



A PASSAGE THROUGH THE NEW TESTAMENT
PART ELEVEN

The Shorter Letters

**First and Second Peter
First, Second and Third John
Jude**

by Jeff S. Smith

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First and Second Letters of Peter

Authorship: Peter, A.D. 63-67

Simon Peter identifies himself as the author of the two letters that have come to bear his name. In addition, the tiny letter of Jude bears an uncanny, but logical resemblance to the flow of Second Peter, but was evidently written by one of the Lord's fleshly brothers, Judas, or Jude.

Peter's letters were likely written around A.D. 64 from the city of Rome, called Babylon in the letter possibly to disguise the source (5:13). Emperor Nero was just then beginning his persecution of the church and uninspired historians contend that Peter would lose his life as a result. Silvanus and Mark were with Peter, and the latter association may have had something to do with the second canonical gospel account.

The purpose of First Peter is to communicate the commands of God to his servants. Peter vividly recalls Jesus's death and teaches about leadership and perseverance. The apostle wrote to settle them in the midst of bewildering persecution. His guidance is practical and temperate. Peter urges them to stand firm in their faith based on the knowledge of salvation and the example set by Jesus.

The purpose of Second Peter is to deal with some problems, including false teaching and a faltering trust that Jesus was coming back because nearly 35 years had already passed. It is little wonder that the world has grown so lax now that nearly 2000 years have come and gone.

Letter of Jude

Authorship: Jude, A.D. 65

Second Peter 2:1-3:4 appears to quote almost word for word from Jude 4-19, so that both letters show common inspiration and purpose. Jude describes the character of the wicked instructors in trying to train his brethren to recognize them. He tells his readers how to deal with error and how to protect their own from its destructive course.

Jude was written during the last half of the first century when itinerant false prophets were troubling the churches with their errors. Jude exposes their greed, pride and selfishness in an attempt to separate the true saints from their influence.

The First, Second and Third Letters of John

Authorship: John the Apostle, A.D. 85-95

The apostle John is credited with writing these three letters, as well as a gospel account and the Revelation of Jesus Christ. Johannine authorship has been settled among men since at least the second century although the writer does not overtly identify himself. John, “the elder” in these letters, appears to be the last surviving apostle and these letters were likely written after the church had come to maturity—probably between A.D. 85 and 95. All three letters share a similar style with each other and with the gospel clearly attributed to John. Also, apostolic authority is in clear evidence.

The first letter, the longest, is not addressed to anyone in particular, but the other two, while much shorter are respectively addressed to “the elect lady” and the beloved Gaius. The latter two are obviously of a much more personal nature than First John, but all three letters are valuable in regulating individual and church action.

First John appears to be a doctrinal treatise sent to a group of Christians like those in Revelation, troubled both by incessant persecution and insidious false doctrine. While false teachers are the focus of First and Second John, a false brother is at the heart of the third letter.

Without naming them, the Gnostics seem to be the target of John’s ire in the first letter. They were guilty of teaching the early church that Christ could not have come in in sinful flesh and that any iniquity committed in the body would have no effect on the spirit. The result of was skepticism about the cross and tolerance of wicked behavior.

The more personal letters—Second and Third John—are words of encouragement to brethren beloved of John. The apostle is concerned with the children of the elect lady—possibly a euphemism for a local church and its members. Third John addresses division in the church where Gaius worshiped.

Lesson 1: Salvation in Christ Jesus

First Peter 1:1-2:10

1. First Peter 1:2 shows us the way in which man is saved or chosen by God. Election is according to what? Election is by what means? Does this verse teach “faith only” is required for salvation? Explain.

2. Compare verse three to First Corinthians 15:14. What happens to modern theologians who assert that Jesus’s resurrection is a myth or a delusion?

3. What is this inheritance and when will one fully grasp it?

4. What effect do trials have on the faith of a Christian, according to verse 7?

5. List and explain three commands in verse 13:

a.

b.

c.

7. What kind of children does God expect us to be?

8. God “without partiality judges according to what (verse 17)? Does this sound like faith only? Explain.

9. How long will the word of God endure?

10. What then do you say to those who reject the fundamentals of the Bible with arguments that it is antiquated or does not answer the needs and situations of modern people? `

11. The first verse of chapter two speaks in some way to those who desire to be Christians but reject the parts of the Bible they deem antiquated. Explain how such a view is an example of hypocrisy.

12. Explain First Peter 2:2.

13. What is significant of the following descriptions in First Peter 2:9?

a. chosen generation:

b. royal priesthood:

c. holy nation:

d. special people:

Lesson 2: Relationships in Christ Jesus

First Peter 2:11-3:12

1. The Greek word translated fleshly “lusts” (ἐπιθυμιῶν, James 1:14) in verse 11 is the word used for desires and so is broader than the English might indicate. A list of such offenses appears in Galatians 5:19-21. What does Paul indicate is the end of those soldiers and pilgrims who do not abstain?

2. There were apparently some who, in becoming Christians, believed that they were no longer obligated to obey civil law. Paul wrote about the problem and now Peter meets it. What is his teaching here and how does it apply? Are there any limits?

3. What is the social gospel? Are verses 18-19 an indication that the social gospel was in use by the apostles in the first century? Does this indicate the approval by the Holy Spirit of the social gospel?

4. What should we do when unbelievers make fun of us—fire back with vitriolic ferocity or something else? What?

5. Jesus once looked with compassion on the masses of people for they were like sheep going astray. How is the world still like this? How shall we find them a shepherd?

6. What should be a major concern of every sister whose husband is not a Christian? How can this be accomplished?

7. Whom does God judge more attractive: a beauty queen with a wicked heart or a faded woman with a precious spirit?

8. Husbands are given two commands. Complete these statements and then expound upon each one.

- dwell with them with ...

- giving honor to the wife as the weaker vessel as being ...

9. Peter moves beyond the slave and domestic relationships to that in the church. One phrase sticks out in verse 8: "love as brothers." What will that do in a church?

10. What should be our response when a brother attacks us?

6. Verse 3 lists some things that saints should put away. Give an example of each as they invade our lives or minds from time to time.
- a. lewdness
 - b. lusts
 - c. drunkenness
 - d. revelries
 - e. drinking parties
 - f. abominable idolatries
7. What degree of love should brethren have for one another? Could rebuke be included in this type of love (Matthew 18)? Why or why not?
8. Why would one conceal his abilities and not use them in God's service? Compare this passage to Matthew 25:14-30.
9. When we choose to speak on God's behalf, what message should we utter? Exclusively?
10. When the day ends and we have served Jesus while being mocked and ridiculed, what should our attitude be?
11. What four occupations are prohibited in verse 15? Which one might seem ill-placed to some?
12. Verse 17 presents a rhetorical question. "What will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God"?

Lesson 4: Community of Christ Jesus

First Peter 5:1-14

1. Peter presents himself as an elder in verse one. What was one family requirement to be an elder, according to First Timothy 3:2? How do we know that Peter qualified (Matthew 8:14-15)?

2. What is the elder to do for the flock of God?

3. What is a limitation on an elder's authority in verse 2?

4. Who is Chief Shepherd? What is his relation to a Cardinal or Pope?

5. Two commands in verse five go hand-in-hand and are the cure for most of our petty non-doctrinal problems. What are they?

6. What does it mean to be vigilant?

7. Which of these are enemies of vigilance?

a. intoxication

d. indifference

b. apathy

e. lack of study

c. lack of assembly

f. lack of prayer

8. By whom did Peter send this letter?

Lesson 5: Increase in Faith

Second Peter 1:1-21

1. What percentage of “things that pertain to life and godliness” has God given to us through Jesus and his word? What would be the purpose of continuing revelation today?

2. Does partaking of the divine nature entail becoming gods or becoming like God? Refer to First Peter 1:13-16 to complete your answer.

3. Define the following terms found in this passage:

a. faith

a. virtue

b. knowledge

c. self-control

d. perseverance

e. godliness

f. brotherly kindness

g. love

4. Without these attributes, the saint will find himself in what state concerning his knowledge of Jesus Christ?

5. Is it possible to be called a Christian and not truly know Christ? Support your answer with scripture.

6. Does man have any responsibility at all in effecting his salvation?

7. What does Peter mean by being “in this tabernacle” or tent in verse 13?

8. Why is Peter writing these things? Does this imply that they were to continue to stand after his demise?

9. What past event does Peter reference in verses 16-18? Where is it found in the Bible?

10. What is the origin of Scripture? Refer to Second Timothy 3:16 to complete your answer.

11. According to Deuteronomy 18:20-22, what is the test of a prophet?

7. According to verse 14, what type of souls are susceptible to the allure of error? What conditions might lead to this type of soul?

8. What is the way of Balaam (Numbers 22-24; Jude 11, Revelation 2:14)?

9. What is the promise that false teachers make, according to verse 19? What could this entail?

10. What is said of a Christian who returns to the world?

11. What two animals are used as examples of this suicidal attitude among some saints?

Lesson 7: Jesus is Coming

Second Peter 3:1-18

1. Of what apostolic teaching do the scoffers make light? What is their reasoning?
2. How could such reasoning infect the heart of a Christian?
3. To what event does Peter direct their minds to disprove their reasoning as faulty?
4. Will the earth be destroyed by water again? What Genesis passage proves this also?
5. What is part of the reason God has not destroyed the world yet, according to verse 9 (see also Romans 2:1-11)?
6. How much notice from warning signs or other means will be given to us so that we can begin preparing for Jesus's return (cf. Matthew 24:36, First Thessalonians 5:1-11)?

7. What does Peter say will become of the earth when Jesus returns?

8. Even judging by all this destruction, is this a day that we should want to hasten? Why? Why don't some people want to hasten it?

9. How does Peter describe our effort in being found acceptable by Jesus?

10. How did Peter characterize Paul's writings?

11. What do the ignorant and the unstable do with God's word?

12. Peter has warned his readers about apostasy and the error of the wicked. What two things must they now do?

Lesson 8: The Letter of Jude

Jude 1-25

1. What three words does Jude use to describe his audience in verse 1?
2. How should one defend the faith of Christ?
3. Is the faith the subject of continuing revelation forever? Explain.
4. Did false teachers announce themselves as servants of the devil? How did they approach the faithful?
5. The beginning of verse 5 points out the problem they were experiencing and how error crept in unnoticed. What is it?
6. Complete the chart:

EVENT

GOD'S REACTION

- murmurers who escaped Egypt
- angels who left their proper abode
- Sodom and Gomorrah's sin

7. Jude compares false teachers with these last examples, saying, "these dreamers" commit three sinful acts. List them.

8. In pronouncing their woe, Jude accuses them of three symbolic sins:

- In whose way have they gone?
- In whose error have they run greedily?
- In whose rebellion have they perished?

9. What is the relative worth of the presence and instruction of such people?

10. What device do they use to gain advantage over some people?

11. Jude's prescription is fourfold. What is it?

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

12. How do we go about trying to rescue those that can be saved?

13. Who alone will save us? How?

Lesson 9: Walking in the Light

First John 1:1-2:29

1. Who is “the Word of life”? Cite scripture from another of John’s writings to support this.
2. Referring to verse 5, is there any cause to blame God for tragedies or sorrows that befall us? Explain.
3. What is the case if we claim to be Christians but make a practice of doing sinful things? Why won’t God maintain fellowship with us anyway?
4. Describe the difference between sinning and walking in sin.
5. Verse 7 said that Jesus’s blood cleanses us from all sin. What condition of forgiveness does verse 9 describe?
6. This passage shows Jesus in two similar roles. What are they and what do they mean?
7. How can we be certain that we truly know the Lord? Compare to Matthew 7:21-23 to complete your answer.

8. What does obeying the commands of God perfect in a Christian, according to verse 5?

9. What could cause a person who claims to walk in the light to be in darkness?

10. Compare verse 15 with James 4:4. What does love of worldly things do to man's relationship with God?

11. Give an example of the three categories of worldliness:

- lust of the flesh:
- lust of the eyes:
- pride of life:

12. John writes here to protect them from the Gnostic doctrines about Jesus and sin. According to verse 20, what should be used to guard their faith from antichrists? According to verse 24, what is one avenue that this anointing takes in getting to man?

13. If verse 28 is true instruction, what would become of a Christian that *did not* abide in Jesus when He returns?

Lesson 10: Who Are God's Children?

First John 3:1-24

1. John notes two reasons that Christians should be encouraged to live humble and holy lives. The first has to do with the present and our relationship to the Lord. The second deals with the future. What are these two reasons?

2. How does John define sin? Does a transgression have to be of a certain magnitude before it is termed "sin"? Explain.

3. The concept inherent in verses 6-9 is that this one is practicing sin or making it a habit. John does not teach that Christians will be sinlessly perfect, but that he will not abide in any sin. What does John call one who lives in sin (verse 8)?

4. According to verse 10, what should our habit be instead?

5. People in the world sometimes despise Christians, just as Cain despised Abel. Sometimes, one Christian loathes a brother or sister for the same reason. According to verse 12, what is that reason?

6. How do Christians sin after Cain's example (verse 15)?

7. What act of Jesus is mentioned in verse 16 and what should that example lead us to do?

8. Besides death, what might this cause us to do for a brother?

9. Why isn't enough to talk about our good intentions and hope that he finds help from someone, somewhere?

10. According to verse 19, what does this do for our own souls and consciences?

11. How do we abide, or live, in Jesus?

Lesson II: Discernment and Love

First John 4:1-21

1. How do we know that any prophet or preacher is teaching truth (Compare to Acts 17:11 and First Thessalonians 5:21)?

2. The tests that John prescribes in this passage seem to have interest in exposing Gnostic false teachers. According to verse 2, how could these disciples test a suspected Gnostic?

3. A few years ago, bold headlines were printed in the supermarket tabloids that suggested the “Antichrist is in the world.” Is such a thing really so shocking? Explain.

4. Of the false teachers, working against Christ, though claiming to labor for him, John says, “the world hears them.” Why does the world listen especially to such weak teaching?

5. Distinguishing between the spirits of God and error is dependent upon one basic thing. What do the rest do while God’s children pay attention to his word and authority?

6. How was God's love for us shown?

7. John says that no one has physically seen God, but that the world can see his influence. How?

8. Judging by the last ten verses, how does John indicate the importance of love?

9. What does John mean by having "boldness in the day of judgment"?

10. If we are living righteously, need we have a vexing fear of torment? Should we continue to respect the possibility of apostasy? Explain.

11. Can a Christian hate any brother and properly love God? What does John call someone like that?

Lesson 12: Faith in Jesus

First John 5:1-21

1. How are we begotten as children of God?
2. Does John mean to say that we need to do nothing to be pleasing to God and justified in his sight (consider verses 2-3)? Explain.
3. Is God's command to not forsake the assembling of the saints burdensome to you? What would it reveal about one's faith if assembling became a burden?
4. Two great and compatible ideas are entwined in this short passage. One is stated at the very end of verse 4 and the other is stated in verse 3. What are they?
5. How did Jesus come "by water"?
6. What does John say of the relationship between the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit?
7. What three witnesses does John call?

8. According to verse 13, why did John write this letter?

9. Consider Hebrews 10:32-39. What will become of a saint that recants his faith for some reason?

10. One stipulation on prayer is noted here. What is that condition? What things would that eliminate?

11. What should one do for a brother who is falling into some sinful pursuit, such as gambling, drinking or forsaking the assembling of the saints?

12. The “sin leading to death” seems to have an attachment to a complete jettisoning of one’s faith, rather than the types of things mentioned in question 11 (cf. Hebrews 6:4-6). May we, “according to God’s will” pray that someone be saved without his having faith or remaining faithful?

13. Under whose influence should the saint be? Under whose sway is the world?

Lesson 13: Second John and Third John

Second John 1-13 and Third John 1-14

1. What is the bond of love that ties John to the lady and her children and to all believers? Should this still be true of us today?

2. In a few words each, define grace, mercy and peace as they relate to the faith.

- grace
- mercy
- peace

3. We are thrilled when our children begin to walk. For what reason is John thrilled for here?

4. What is love, according to verse 6? What does it mean “to walk” in this setting?

5. (Second John 7-13) What is said of one who goes beyond God’s word? How should we treat such a one?

6. How does a soul prosper?

7. What one word could describe John's command in verse 5? What two classes are to be its recipients?

8. How do we become their fellow workers for the truth?

9. How does this relate to Second John 9-11?

10. What prompted Diotrephes to reject John's letter?

11. How far had he gone?

12. Had Diotrephes truly "seen God"? Explain.

13. Demetrius's good testimony came not only from men but also from what thing itself?

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