

MICHIGAN BIBLE SCHOOL

January – April 2010

“THE GENERAL EPISTLES”

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The information in this book was prepared for a study of the General Epistles as a part of the Michigan Bible School, a work of the church of Christ West, 291 Spring Street, Plymouth, Michigan.

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GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST!**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

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THE GENERAL EPISTLES
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- I. BACKGROUND TO THE GENERAL EPISTLES
- a. The New Testament is divided into five sections.
 - i. The Gospel Accounts – Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
 - ii. History – Acts
 - iii. Pauline Epistles – Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon
 - iv. General Epistles – Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1 & 2 & 3 John, Jude
 - v. Prophecy – Revelation
 - b. Some would include Hebrews in the Pauline Epistles because they believe the evidence justifies stating that the book was written by Paul. For the sake of our discussion of the General Epistles, we will place Hebrews in Paul's writings.
 - c. Thus, the epistles we will be discussing are James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1 & 2 & 3 John, and Jude.
 - d. The books received the title of General Epistles because unlike most of Paul's writings they were written to broader audiences. For instance, Paul would write to the church at Thessalonica while James would write "to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad" (Jas. 1:1).
 - e. The dates of the writing of these books.
 - i. James – 50 a.d.
 - ii. 1 & 2 Peter – 64 a.d.
 - iii. 1, 2, 3 John – 90-96 a.d.
 - iv. Jude – 67-68 a.d.
 - f. Memory tools for the books.
 - i. James – Practical Christianity
 - ii. 1 Peter – Encouragement in persecution
 - iii. 2 Peter – Peter's farewell address/warning against false teachers
 - iv. 1 John – Refutation of heresy
 - v. 2 John – Commendation of the elect lady
 - vi. 3 John – Commendation of Gaius/follow that which is good
 - vii. Jude – Warning against false teachers/contend for the faith
 - g. Key verses
 - i. James 1:22 – *"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"*
 - ii. 1 Pet. 4:12 – *"Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you"*
 - iii. 2 Pet. 2:1 – *"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction"*
 - iv. 1 Jn. 2:9 – *"He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now"*

- v. 2 Jn. 4 – *“I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father”*
- vi. 3 Jn. 11 – *“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God; but he that doeth evil hath not seen God”*
- vii. Jude 3 – *“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints”*

II. JAMES

- a. It is believed that James is one of the earliest books written in the New Testament. It was written by James, the brother of Jesus.
- b. The church, at the time of the writing, has been in existence for about 20 years and has faced many problems.
- c. Worldliness was always a danger and people would waver from living their lives in keeping with God’s will.
- d. James delivers his message in practical application. He deals with such subjects as true religion, true faith, prejudice, the tongue, serving God, and prayer.
- e. The book was addressed to those Christians of Jewish background who had been scattered abroad (1:1). During the days of Saul of Tarsus, the early church had been scattered due the persecution surrounding Stephen (Acts 7). These Christians had gone into various portions of the world and continued to preach the word (Acts 8:4).
- f. Some teachings from James 1:
 - i. Persecution and trials would come their way, but they should count this as a joyful occasion. Why? Because it would strengthen their faith and help them endure all that would come their way (1:1-4). Christians are encouraged to suffer as Christians, which is a good thing because people know they are Christians (1 Pet. 4:12-16).
 - ii. Wisdom, which is the application of knowledge, is necessary in the lives of Christians. We are warned to not be wise in our own conceits (Rom. 11:25:12:16). We are not wise if we measure ourselves by ourselves (2 Cor. 10:12). However, we must be wise in the ways of God (1 Cor. 3:18,19). The scriptures will make us wise unto salvation (2 Tim. 3:15). James teaches us to pray for wisdom (1:5).
 - iii. James on prayer.
 - 1. Pray for wisdom (1:5).
 - 2. Pray without doubt (1:6-8).
 - 3. We have not because we ask not (4:2).
 - 4. We do not receive our requests when we ask selfishly (4:3).
 - 5. Pray in our afflictions (5:13).
 - 6. Pray for forgiveness of sins (5:16).

7. The effectual (“active, efficient”) fervent prayer (“petition”) of a righteous man avails (“to have much”) much (5:16).
- iv. All will pass from this Earth. Therefore, those of low degree must be exalted and those of high estate must abase themselves (1:9-11). That is, with God there is no respect of persons (Acts 10:34), and therefore, with us, there can be no respect of persons. We are all one in Christ (Gal. 3:29; 1 Cor. 12:20).
- v. Those who endure temptations will receive the crown of life (1:12). We must understand that it is not God that tempts us.
 1. God cannot be tempted with evil (1:13).
 2. God does not tempt any man (1:13).
 3. Every one is tempted when he allows his own lust to draw him from God (1:14).
 4. When this lust conceives, then it leads us to sin which then leads us to spiritual death (1:15).
 5. Therefore, we must not err (1:16).
- vi. It is the unchanging God who gives us good things (1:17).
- vii. James on pure religion.
 1. We have been begotten with the word of truth (1:18). We are his.
 2. Because of this, we must be swift to hear, slow to speak, and slow to wrath (1:19).
 3. Man’s wrath does not accomplish the will of God (1:20).
 4. We are to put off filthiness (“dirtiness”) and superfluity (“superabundance”) of naughtiness (“badness, depravity”). Rather, we are to receive meekly the word of God which is able to save us (1:21).
 5. James helps us to understand that we must be doers of the word, not just hearers (1:22-25). James will continue to emphasize that we must work the work of God in order to be saved. We must look into the law, see ourselves, correct ourselves, and do the will of God. We will be blessed.
 6. To not keep our tongues in check makes our religion vain (1:26). In chapter 3, James has much more to say on the tongue.
 7. In order to be pleasing to God, we must practice pure religion which not only involves keeping ourselves pure, but also visiting (“to go see, inspect, relieve”) the widows and the fatherless. Christians seek to relieve the needs of those less fortunate in this life (cf. Gal. 2:10).
- g. Some teachings from James 2.
 - i. In verses 1-13, James teaches against prejudice. God who created all men of one blood (Acts 17:26) and in his image (Gen. 1:26,27) expects people to treat everyone the same. That is, to not show respect of persons.

- ii. The Jews and Gentiles of the First Century had to learn this lesson (Rom. 1-3) and understand that all have sinned and all need the Savior. Those at Corinth were taught not to think of men above that which is written (1 Cor. 4:6).
- iii. James dealt with their hypocrisy in showing respect of persons by having them understand they were exalting those who oppress them (vs. 6) and blaspheme the name of Christ (vs. 7). They had forgotten that it was the poor who saw a need for Christianity and were rich in faith (vs. 5).
- iv. Therefore, God concludes the following:
 - 1. If they show respect of persons, they sin (vs. 9).
 - 2. If they err in this one point, they violate the entire law (vss. 10,11).
 - 3. If they show respect of persons, they fail to fulfill the royal law (the second great commandment – Matt. 22:37-39) – “Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself”.
 - 4. Those who fail to show mercy to all men will be judged by God without mercy (vss. 12,13).
- v. Faith becomes the discussion of verses 14-16
 - 1. Faith without works is dead. This is James’ conclusion from beginning to end of this discussion.
 - 2. Like so many, they had talked a good talk but were not helping those in need (vss. 14-16), and therefore were unprofitable to those around them.
 - 3. In verses 17, 20, 24, and 26, James shows that faith without works is dead. That is, faith only will not save us. By what then are we saved?
 - a. By the grace of God, but not grace only (Eph. 2:5,8).
 - b. By faith, but not faith only (Eph. 2:8; Acts 16:31).
 - c. By works, but not works only (Eph. 2:10; Matt. 7:21).
 - d. By baptism, but not baptism only (1 Pet. 3:21).
 - e. By what then are we saved? It is best said in Rom. 6:17 – “...but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you”.
 - 4. To believe in God is not enough if we are not going to act upon that belief. The devils also believe and tremble (vs. 19).
 - 5. James shows us that our faith is shown by our works (vs. 18) and uses Abraham (vss. 21-23) and Rahab (vs. 25) as examples of such.
- h. Some lessons from James 3
 - i. Those who sought leadership positions had to understand that this brought on greater accountability (vs. 1). Too many people want to be viewed as those others should heed and follow, yet they do so

without understanding that now they are going to be judged by God for the influence they have upon others. This is very similar to the teaching found in Heb. 13:7,17 when God talks about the elders who will give account for those they oversee.

- ii. The tongue becomes James' next discussion.
 - 1. Man is not able, of himself, to control the tongue (vss. 3,8).
 - 2. Little things control larger objects (vss. 3,4).
 - 3. The tongue is a little member than can kindle a great fire. Much harm can be done with the tongue (vss. 6,7).
 - 4. People bless God and curse man from the same mouth. In nature, such a thing is unheard of. It should never be that we bless God and curse man (vss. 9-12).
- iii. Wisdom that is from above is shown in distinction to that which is from the world.
 - 1. True Christians show their works with meekness of wisdom (vs. 13).
 - 2. Wisdom that engenders bitter envying and strife is earthly ("worldly"), sensual ("animate, natural"), and devilish ("demon like"). It leads to confusion ("disorder") and every evil work (vss. 14-16). The wisdom of the world is foolishness with God (1 Cor. 1:20).
 - 3. The wisdom that is from above is what we should have. Its various fruit is seen in verses 17,18.
 - a. Pure – "clean"
 - b. Peaceable – "pacifies"
 - c. Gentle – "appropriate"
 - d. Easy to be entreated – "compliant"
 - e. Full of mercy – "filled with compassion"
 - f. Full of good fruits – "good fruit, work"
 - g. Without partiality – "impartial"
 - h. Without hypocrisy – "sincere"
 - i. Those who are righteous sow peace.
- i. Lessons from James 4
 - i. The world so greatly influences Christians and how they act towards one another. The world teaches distrust, hatred, bitterness, jealousy, anger, and selfishness. Many in the church have adopted these attitudes in their dealing with one another.
 - ii. James works to correct this erroneous thinking on the part of the recipients of his letter.
 - 1. They war because of their own lusts (vs. 1).
 - 2. They try to gain by their own means and do not ask of God (vs. 2).
 - 3. Their selfishness has built a wall between them and God (vs. 3).
 - 4. By loving worldliness, they became the enemies of God (vs. 4).

- iii. Now, a lesson on humility.
 1. God is a jealous God (vs. 5; Ex. 20:5; 34:14; Deut. 4:24; 5:9; 6:15; Josh. 24:19).
 2. He gives grace to the humble, therefore we need to submit to God and resist the Devil (vss. 6,7).
 3. We must draw nigh to God, cleanse our hands, and purify our hearts (vs. 8).
 4. We need to be saddened because we have allowed worldliness to come into our lives and therefore we need to humble ourselves before God so we can be exalted (vss. 9,10; Matt. 23:12; Gal. 6:9).
- iv. Verses 11,12 teach against hypocritical judging as is also found in Matt. 7:1-5. The context of Jas. 4 shows bitterness, envy, and hatred controlling their thinking about others. It was based on these ideas that they were judging others. They were not judging righteous judgment (Jn. 7:24).
- v. Knowing the truth and failing to do it is sin (vs. 17). This is the teaching found in verses 13-17.
 1. They must understand that they are not promised tomorrow (vss. 13,14).
 2. They must put their lives into the hands of God and his will (vs. 15).
 3. They must not trust in self (vs. 16).
 4. Knowing this, they still did these things, yet did not see it as sin (vs. 17).
- j. Lessons from James 5
 - i. Those who trust in riches have treasure but not in Heaven (vs. 1). Why?
 1. They were corrupt (vs. 2).
 2. Their riches will consume them, especially eternally (vs. 3).
 3. They cheated others (vs. 4).
 4. They lived in unbridled worldly pleasure serving only self (vs. 5).
 5. They condemned and killed the just (vs. 6).
 - ii. They must endure until the end.
 1. Be patient ever looking for the coming of the Lord (vss. 7,8).
 2. Treat others correctly in view of Judgment (vs. 9).
 3. The prophets are our example of endurance in suffering. Job certainly teaches us to be patient (vss. 10,11).
 - iii. They must be honest (vs. 12).
 - iv. Various injunctions.
 1. Are you afflicted? Pray. Are you merry? Sing (vs. 13).
 2. Are you sick? Call for the elders because the prayer of a righteous man avails much (vss. 14,15).

3. Confess your faults to one another and pray for one another (vs. 16).
4. Elijah, our example of prayer (vss. 17,18).
5. We must work to restore those who have strayed from God (vss. 19,20).

III. 1 PETER

- a. Written by the apostle Peter when persecution against the church was beginning to grow (about 64 a.d.), there was a need to encourage the brethren to endure this persecution and remain faithful to God.
- b. Like James, this book was addressed to Christians who had been scattered throughout Roman provinces on Asia Minor (vs. 1).
- c. In his introduction, Peter reminds them of their calling to an incorruptible inheritance that is reserved in Heaven for them (vs. 4). A hope that Christians have because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ (vs. 3).
- d. The work of the Godhead in the salvation of man is seen in verse 2.
- e. Lessons from 1 Pet. 1
 - i. Their faith was being tested (vs. 7) yet they were encouraged to remain faithful. They had their trust in God even though they could not see him, yet knew he was there (vs. 8) and would therefore receive the end of their faith, their salvation (vs. 9).
 - ii. This salvation was that which was prophesied by the prophets of old and was of interest to the angels (vss. 10-12).
 - iii. Because they had this hope of salvation, there were certain things they must do.
 1. They need to keep their hope until Christ returns (vs. 13).
 2. They must not return to the ways of the world (vs. 14).
 3. They must be holy as God is holy (vss. 15,16).
 4. They must remain faithful to God remembering that they were redeemed by the blood of Christ (vss. 17-21).
 5. They had obeyed the truth and had an unfeigned love of the brethren. Therefore, they must love one another fervently. They were a changed people (“born again”) having obeyed the word of God which endures forever (vss. 22-25).
- f. Lessons from 1 Pet. 2
 - i. If you appreciate the grace of God, then put away evil things and long for the milk of the word so you can grow in Christ (vss. 1-3).
 - ii. Although the world rejected Jesus when he came, Christians know who he is and believe in him. The result of this is that the church is special in the sight of God (vss. 4-12).
 1. The church is described as “lively stones”, a figurative expression showing that Christians are alive because they follow the “stone which the builders disallowed” (vss. 5,7).
 2. The church is a spiritual house (vs. 5). It is not some man-made institution, but is the house of God (cf. 1 Tim. 3:15).

3. The church is a holy priesthood (vs. 5,9). We are the priests of God.
 4. The church is to offer up spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God (vs. 5; Rom. 12:1,2).
 5. The church is the chosen (“select, elect”) generation. There are no chosen of God in the denominations.
 6. The church is a holy nation (vs. 9). As Israel was the people of God in the Old Testament (Deut. 7:6), so the church is the people of God in the last days. There is no other group that fits this description today.
 7. The church is a peculiar people (“the purchased possession”). See Acts 20:28 and Eph. 1:14. The church is the blood-bought institution. Jesus died to bring into existence no other (cf. Matt. 16:18).
 8. The church should praise God who has called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light (vs. 9; Col. 1:13).
 9. The church is the people of God (vs. 10).
 10. The church has obtained mercy (vs. 10).
 11. The church understands that it is a stranger and a pilgrim on this Earth (vs. 11).
 12. The church lives in such a way that if the world speaks against it what they say is a lie (vs. 12).
- iii. Christians must submit to ruling authorities (vss. 13-17). Remember that these statements were made when Rome ruled the world and when Rome was beginning to persecute the church.
1. Submit to the ordinances of man (vs. 13). Why?
 - a. For the Lord’s sake (vs. 13).
 - b. For it is the will of God (vs. 15).
 - c. That we may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men (vs. 15).
 - d. So we can be the servants of God (vs. 16).
 2. Government is ordained of God to punish evil and reward good (vs. 14; Rom. 13:1-5)
 3. What the Christian must do (vs. 17).
 - a. Honor (“prize”) all men
 - b. Love the brotherhood
 - c. Fear (“be in awe of; frightened, revere”) God
 - d. Honor (“prize”) the king
- iv. Servants are to be obedient to their masters even if their masters are mean (vs. 18).
- v. If we suffer wrongfully, take it patiently. This is acceptable to God (vss. 19,20). Our example for such – Jesus Christ (vss. 21-25).
1. Jesus is our example to walk in his footsteps (vs. 21).
 2. Jesus did not sin nor was guile (“deceit”) found in his mouth (vss. 22,23).
 3. Jesus committed his life to God (vs. 23).

4. Jesus bore our sins on the cross (vs. 24).
 5. We were lost, but now have the Shepherd of our souls (vs. 25).
- g. Lessons from 1 Pet. 3
- i. Wives are to be in subjection to their own husbands even if their husbands are not Christians (vss. 1-6).
 1. It is possible for the godly wife to win her husband to Christ (vs. 1,2).
 2. Godly women do not dress in such a way as to draw undue attention to themselves (vs. 3; 1 Tim. 2:9,10).
 3. Their adorning will be that which is ruled by a meek and quiet spirit. An example of such was Sarah (vss. 4-6).
 - ii. Husbands are to honor their wives lest their prayers be hindered (vs. 7).
 - iii. The Christian's conduct
 1. Be of one mind (vs. 8).
 2. Be compassionate (vs. 8).
 3. Love as brethren (vs. 8)
 4. Have pity (vs. 8).
 5. Be courteous (vs. 8).
 6. Do not render evil for evil (vs. 9).
 7. Do not return evil for evil, but rather bless those who would speak evil against you (vs. 9).
 8. If you want to have a good life, then keep your tongue from evil (vs. 10).
 9. Shun evil and do good (vs. 11).
 10. Seek peace and make it your way of life (vs. 11).
 11. God's eyes are over and his ears are open to the righteous (vs. 12).
 - iv. If ye suffer as a Christian (vss. 13-18).
 1. Who can really do you any harm (vs. 13)? What can man really do to us? Follow good.
 2. If you do suffer, do not fear men, but rejoice that you are able to suffer as a Christian (vs. 14).
 3. Even in suffering, be ready to give an answer for the hope that is in you (vs. 15).
 4. If you are accused of evil, live in such a way that it will be a lie they have spoken against you (vs. 16).
 5. If need be, accept the suffering as Christ did (vss. 17,18).
 - v. Christ our example (vss. 19-22).
 1. Jesus, through Noah, preached to the people in the days of Noah (vss. 19,20; 2 Pet. 2:5).
 2. As those on the Ark were saved by water, so also we are saved by water in baptism (vs. 21).
 3. All of creation is subject to Christ who has ascended to Heaven (vs. 22).

h. Lessons from 1 Pet. 4

i. Christians are a changed people.

1. We are to have the mind of Christ and be willing to suffer for God (vs. 1).
2. We no longer live to the fleshly lusts of men (vs. 2).
3. Those with whom we used to run now think it strange that we no longer do those wicked things of our past life (vss. 3,4).

ii. The Judgment of God

1. All will give an accounting for their actions before God (vs. 5).
2. Those who are dead had the opportunity to obey God (vs. 6). This verse is not teaching that those who have died will get another opportunity to be taught and come to God. This verse is showing these Christians that those who have died were taught the gospel and therefore could be judged by God and be saved or be lost. After death comes the judgment of those who died (Heb. 9:27).
3. Be prepared for the Judgment (vs. 7).

iii. How Christians should treat one another

1. Have fervent charity toward one another (vs. 8). Charity does not hide sin, but because we love one another, we will help each other overcome sin (Gal. 6:1; Jas. 5:19,20).
2. Be hospitable toward one another and do so willingly (vs. 9).
3. As we have received the grace of God, extend the same to everyone else (vs. 10).
4. In all things, God is to be glorified (vs. 11). We are to speak as the oracles (“An oracle was one charged with delivering the message of his master without change and in its completeness”) of God. Christians are to serve with another with all their ability.

iv. More on suffering

1. Don't think it strange when you suffer (vs. 12).
2. Rejoice that you are a partaker of Christ's sufferings (vs. 13).
3. Glorify God by remaining faithful to God when you suffer because you are a Christian (vs. 14).
4. Do not suffer as an evil doer (vs. 15), but if you suffer as a Christian, glorify God (vs. 16).
5. What will be the end of those who obey not the gospel? What about those who are ungodly and sinners? (vss. 17,18).
6. Do not stray from God but commit the keeping of your souls to him because he is a faithful Creator (vs. 19; Heb. 10:23).

- i. Lessons from 1 Pet. 5
 - i. Peter's charge to the elders.
 - 1. Feed the flock of God (vs. 2). Elders should remember that the church belongs to God.
 - 2. Elders should willingly guard and guide the church (vs. 2).
 - 3. Elders are to be leaders who are good examples to the church (vs. 3).
 - 4. Elders will answer to the Chief Shepherd (vs. 4).
 - ii. The charge to all Christians.
 - 1. The younger are to submit themselves to the elder (vs. 5).
 - 2. All are to submit one to another (vs. 5; Eph. 5:20).
 - 3. All are to be clothed in humility (vs. 5).
 - 4. God will give grace to the humble (vs. 5).
 - 5. God will exalt those who humble themselves to him (vs. 6).
 - 6. Cast your cares on God (vs. 7; Phil. 4:6).
 - 7. Be on guard against the Devil and resist him. Remember you are not the only one he is afflicting (vss. 8,9).
 - 8. After we have suffered awhile, God will make us perfect, establish us, strengthen us, and settle ("make a foundation for") us (vss. 10,11).
 - iii. Closing remarks
 - 1. Silas was with him when he wrote the letter (vs. 12).
 - 2. Peter is at Babylon, which is near modern day Baghdad, when he writes this letter (vs. 13).
 - 3. He wants them to greet one another and be at peace with one another (vs. 14).

IV. 2 PETER

- a. In his second letter, written about the same time as the first, Peter continues to exhort his fellow Christians. He also gives them a strong warning against false teachers and will then bring them a picture of the end of the world.
- b. Lessons from 2 Pet. 1
 - i. God has given to us all things that we need, all that pertains to life and godliness (vs. 3).
 - ii. We are now able to escape the corruption of the world because of the great promises of God (vs. 4).
 - iii. The Christian must add ("furnish completely") the following (vss. 5-7):
 - 1. Faith
 - 2. Virtue
 - 3. Knowledge
 - 4. Temperance
 - 5. Patience
 - 6. Brotherly kindness
 - 7. Charity

- iv. Having these things, the Christian will not be unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ, and will not be blind spiritually (vss. 8,9).
- v. They were exhorted to make their calling and election sure so they would not fall (vs. 10). This verse also helps us to understand that the Christian can fall from grace.
- vi. We are assured a home with God if we bring these things into our life (vs. 11).
- vii. The more sure word of prophecy.
 - 1. Peter knew he was about to depart from this world and wanted to bring to their remembrance the things which they needed to do in order to be saved (vss. 12-15).
 - 2. They did not follow fables, but the word of God based on God's direction that Jesus is his beloved son (vss. 16-18).
 - 3. We have a more sure word of prophecy (vss. 19-21).
 - a. The scripture is not open to private interpretation (vss. 19,20).
 - b. The word of God was inspired by the Holy Spirit (vs. 21; 2 Tim. 3:16).
- c. Lessons from 2 Pet. 2
 - i. False prophets would come in among them and work to destroy them (vss. 1,2).
 - ii. False teachers will use people and cause the way of Truth to be evil spoken of (vs. 3).
 - iii. God knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and punish the unjust (vs. 9).
 - 1. God spared not the angels that sinned (vs. 4).
 - 2. God spared not the world in the days of Noah (vs. 5).
 - 3. God spared not Sodom and Gomorrha (vs. 6).
 - 4. God delivered lot from Sodom (vss. 7,8).
 - iv. False teachers and their work
 - 1. Walk after the flesh (vs. 10).
 - 2. Despise government (vs. 10).
 - 3. Are presumptuous (vs. 10).
 - 4. Self-willed (vs. 10).
 - 5. Speak evil of dignities ("glory, praise, honor") (By implication, those in positions to be honored) (vs. 10). They speak where angels dare not speak (vs. 11).
 - 6. Are as natural brute beasts (vs. 12).
 - 7. Speak evil of things they do not understand (vs. 12).
 - 8. They shall perish because of their own corruption (vs. 12).
 - 9. They will receive the reward of unrighteousness (vs. 13).
 - 10. They are spots and blemishes (vs. 13).
 - 11. They deceive themselves and others (vs. 13).
 - 12. They have eyes full of adultery (vs. 14).
 - 13. They cannot cease from sin (vs. 14).
 - 14. They beguile unstable souls (vs. 14; cf. Tit. 1:11).

15. Their hearts are set on covetous practices (vs. 14).
 16. They are cursed children (vs. 14).
 17. They have forsaken the right way (vss. 15,16).
 18. They are wells without water (useless) (vs. 17).
 19. They are storm clouds (dangerous) (vs. 17).
 20. They are reserved to darkness forever (vs. 17).
 21. With great words that appeal to the ears of people, they win back to the Devil those who are new in Christ (vs. 18).
 22. They promise liberty while they are in bondage to sin (vs. 19).
- v. One can fall from grace (vss. 20-22).
- d. Lessons from 2 Pet. 3
 - i. Peter wrote to put them in remembrance of what they had been taught before (vss. 1,2).
 - ii. There would come scoffers who would challenge their faith (vs. 3).
 1. They would deny the second coming (vs. 4).
 2. They would say that nothing has changed on the Earth from the Creation (vs. 4).
 3. They would willingly ignore the Flood (vss. 5,6).
 - iii. The second coming and Judgment
 1. The heavens and the Earth will be destroyed by fire some day (vs. 7).
 2. It will be when God is ready (vs. 8).
 3. God does not desire that any should perish (vs. 9; cf. Eze. 33).
 4. Although God wants all to be saved, there will come a time in which the world will be destroyed and mankind will stand before God in Judgment (vss. 10-15).
 - a. His coming will be without announcement (vs. 10).
 - b. At his coming, the Universe will be destroyed.
 - i. Shall pass away with a great noise (vs. 10).
 - ii. Shall melt with fervent heat (vs. 10).
 - iii. Shall be burned up (vs. 10).
 - iv. Shall be dissolved (vs. 11).
 - v. Shall be dissolved (vs. 12).
 - vi. Shall melt with fervent heat (vs. 12).
 - c. We look for a new dwelling place.
 - i. In this place dwells righteousness (vs. 13).
 - ii. We must work hard to be found without spot and to be blameless when he comes again (vs. 14).
 - iii. We must wait with patience for the coming salvation (vs. 15).
 - iv. The charge to grow in Christ
 1. Some will wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction (vs. 16).

2. We must beware of those who would lead us astray and cause us to fall (vs. 17).
3. We are to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (vs. 18).

V. 1 JOHN

- a. Written within the last 10 years of the 1st Century, John writes this first book to teach us about love.
- b. It is in this book that we are introduced to the word “antichrist”, a word that terrifies so many today. In our discussion of this, we will learn that while it is something to be concerned with, it is not something that we should look forward to with dread, supposing that a major world war of catastrophic proportions will happen before Christ comes again.
- c. Like the Revelation, John writes this letter to be relevant to his audience in the 1st Century.
- d. Lessons from 1 Jn. 1
 - i. Jesus was at the beginning of the world and was manifested to mankind. This is the message which John presents to the people (vss. 1-4; cf. Jn. 1:1-4).
 - ii. God is light. In him, there is not darkness (vs. 5). This message is going to be seen consistently throughout this book.
 - iii. If we walk in darkness, we are liars and we have no fellowship with God (vs. 6).
 - iv. Our fellowship with one another and with God is dependent upon our walking in the light, that is, to be like God (vs. 7).
 - v. If we deny that we have sinned, we are liars. If we do not confess our sins, they will not be forgiven (vss. 8-10).
- e. Lessons from 1 Jn. 2
 - i. It is John’s desire that we do not sin (vs. 1).
 - ii. However if we do sin, we have an advocate (“one who pleads our cause”) with the Father who is also the propitiation (“the price paid”) for our sins. This advocate is Jesus Christ (vss. 1,2). Jesus is also described as our mediator (1 Tim. 2:5).
 - iii. The keeping of God’s commandments is how we show that we love him. Notice the following:
 1. Jn. 14:15 – If we love him, we will keep his commandments.
 2. 1 Jn. 2:3 – The keeping of his commandments is how we know him.
 3. 1 Jn. 2:4 – If we do not keep his commandments, we are liars.
 4. 1 Jn. 2:5 – The word of God is perfected in us by the keeping of his commandments.
 5. 1 Jn. 2:5 – By keeping his commandments, we know that we are in him.

6. 1 Jn. 2:6 – We abide in God when we walk in his commandments.
 7. 1 Jn. 3:22 – We receive our prayer requests because we keep his commandments.
 8. 1 Jn. 3:24 – If we keep his commandments, we dwell in him.
 9. 1 Jn. 5:2 – By the keeping of his commandments, we know that we love the children of God.
 10. 1 Jn. 5:3 – By keeping his commandments, we show that we love God.
 11. 2 Jn. 6 – This is love when we walk after his commandments.
- iv. John's message to show how we measure our love for God is that we cannot love God if we do not love our brethren.
1. He who hates his brother is in darkness (vss. 8-10).
 2. He who hates his brother is in darkness, walks in darkness, does not know where he is going, and is blind spiritually (vs. 11).
- v. His message to the recipients of his letter.
1. Their sins have been forgiven (vs. 12).
 2. The fathers have known God from the beginning (vs. 13).
 3. The young men had overcome the wicked one (vs. 13).
 4. The little children have known God (vs. 13).
 5. The fathers have known God from the beginning (vs. 14).
 6. The young men are strong, the word of God abides in them, and they have overcome the wicked one (vs. 14).
 7. Therefore, they are not to love the world.
 - a. If they love the world, the love of the Father is not in them (vs. 15).
 - b. The things of the world are not of the Father (vs. 16).
 - c. The world and the lusts thereof will pass away, but the one who does the will of God will live forever (vs. 17).
- vi. John is the only New Testament writer who mentions antichrist. While greatly misunderstood in our world today, John clearly identifies who is an antichrist.
1. They existed at the time of John's writing (vs. 18).
 2. There were many of them in existence (vs. 18).
 3. They were at one time members of the church (vs. 19).
 4. Who is an antichrist? One who denies the Father and the Son (vs. 22).
 5. Who is an antichrist? One who will not confess that Jesus came in the flesh (4:3; 2 Jn. 7).
 6. The antichrists are deceivers (2 Jn. 7).

7. The early church was not looking for some terrible “monster” or “world leader” to rear his ugly head and cause a great war between Christ and the Devil. The early church knew there were many antichrists (those who opposed Christ) among them. While all that is taught about “The Antichrist” by most religions today is interesting and fascinating, it is all false, merely the imagination of man gone wild!!!
- vii. Gnosticism was a religious belief prevalent in the 1st Century. Among its tenets was the denial that Jesus came in the flesh. This teaching influenced many members of the church and John has to teach them that Christ did come in the flesh (this is how he began this book). And, he had to teach them that to deny such means they were opposed to Christ and they do not have the Father in them (vs.23).
- viii. They were to hold fast to that which they had been taught so they could gain the promise of the Father, eternal life (vss. 24,25).
- ix. While others would deceive them, they must remember they have been taught the truth and abide in Christ. This would assure them of a great confidence as they stand before Christ in Judgment (vss. 26-28).
- x. Knowing that God is righteous, they must be righteous. This will show that they truly believe God (vs. 29).
- f. Lessons from 1 Jn. 3
 - i. The world does not know us because it did not know Christ (vs. 1; Jn. 17:14,16; 15:18).
 - ii. Christians have the promise that they will be like Christ in eternity (vs. 2). Therefore, they should keep themselves pure as Christ is pure (vs. 3).
 - iii. John on sin and our attitude toward sin
 1. Sin is the transgression of the law (vs. 4).
 2. Jesus came to take away sins (vs. 5; Lk. 19:10; Matt. 1:21).
 3. If we abide in Christ, then we will not continue to sin (vs. 6; cf. Rom. 6:1).
 4. The sinner is not righteous, because to be righteous one must practice righteousness (vs. 7).
 5. Those who continue in sin are of the Devil (vs. 8), and Jesus came to destroy the work of the Devil. Therefore, those who continue in sin defy the work of Jesus and aid the work of the Devil.
 6. Those who are born of God cannot sin, that is, it is no longer a part of their lives. Sin becomes a foreign idea to them (vs. 9).
 7. How do you tell the difference between a Christian and a person of the world? The Christian practices righteousness and loves his brethren (vs. 10; Jn. 17:20,21).

- iv. Loving our brethren
 1. We must love one another (vs. 11).
 2. We must not be like Cain who killed his brother because his brother's actions were righteous (vs. 12).
 3. The world will hate us, but we will love one another (vss. 13,14).
 4. If we hate our brother, we are guilty of murder and will not gain eternal life (vs. 15). This is consistent with the teachings of Jesus that deal with what a person thinks in his heart (Matt. 5:21-26,28). Also, as a man thinks in his heart, so is he (Prov. 23:7), and out of the heart proceeds evil things (Matt. 15:19).
 5. As Christ laid down his life for us, so we must lay down our lives for our brethren (vs. 16).
 6. To fail to provide for the needs of our brethren shows that the love of God does not dwell in us (vs. 17).
 7. Love is not seen in words, but in actions (vs. 18).
 8. By loving our brethren, we know we are of the truth (vs. 19).
- v. Our hearts must be assured before God in order to be acceptable to God. Our hearts will be assured before God when we keep his commandments (vss. 19-24).
 1. By loving our brethren, we assure our hearts before God (vs. 19).
 2. If our heart condemns us, we can overcome our hearts by yielding to God and keeping his commandments (vss. 20-22).
 3. We must believe in Christ and love one another as this is what God has commanded (vs. 23).
 4. We know that God abides in us when we keep his commandments (vs. 24).
- g. Lessons from 1 Jn. 4
 - i. Because there are many false prophets in the world, we must put everyone to the test (vs. 1). How do we know who is of God? Those who confess that Jesus is the Christ (vss. 2,3). This confession is deeper than a mere statement of fact. The demons knew who Christ was (Mk. 5:7) yet they did not obey him. Some of the chief rulers of the Jews believed in Jesus but would not confess him for fear of being cast out of the synagogue (Jn. 12:42,43). Their confession of Christ would have been seen in their life of service to him (Matt. 10:32,33).
 - ii. We know those who are of God because they listen to the message of God. We are greater than the world (vss. 4-6).
 - iii. God is love
 1. We are to love one another because love is of God (vs. 7).

2. If we do not love one another, we do not know God, for God is love (vs. 8).
 3. God loved us and showed his love for us in giving his son for us (vss.9,10). If God so loved us, dare we not to love one another (vs. 11)?
 4. While we have never seen God, we have seen his love for us. Our love for one another shows everyone that God dwells in us (vs. 12).
 5. Those who dwell in God and confess that God sent his son into the world have God dwelling in them (vss. 13-15).
 6. When we walk in love as God is love, we abide in God and have boldness in the Day of Judgment (vss. 16,17).
 7. Perfect love casts out fear (vs. 18).
 8. We love God because he first loved us (vs. 19).
 9. If we do not love our brethren, we do not love God (vss. 20,21).
- h. Lessons from 1 Jn. 5
- i. Our love for God is exhibited in our keeping his commandments and loving our brethren (vss. 1-3).
 - ii. Christians have overcome the world (vss. 4,5).
 - iii. The Spirit bears witness that Jesus is the Son of God. He came to us by water and blood (vs. 6). He was baptized to fulfill all righteousness (Matt. 3:15) and he shed his blood for us that we might be saved (Eph. 1:7).
 - iv. The Godhead bear witness that Jesus is the Son of God (vs. 7).
 - v. On Earth, the spirit (by the word), the water (where we are buried with him in baptism – Rom. 6:3,4), and the blood (which he shed for the remission of our sins – Matt. 26:28) bear witness of Christ.
 - vi. God's witness is greater than man's (vs. 9).
 - vii. We are a liar if we deny that God gave his son for us and that by doing so we can have eternal life (vss. 10-12).
 - viii. Our confidence before God.
 1. We can know that we have eternal life (vs. 13).
 2. We can know that God will answer our prayers according to his will (vss. 14,15; 1 Pet. 3:12).
 - ix. Our attitude toward sin.
 1. We cannot pray for one who sins a sin unto death (vs. 16). The only sins we can pray for are those confessed (Jas. 5:16; 1 Jn. 1:9). If one will not repent, he cannot be forgiven and we cannot pray for their forgiveness (Lk. 17:3).
 2. We must recognize that all unrighteousness is sin (vs. 17).
 3. Those who are born of God keep themselves from sin (vs. 18).
 4. We are of God and the world is wicked (vs. 19).

5. We are in Christ, therefore keep yourselves from idols (vss. 20,21).

VI. 2 JOHN

- a. This book was written to a lady in the church and her children. Some believe that the lady and her children are congregations of God's people, but there is nothing in the context to demand such.
- b. John's message in this letter is very personal in nature, but would also be one that would be taught to others. This letter is a continuation of the teaching of 1 John, especially in the realm of those who would deceive others.
- c. Lessons from 2 John.
 - i. Live in such a way that all who know the truth love you because you stand for the truth (vss. 1-3).
 - ii. Rear your children to walk in truth (vs. 4; Eph. 6:4).
 - iii. We must love one another (vs. 5).
 - iv. We show our love to God by keeping his commandments (vs. 6).
 - v. We must hold to the truth because there are many deceivers out there who do not confess Jesus has come in the flesh (vs. 7). Note: If Jesus did not come in the flesh, then he is not our Savior and the Bible is a book of lies as it centers around the life of Christ in the flesh. If the Bible is not God's word, then we have no hope of salvation, and there are no rules to guide our lives.
 - vi. Be on guard that we do not lose our salvation (vs. 8).
 - vii. Those who transgress the law of God and do not keep the doctrine of Christ do not have God (vs. 9). Those who keep the doctrine of Christ have both God and Christ. The implication of this verse is "Why would a Christian follow someone who does not have God? Why follow someone who is lost eternally?"
 - viii. What if one comes to us and is teaching error?
 1. Do not receive him into your house (vs. 10). Note how this fits with Tit. 3:10 ("reject") and Rom. 16:17,18 ("avoid them").
 2. Do not bid him God speed (vs. 10). To do so makes us a partaker of his evil deeds (vs. 11). What does it mean to bid them God speed? The word that is translated "God speed" means to "be well". Thus, we would be wishing that all goes well for those who are in error, an idea that is contrary to God's will. In the context of 2 Jn. 10,11, the Christian would be saying something like this, "God go with you in your efforts". Certainly, all Christians must recognize that we cannot aid or encourage the enemies of God. We are charged with stopping the mouths of false teachers (Tit. 1:10,11; Eph. 4:27).

- ix. John concludes the book with a desire to come and see the lady and her children and sending personal greetings from her sister (vss. 12,13).

VII. 3 JOHN

- a. The 3rd letter in this series of books is another personal letter written by John to Gaius.
- b. The book mentions three people by name – Gaius, Diotrophes, and Demetrius.
- c. Diotrophes is an evil Christian whom John will bring into account when he comes (vs.10).
- d. Lessons from 3 John.
 - i. Live your life in such a way as to be loved by those who serve God (vs. 1).
 - ii. What if our physical life prospered as our spiritual life prospered? Would we be alive now? (vs. 2).
 - iii. The life of Gaius
 - 1. The truth is in him (vs. 3).
 - 2. He walked in truth (vss. 3,4).
 - 3. He has fulfilled the needs of others, especially in helping others preach the word (vss. 5-7).
 - 4. He was a fellow helper of the truth (vs. 8).
 - iv. Diotrophes
 - 1. He refused to let John's letter get to the church (vs. 9).
 - 2. He spoke against John with malicious words (vs. 10).
 - 3. He refused to receive the brethren (vs. 10).
 - 4. He forbade others from receiving the brethren (vs. 10).
 - 5. He put those out of the church who would help the brethren (vs. 10).
 - 6. John will remember his evil deeds when John comes (vs. 10).
 - v. Follow that which is good, not that which is evil (vs. 11).
 - vi. How do you tell who is of God? If one does good, they are of God (vs. 11).
 - vii. Demetrius
 - 1. He has a good report of all men (vs. 12; cf. Lk. 2:52; Acts 2: 47).
 - 2. He has a good report of the word of God (vs. 12).
 - 3. He has a good report of John (vs. 12).
 - viii. John hopes to come to them shortly and will speak to them of other things which he did not include in this letter (vss. 13,14).

VIII. JUDE

- a. Written by the brother of Jesus to those who are sanctified by God (vs. 1).
- b. It is a book written to warn them about false teachers and their work. Its parallel is 2 Pet. 2.

- c. Lessons from Jude.
 - i. While we would like to be able to talk about the good things in life, it is necessary to stand against false doctrine and warn the church about the dangers both from within and without (vs. 3).
 - ii. We must contend earnestly for the faith (vs. 3).
 - iii. The faith was given to the saints (vs. 3). That is, they had God's word.
 - iv. There are false teachers who have crept in among them (vs. 4).
 - v. Concerning false teachers.
 - 1. Although God saved Israel from Egypt, he destroyed those who sinned (vs. 5).
 - 2. God punished the angels who sinned (vs. 6).
 - 3. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (vs. 7).
 - 4. False teachers
 - a. Defile the flesh (vs. 8).
 - b. Despise dominion (vs. 8). ("disesteem rulers")
 - c. Speak evil of dignities (vs. 8). ("speak evil of things which should be glorified"). The contrast to this is that Michael, the archangel, would not even speak against the Devil, but simply said "The Lord rebuke thee" (vs. 10).
 - d. They follow after greed (vs. 11).
 - e. They are spots in your feasts of charity (vs. 12).
 - f. They work without fear (extremely confident) (vs. 12).
 - g. They are clouds without water (useless) (vs. 12).
 - h. They are trees whose fruit has withered (useless, worthy only to be destroyed) (vs. 12).
 - i. They are raging waves of the sea (dangerous) (vs. 13).
 - j. They are wandering stars (unstable) (vs. 13).
 - k. For them, the blackness of darkness is reserved forever (vs. 13).
 - l. Enoch prophesied against them that God would execute his judgment upon them (vss. 14,15).
 - m. They are murmurers (vs. 16).
 - n. They are complainers (vs. 16).
 - o. They walk after their own lusts (serve self) (vs. 16).
 - p. They speak ear pleasing words so they can take advantage of people (vs. 16).
 - vi. The charge to his audience.
 - 1. Remember that you were warned that false teachers would come (vss. 17,18; cf. Acts 20:92,30; 1 Tim. 4:1-3).
 - 2. These false teachers are not part of you ("separate themselves"), follow worldly things ("sensual"), and do not have the Spirit working with them (vs. 19).

3. Christians are exhorted to keep themselves in the love of God and to always look for eternal life in Christ (vss. 20,21). How would they accomplish this? By building themselves up in the word and by prayer.
4. Christians are to do what is necessary to help others go to Heaven.
 - a. On some, have compassion (vs. 22).
 - b. On some, save with fear (“alarm, fright”) (vs. 23).
 - c. Christians are to hate what sin does to people (vs. 23).
 - d. There are different ways to deal with various situations that come up in the lives of people, but all that we do must be to save souls. Sometimes, a soft approach; sometimes, a hard approach.
5. God is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before him (vs. 24). False teachers cannot do this for you.
6. To God be the glory (vs. 25).