get away from the Lord in cities. But it is because they have not been following Him with all their hearts. The Lord can keep His people pure, even in such wicked cities as Ephesus was. John wrote to tell this woman of his joy and to exhort her to continue walking in the truth. The outline is simple:

1. His greeting to her, vs. 1-3
2. His joy in her children's righteousness, v.4
3. His exhortation to continue in the truth, vs. 5,6
4. Warning against false teachers, vs. 7-11
5. Conclusion, vs. 12,13

1. In his greeting, John commended the Christian woman to whom he was writing for her own good life, vs. 1-3. Parents are very responsible for what their children do. This woman's children were walking in the truth because their mother lived a true life. She had brought them up with a good example. This is a lesson for us who have children. John was confident that she would go on in the truth.

2,3. However, after speaking of his reason for writing, v.4, he exhorted her to continue in the truth, keeping the Lord's commandment by walking in love, vs. 5,6.

4. He exhorted her thus because of the false teachers, vs. 7-11. Those teachers, about whom John wrote in his first letter, were trying to lead Christians astray. We also need to be on our guard lest we, too, be led astray. If we let false teachers deceive us, we will lose the reward which the Lord wants to give us for being faithful, v.8. The person who leaves what God has revealed about Christ does not know God. It is the one who holds the truth about Christ who really has God, v.9. If anyone comes to us teaching things which are not according to what God has revealed about Christ in His Word, we should not receive him. And we should not greet him as if he were a Christian, vs. 10,11. It is a serious thing to teach false doctrine. And those who love the Lord should not help such false teachers in any way.

5. In his conclusion, John hoped soon to visit this woman, and he sent greetings from the children of her sister, who were with him in Ephesus, vs. 12,13.

### 3 JOHN

This letter was written by the apostle John to a Christian man called Gaius, who was one of John's converts (see verse 4). Some traveling preachers of the gospel had come to the town where Gaius lived. Gaius had received them, but a man named Diotrephes was trying to make the believers do only what he wanted them to do. He had refused to receive the preachers. He even put out of the church those who wanted to receive them, v.10. He would not even obey what the apostle John wrote, v.9. So John was going to visit that place, and he would punish Diotrephes with the power which God had given to him. The outline of the letter is:

1. His greeting to Gaius, vs. 1,2
2. Gaius' good behavior, vs. 3-8
3. Diotrephes' evil behavior, vs. 9-11
4. Demetrius' good behavior, v.12
5. Conclusion, vs. 13,14

1. John wanted Gaius to be as healthy in his body as he was in his soul, v.2. One is healthy in his soul when he walks in the truth, that is to say, when he walks in righteousness, in love, and holding the truth revealed about Christ. It is much more important to have a healthy soul than it is to have a healthy body.

2. Gaius was walking in the truth, v.3. A true servant of the Lord

is always glad when he sees people walking in truth, v.4. Gaius was acting in love toward others, vs. 5,6. He had helped the travelling preachers of the Word, and this was a good thing to do, v.6. These preachers did not take any gifts from Gentiles, that is from unbelievers, v.7. So it was the responsibility of real Christians to help them, as Gaius had done, v.8. While it is wrong to help false teachers, those who preach the truth should be helped in every way.

3. John had written to the church, but Diotrophes refused to obey him, v.9. Probably, John had written about those evangelists. Diotrophes may have been a rich man who thought that, because he was rich, therefore other believers should obey him. He was determined that men should do just as he said. And he would not allow anyone to think or to act differently, v.10. Such behavior is sinful. It is not from God but is the result of sinful pride and self-will. So John was determined to deal with Diotrophes. He exhorted Gaius not to do as Diotrophes was doing. Anyone who acted like Diotrophes would be acting as if he had not seen God at all. That is, he would be acting as if he were not really saved, v.11. The man who is born of God does good, and not evil. The Lord Jesus told us that the really great man is not the one who tries to be master of others, but the one who serves others, Matthew 20:26 (minister means “servant”).

4. Demetrius was a believer who had done well, and John praised him, v.12.

5. He closed with the hope that he would soon be able to speak with Gaius face to face, v.14.

## JUDE

The writer of this letter called himself a “brother of James”. See the notes on James, where we read about James and his brother Jude, or Judas. Jude is just another way of writing Judas. See Luke 6:16. As Jude was a brother of James, he was also a brother of the Lord Jesus. But in his letter he called himself only James’ brother, but a servant (slave) of Jesus Christ. This was because the Lord Jesus was Son of God, which is more important than His being son of Mary. Human relationships are not the things which bring honor or blessing before God. See Matthew 12:48-50; Luke 11:27,28.

There is nothing in this letter to tell us to whom Jude wrote. Some people think that he wrote to the same Christians to whom James sent his letter.

If you compare this letter with Peter’s second letter, you will see that they are much alike in many things. Some people think that Peter had Jude’s letter in mind when he wrote his second letter. Others think that Jude had Peter’s second letter in mind when he wrote. But we do not know for sure.

Jude began to write about salvation which believers have in Christ. But he was troubled when he thought of some men who called themselves Christians – who were even gathering with other Christians – but who lived evil lives, vs. 3,4. So he finally wrote to warn believers

against those evil men. We may outline his letter thus:

1. His greeting to them, vs. 1,2
2. The subject of which he wrote, vs. 3,4
3. God's judgment on those who do evil, vs. 5-7
4. What the evil men are like, vs. 8-19
5. How believers should act, vs. 20-23
6. Closing praise to God, vs. 24,25

1,2. After his greeting to them in verses 1 and 2, Jude told them how he was moved to write as he did, vs. 3,4. Some men had come in among the believers, who ought not to have been in the church at all. They were evil men, who turned God's grace into lasciviousness. That is to say, they said that, since men are saved by God's grace and not by their own works, therefore they can do as they wish. And so they lived evil lives. They denied the Lord Jesus by the things which they did and said.

3. Jude reminded them how God always judges those who do evil, vs. 5-7. He has judged them in the past, and He will do so in the future. He called the Israelites out of Egypt, but afterward destroyed those who would not believe Him, v.5 (compare Numbers 14:29 and Hebrews 3:17,19). He has judged angels who sinned, and He keeps them in prison waiting for the final judgment, v.6. And He judged the people of Sodom and Gomorrah for living evil lives, destroying their cities by fire, v.7 (compare Genesis 19:24). Remembering these acts of God should make men afraid to do evil. God does not hate evil today any less than He ever did.

4. The writer then told what those evil men were like, vs. 8-19. They defiled the flesh (that is, they did immoral things). They were rebellious (would not obey). And they were impertinent. They talked against those who were important among men and before God. Even the archangel Michael, great as he is, had not done that. He had not dared to speak harshly against Satan, as these men spoke against those who were greater than they, v.9. Satan is a fallen angel and will someday be judged. But God has not yet taken all his dignity away from him.

These men were like Cain, who refused to do God's will. They were like Balaam, who only thought of pay. And they were like Korah, who would not obey God's servant Moses, v.11. See Genesis 4:1-8; Numbers 22:15-17; 16:1-3. Their being among true believers was a blemish. They cared for no one but themselves. They helped no one. And they were going to judgment and eternal night, vs. 12,13. Enoch had spoken about men like these and how God would judge them in His anger, vs. 14,15. They were always complaining, talking of big things, and flattering people so that they would give them what they wanted, v.16. The apostles had warned believers that such evil mockers would come, v.18. They were men who lived according to the desires of the body. And they did not have the Holy Spirit, as real believers do, v.19. Today there are many men like them, who call themselves Christians, but who are really evil men who do not know God at all.

5. He then told them how they should act as Christians, vs. 20-23. First, they should keep on growing in the things of God, praying, and looking for the coming of Christ, vs. 20,21. A person will keep himself in God's love by doing the things which He wishes. Compare John 15:9,10. Those evil men knew nothing of God's love, and so they did not do His will. Then Christians should try to save such men from their own errors, by warning them, vs. 22,23. They should make a difference. Some men are just deceived, and believers should feel sorry for them. But other people are deceivers. They should be warned with fear, hating all their evil deeds.

6. Jude closed his letter with praise to God, vs. 24,25. Even though there are many evil men and evil things in the world, God is able to keep His people so that they will not fall. He is able to keep them always, so that when Christ comes they may be found with no faults. There is no excuse for a child of God to fail when God is on his side like this. All glory and power belong to Him.

With this last word of warning against evil men, the letters of the New Testament close. We have seen in them what a wonderful salvation we have in Christ. We have seen how God saves us by faith in

Christ's work, and not by our own works. We have seen what praise belongs to God and what glory belongs to Christ. We have seen something of God's great plan for eternity, in which we who believe in Christ have such a wonderful part. And we have seen how, even from the first, false teachers and wicked men have served Satan. We have seen how they have tried to lead Christians into false teaching and evil living, just as they are doing today. May we allow His Word to fill our hearts so that we may always be filled with joy and with praise to Him! May we be kept from following things which are not according to His will!

## TEST 12 1, 2, & 3 John; Jude

*Choose the correct answer.*

1. John seems to have written his letters from
  - a. Rome.
  - b. Jerusalem.
  - c. Ephesus.
  
2. Anyone who says that he is a Christian and does evil things is
  - a. a liar.
  - b. a wise man.
  - c. a prophet.
  
3. The pure life of the Lord Jesus tells us that God is
  - a. powerful.
  - b. wise.
  - c. light.
  
4. He who has eternal life will
  - a. have lots of money.
  - b. love other believers.
  - c. never get sick.
  
5. It is impossible to be in God without
  - a. showing love.
  - b. success in life.
  - c. pride.

*Enter TRUE or FALSE after each statement.*

6. Anyone who doesn't love his brother shows that he doesn't love God.
7. God can keep His people pure.
8. John praised Diotrephes for his good behaviour.
9. Satan is a fallen angel and will some day be judged.
10. We keep ourselves in God's love by doing His will.

**What Do You Say ?**

What are some of the dangers to the faith today?