



**New Testament Survey 3**  
**The General Letters and Revelation**  
**Teaching Notes**

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# Lesson 1 – Hebrews

## Introduction

The General Letters, also known as the General Epistles, do not always receive as much attention as other parts of the New Testament. The Gospels, Acts, and Paul's Letters are well-known and often studied. But if we will take the time to look carefully at the collection of letters at the end of the New Testament along with the book of Revelation, we will find great treasures of truth, wisdom, and practical guidance that will strengthen our faith and deepen our love for our Lord Jesus. In this course we will explore these books together, beginning with the book of Hebrews and finishing the New Testament in the book of Revelation. The daily lessons are organized in a similar way to the New Testament courses we have already completed. Our desire is to see each student gain a more complete understanding and a deeper appreciation for the General Letters, as well as the ability to read and interpret their meaning accurately.

## Part 1 – Hebrews

The book of Hebrews is a challenge and a delight to study. In many ways, it is different from all of the other letters in the New Testament. It does not tell us who its author is. It does not include some of the regular parts of a normal letter such as a greeting or word of thanksgiving at the beginning. It also does not contain many specific instructions or practical guidance for what we should and should not do as Christians. But even though it lacks some of those things, it is a book full of truth and insight that will increase our understanding of the whole Bible.

Some people have called the book of Hebrews a commentary on the Old Testament. This is true in many ways. The only book in the New Testament with more connections to the Old Testament than Hebrews is the book of Revelation. But Hebrews is much more direct in its explanation of the Old Testament. Chapter by chapter, the author of Hebrews explains how Jesus is greater than every person or religious ritual that formed the religious faith of Jews in the Old Testament. If you want to summarize the book of Hebrews in one short phrase, you can say, "Jesus is Greater!" In this lesson, we will look more closely at Hebrews to understand what God is teaching through this important book.

For each book we study in this course, we will explore the following areas: (1) key historical facts, (2) a basic outline of the book with key sections explained, (3) explanation of noteworthy passages, and (4) important theological themes.

### (1) Key Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**  
Unknown

One of the greatest mysteries of the New Testament is this question, "Who wrote the book of Hebrews?" The truth is that no one knows for certain. Many theories have been given over the centuries. Many people think this was written by the apostle Paul

because of his extensive knowledge of the Old Testament. Yet Paul was called by Jesus to be an apostle to the Gentiles, and the book of Hebrews is written especially for Christians who come from a Jewish background. Others have believed the book was written by Luke, Apollos, Barnabas, Clement of Rome, or many others. This is what we do know for certain. (1) The author had a deep knowledge of the Old Testament and all its forms of worship. (2) The author either was an apostle or was personally acquainted with the apostles. (3) Christians received and studied this book as true Scripture from God even in the earliest days of Christianity.

- **When was it written?**

Approximately AD 65

The book of Hebrews was most likely written in the mid-60s, around the year 65. At this time, the Emperor Nero was persecuting Christians severely, especially around Rome. This letter was written to help and encourage those Christians.

- **Where was it written?**

Unknown

The question of where the author of Hebrews was located when he wrote the letter is also unknown. Few clues are available from the text of the book or from other historical sources.

- **To whom was it written?**

Jewish Christians in Rome

The book of Hebrews does not include the standard greeting that was found in most ancient letters to tell who the recipients were. However, we have three important clues that help us to know this was written to Jewish Christians in Rome. (1) The title of the letter, "Hebrews," makes it clear that Jewish Christians are intended to read this. (2) The frequent use of the Old Testament throughout the book agree with this idea also. (3) In 13:24, the author says, "Those who are from Italy send you greetings." This most likely means the letter was sent to Italy (Rome) and the recipients knew who the author was talking about.

- **What was the situation that caused the author to send this letter?**

Persecution of Christians that caused some to return to Judaism

In the year 64, the Emperor Nero launched a new and severe persecution against Christians, especially in Rome. It was a dangerous time to be a Christian. The church in Rome included a mix of Gentile and Jewish background Christians, and it seems that some of the Jewish Christians were considering abandoning their faith and returning to Judaism so that they could avoid the persecution.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Hebrews?**

To warn Christians about trying to avoid persecution by returning to Judaism

Suffering and difficulty is never a good reason to walk away from truth. The most important truth in the Christian faith is that Jesus is the Christ who died on the cross and rose again from the grave. Our entire lives, faith, and hope rest on that fact. But some believers in Rome were ready to deny this and return to the traditions of Judaism for safety. We can understand why they felt afraid, but this letter was written to remind them of truth and call them back to Christ, the One who is greater than all our fears and dangers.

- **What is the most important theological theme?**  
Christ is greater than all Old Testament personalities and religious forms.

<b>Key Historical Facts</b>	
Who is the author?	Unknown
When was it written?	Approximately AD 65
Where was it written?	Unknown
To whom was it written?	Jewish Christians in Rome
What was the situation in the churches?	Persecution of Christians that caused some to return to Judaism
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To warn Christians about trying to avoid persecution by returning to Judaism
What is the most important theological theme?	Christ is greater than all Old Testament personalities and religious forms.

## (2) Basic Outline

The book of Hebrews carefully explains how Jesus is superior to every important person or ritual that was part of the Jewish approach to worship in the Old Testament. In every section, the author shows how those who came before Christ were limited in their power and were never intended to save us. Then he shows that Jesus is the ultimate Savior sent by God. Hebrews teaches that Jesus is greater than the prophets, the angels, Moses, Melchizedek, and even greater than the whole system of sacrifices and temple worship.<sup>1</sup>

- I. Jesus Our Heavenly King (1:1-4:16)
  - A. The Son who is greater than the prophets and the angels (1:1-2:4)
  - B. The Faithful High Priest (2:5-18)
  - C. The Sabbath-giver who is greater than Moses (3:1-4:16)
- II. Jesus Our Great High Priest (5:1-10:25)
  - A. Growing to Maturity (5:1-14)
  - B. Maturity Brings Confident Hope (6:1-20)
  - C. Drawing Near to God (7:1-10:25)

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<sup>1</sup> The book outlines in this course are adapted from those published in *The Cradle, The Cross, and the Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.), written by Andreas J. Kostenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2016).

1. A High Priest Greater than Melchizedek (7:1-28)
  2. A High Priest who Purifies and Prepares his people (8:1-10:18)
  3. Response to our High Priest: Draw Near to God (10:19-25)
- III. Jesus the Author and Perfector of Our Faith (10:26-13:16)
- A. Run the Race by Faith (10:26-11:40)
  - B. Run the Race Set Before You (12:1-29)
  - C. Go to Jesus outside the Camp (13:1-16)
- IV. Conclusion (13:17-25)

### (3) Noteworthy Passages in Hebrews

- *God speaks to us through His Son (1:1-4)*

The very first verses in this book make a bold and important claim. “Long ago,” during the times of the Old Testament, God spoke to his people through prophets, a group of holy men who different from any other religious figures in the Bible. But then verse two says, “But in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son.” When we studied the book of Acts, we learned that “the last days” refers to all of the time from the day of Pentecost until the return of Christ. This means that we are living in the last days that these verses are talking about.

So what is important about this? According to these verses, God now speaks to us by his Son. That is a positive way of saying that God does not reveal himself or send his messages through prophets today in the way that He did in the Old Testament. Now we hear God speak through his Son, Jesus. In the New Testament, we find God’s Word delivered to us through the teachings of his Son and the apostles who were trained and sent by Christ. Verses 2-4 explain why we should prefer listening to Jesus over prophets. Jesus himself is the exalted and glorious Son of the Most High. “He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature.” If we can learn directly from Jesus and his apostles by studying Scripture, why would we want to set this aside and listen to those who call themselves prophets today?

- *The High Priest who knows our weakness (4:14-16)*

This passage contains a very real and powerful word of comfort and encouragement to Christians who are struggling. They tell us why we can trust Christ to care for us, even when we are weak or doubting. Verse 15 says, “We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses...” We know that Jesus intercedes to us as a priest at all times. But he is a priest who knows us well. He has lived in this world the way that we have. He has personally experienced all of the things that trouble us. He knows how it feels to hurt, to be hungry, to be cold, to be sick, to grieve over those who have died, and to face temptation to sin. He does not condemn us for being weak, because he became like us and knows that it is difficult. For this reason, we find comfort knowing that our High Priest understands us and stands for us before the Father.

- *Christ the Perfect and Final Sacrifice (9:11-14, 23-26)*

Chapters 9 and 10 need to be read slowly and carefully. They include careful explanations and details showing how Jesus is the fulfillment of all of the sacrificial

systems that were established for the Jews in the Old Testament. Here we find a very important truth that is a foundation to our faith. “But as it is, [Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (9:26). This is the reason that Christians do not offer sacrifices the way that other religions do. Even the Jews had a complicated system of sacrifices including bulls, goats, sheep, and even birds to atone for their sins. But Christians do not make sacrifices because the price of our sins has been paid in full. Jesus offered himself – the Son of God in human flesh – as a perfect sacrifice that was sufficient to cover the sins of all who come to the Father through faith in him. There is nothing more for us to add. Instead of sacrifices to receive forgiveness, we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice in love and thanksgiving to the God who gave his son to save us (Romans 12:1-2).

- *Faith that leads to an eternal homeland (11:1-40)*

Chapter 11 has been called the “Hall of Faith” by many Christians. In this chapter, the author of Hebrews lists dozens of Old Testament heroes of faith as examples of those whose lives are acceptable to God. We learn some important lessons by noticing what is emphasized and what is not in this chapter. First, we know that saints are not celebrated because they were perfectly righteous and sinless before God. Every one of them struggled and doubted and sinned, and sometimes their sins were very serious. But they are commended in this chapter because of their faith. Verse 1 gives us the clearest definition of faith in the Bible: “Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.” Faith is hearing God’s Word, believing him, and living according to his promises, even when we cannot see any of those promises being fulfilled yet.

We should also notice how God describes these heroes of faith. They were people who “acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth,” and who “desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one” (verses 13, 16). They were saints “of whom the world was not worthy” (verse 38). They were remarkable because they believed God and they desired his promises more than anything they found in this world. “Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city” (verse 16). May the same be said about us when we live by faith.

#### (4) Important Theological Theme

- *Christ is greater than all Old Testament personalities and religious forms.*

Remember that this letter was written to convince Jewish Christians not to abandon Christ and return to their Jewish traditions. It convinces them by showing that Jesus is superior to everything found in the Old Testament. He is greater than the prophets (chapter 1). He is greater than the angels (chapters 1 and 2). He is greater than Moses (chapter 3). He is the fulfillment of Sabbath rest (chapter 4). He is greater than Melchizedek (chapter 7). He is greater than the Old Covenant and its priesthood (chapters 7 and 8). He is greater than the Old Testament worship and sacrifices (chapters 9 and 10). He is the author and the perfecter of our faith, the source of life and hope for all who look to him (chapter 12). If Jesus is so glorious, why would they ever want to return to traditions and rituals that were empty of truth and power

compared to Jesus. Why would we ever consider placing our faith in anyone or anything besides him?

## Part 2 –Interpretive Journey Practice

Explain to the students that we will continue using the five steps of the Interpretive Journey learned in the previous course to develop our skills in faithful and accurate biblical interpretation. Distribute copies of the full-page picture of the Interpretive Journey found at the end of this lesson, and lead students through the questions below to refresh their memory of the process.<sup>2</sup>

ASK: What are the five steps of the Interpretive Journey? What is the Key Question that goes with each step?

*Lead the students through this review of the 5 Steps and Key Questions quickly. They should be able to answer this with no problems.*

- Step One – Grasp the text in their town.
  - Key Question – What did the text mean to the original audience?
- Step Two – Measure the width of the river to cross.
  - Key Question – What are the differences between the biblical audience and us?
- Step Three – Cross the Bridge of Timeless Truth
  - Key Question – What is the unchanging biblical principle in this passage?
- Step Four – Consult the biblical map.
  - Key Question – How does our timeless truth fit with the rest of the Bible?
  - Step Five – Grasp the text in our town.
    - Key Question – How should individual Christians and churches live out the timeless truth in this passage?



Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of Hebrews 12:1-3. This is now the third course in our New Testament Survey, and students should be very familiar with the Interpretive Journey by now. Therefore, these notes

<sup>2</sup> The Interpretive Journey was developed by Drs. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays of Ouachita Baptist University and is used in this course with the authors' permission. A complete explanation of the Interpretive Journey can be found in their book, *Grasping God's Word*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Zondervan Academic: 2012.

do not provide as many answers as the practice studies in earlier courses. Encourage students to find the necessary information by reviewing their notes or by carefully studying the text of Scripture. Try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take about 30 minutes, and students will not be able to work out every detail or question they may have about the question. Help them focus on the most important points in this passage.

Read Hebrews 12:1-3.

Therefore, since we have surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of God. Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself so that you will not grow weary or fainthearted.

### Step One – Grasp the Text in Their Town

Instruct the group to look closely at the verses and answer as many of the following questions as possible just from reading the text. Refer to information from earlier in this lesson about interpreting the book of Hebrews.

ASK

#### Observing the Text

- What is written in this passage? Describe the text.  
*Students should work together to rephrase the passage in their own words. Include as many details as possible, including specific explanations and instructions.*
- When was this written?
- Who wrote this book?
- What is the author's relationship to the audience before this letter?
- Who is being spoken to?
- What is the author's attitude toward the audience?
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?

#### Observing the Context

- Historical Context
  - Where does this book fit in the history of the New Testament?
  - What was the local situation for the audience receiving this letter?
  - What was the attitude and life situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
  - Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?
- Literary Context



- What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
- What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
- What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
- Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the middle? Is it a summary at the end?

### Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.  
*Example: In Hebrews 12:1-3, the writer is urging Roman Christians to endure hardship and persecution in faith by casting off sin and by remembering the examples of faith from those who came before them and from the Lord Jesus himself.*

### Step Two – Measure the Width of the River to Cross

For this step, encourage the students to discuss what they know of each of the major categories listed below.

- Language – What language did Paul write in? Do the differences between their languages and the language that we are speaking influence how we understand this?
- Time – When was all this happening? What do we know today that they did not know?
- Culture – What was important to the disciples in their culture that is not as familiar to us today?
- Situation – What are some significant ways that our situation is similar to or different from the situation the disciples were in?
- Relationship to God – What was the disciples' relationship to God in this story? What about the original readers of Galatians? How is their relationship to God like ours or different from ours?

ASK: What are the most important similarities between this story (their town) and our story (our town?) What are some important differences?

ASK: Would you consider the river between their town and our town to be extremely wide (major, important differences), narrow (small differences), or something in between? Why do you think that?

### Step Three – Cross the Bridge of Timeless Truth

Instruct the students to think carefully about everything learned about this passage in the first two steps. Re-read the passage once or twice if necessary.

ASK: Now work together to write a short sentence using present tense verbs that communicates that timeless truth taught in this passage. Remember the guiding questions for this step.

- Is this truth reflected clearly in the text?
- Is this truth timeless and not tied to a specific situation?
- Is this principle universal and not tied to a particular culture?
- Does this principle agree with the teaching of the rest of the Bible?
- Does this principle apply both the biblical audience in “their town” and today’s Christians in “our town?”

Write the Timeless Truth that is found in this passage:

- *Example: “All Christians are called to endure in faith, even though we will experience very difficult days. We can find strength to persevere by fleeing sin and by remembering the examples of those who lived by faith before us, including the example of Jesus.*

#### Step Four – Consult the Biblical Map

At this time, help the students to compare their timeless truth to other verses and passages in the New Testament to see whether there are any problems with their interpretation.

ASK: What other verses in the New Testament can support or contradict the timeless truth we have discovered in this passage?

ASK: Based on these other verses you have suggested, does the timeless truth we discovered in this passage agree with the rest of God’s Word?

#### Step Five – Grasp the Text in Our Town

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we believe?

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we do?

ASK: How can we begin to obey this biblical principle?

ASK: How does this biblical principle apply to the different relationships in our lives?

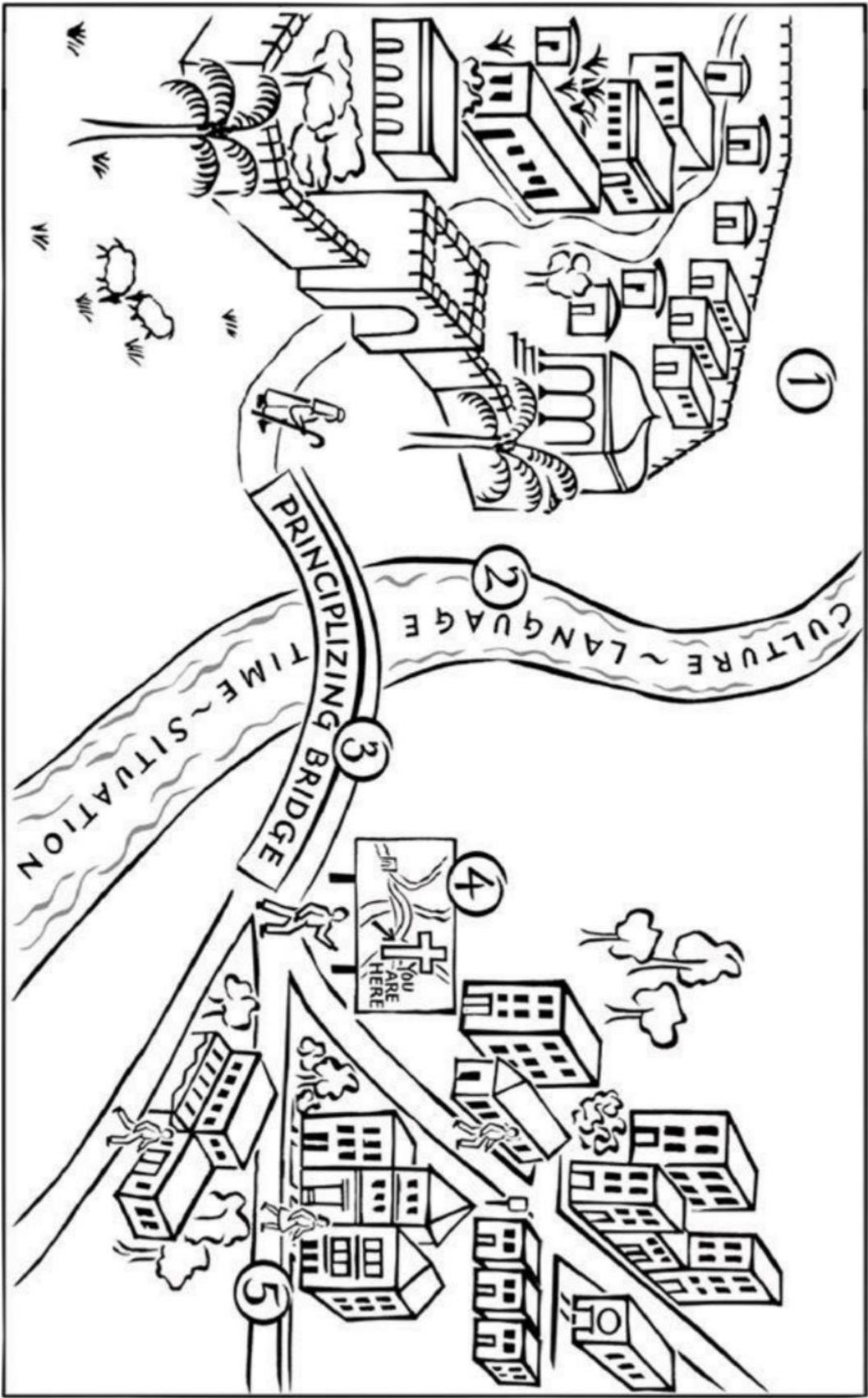
ASK: What would happen if everyone in our church believed and obeyed this biblical principle?

ASK: Look at all the suggested applications that we have found for teaching this timeless truth to people in “our town.” If you were teaching a Bible study on this passage, which applications would you include in your lesson? Choose two or three and explain why you would want to include them.

### **Part 3 – Review and Discussion**

This first lesson has provided much information, and the lessons that follow will be challenging as well. Ask the following questions to give students an opportunity to remember some of the details and think about the new ideas they have learned so far.

1. Who was the author of Hebrews?  
*Unknown*
2. Who was the book of Hebrews written to?  
*Jewish Christians living in Rome*
3. What was the situation that led the author to write the book of Hebrews?  
*Persecution of Christians that caused some to return to Judaism*
4. What is the most important theological theme in the book of Hebrews?  
*Christ is greater than all Old Testament personalities and religious forms.*
5. What has been the most helpful or interesting that you have learned in this lesson?



## Lesson 2 – James

### Introduction

The book of James is a great partner for the book of Hebrews. Hebrews is deep in theological truth, revealing Christ in his glory and calling Christians to deep and enduring faith. The book of James balances this message with practical theology. It calls us to put our faith to work. It is not enough to simply say that we believe certain truths about Christ, we must live in a way that shows He has changed us. James is a challenging book in many ways, but it is one that will help us think in fresh ways about the way we live as Christians in the world today.

### Part 1 – James

In this lesson, we will explore the powerful teachings written in the book of James. Just as we did in the previous lesson, we will (1) learn the historical facts about this letter, (2) look at a basic outline of its contents, (3) explore some of the noteworthy passages in a little more detail, and (4) think about the most important theological theme. After we have learned all these things, we will use our new knowledge by practicing the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to study a section of the book of James together.

#### (1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

James

The author of James was not the brother of John who was one of the 12 disciples. This is James, the son of Joseph and Mary, half-brother to Jesus

- **When was it written?**

Approximately AD 45

The book of James was likely written earlier than any of Paul's letters that are in the New Testament. This letter was probably written near the year 45, three or four years before Paul wrote the book of Galatians.

- **Where was it written?**

Jerusalem

James was a known leader in the church of Jerusalem who was killed by King Agrippa (Acts 12). This letter was most likely written while James was living in Jerusalem and leading the church there.

- **To whom was it written?**

Jewish Christians who were scattered in various places outside of Jerusalem

James writes this letter to “the twelve tribes in the Dispersion.” The twelve tribes refers to the Jews, the people of Israel descended from the twelve sons of Jacob. The Dispersion refers to all of the places outside of Jerusalem and Judea where Jews have scattered for various reasons. If Jerusalem and Judea were seen as the homeland, then Jews living in any other place were considered part of the Dispersion.

- **What was the situation that caused James to write this letter?**

This letter was written to be shared among Christians in many places who had fled Jerusalem because of persecution.

Most likely, the scattered Jewish Christians who received this letter had been scattered by persecution occurring in and around Jerusalem. Many Christians fled the city to find safety in other places. The first example of this is recorded in Acts 8:1.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing James?**

To urge Christians to continue actively living their faith, walking in wisdom, and demonstrating the genuineness of their faith with good works.

The Christian faith was never intended to be private or kept to yourself. James was writing to instruct and encourage these believers to continue living in the ways that Jesus taught us to live. We can understand that they may have been nervous about showing their faith openly because of the persecution they had just escaped, but James teaches that we must always live in the way the Jesus lived.

- **What is the most important theological theme?**

Faith that works

<b>Key Historical Facts</b>	
Who is the author?	James
When was it written?	AD 45
Where was it written?	Jerusalem
To whom was it written?	Jewish Christians who were scattered in various places outside of Jerusalem
What was the situation in the church?	This letter was written to be shared among Christians in many places who had fled Jerusalem because of persecution.
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To urge Christians to continue actively living their faith, walking in wisdom, and demonstrating the genuineness of their faith with good works.
What is the most important theological theme?	Faith that works.

## (2) Basic Outline

Christian pastors and scholars have said for generations that James is one of the most difficult books in the New Testament to outline. The body of the letter does not begin with doctrine and move to practical instructions the way that Paul's letters do. Instead, James moves from one topic to another, explaining how our faith in Christ should cause us to live in a way that is different from the unbelieving world. The outline below shows one way to organize the teachings of James so that we can understand them better.

- I. Introduction: The Path to Christian Maturity (1:1-27)
  - A. Major Themes: Trials and Temptations (1:2-18)
  - B. The Mark of True Religion (1:19-27)
- II. Body: The Nature of True Faith and Urging to Live according to Faith (2:1-5:11)
  - A. Genuine Faith Results in Works (2:1-26)
  - B. Called to Live by Faith, not Pride (3:1-4:10)
    1. Correct and Incorrect Use of the Tongue (3:1-12)
    2. Correct and Incorrect Use of Wisdom (3:13-4:10)
  - C. Called to Live by Faith, not Impatience (4:11-5:11)
    1. God will judge slanderers. (4:11-12)
    2. God will judge arrogant merchants. (4:13-17)
    3. God will judge the wealthy who exploit the poor. (5:1-6)
    4. Call to be patient. (5:7-11)
- III. Conclusion (5:12-20)

## (3) Noteworthy Passages in James

- *Joy in Trials and Testing (1:2-8)*

Do these words surprise you: "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds"? Most of us want to avoid trials and difficulties at all times. But James says that we should welcome these difficulties with joy. These verses teach us that we can embrace difficulty because we know that God uses them for our good. Our Father does not cause his children to endure trials for no reason. Instead, when our faith is challenged and yet we persevere, we find that our faith is even stronger and more certain. Not only that, we are encouraged to seek God for wisdom and help when we face these trials. He does not leave us alone but gives us all that we need to remain strong and faithful.

But there is a challenge that comes with this teaching. When we ask of God, we must ask in faith, trusting in him alone and not doubting. Many times we are tempted to ask God for help, but then we also want to look for other sources of help in case He doesn't give us what we need. So we ask the church to pray for our child's sickness, but then we visit a traditional healer to see if we can find help or power there. Or we pray for God to provide money to meet a critical need, then we take the money we already have and gamble with it, hoping that maybe we can win the extra money we need. God says these actions reveal that we have no true faith in him, and those who

do these things should expect no help from him.

- *Faith without Works is Dead (2:14-26)*

Many people believe that these verses are confusing or controversial, but the teaching in them is plain. The summary of the whole passage is verse 26: “For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead.” This is a great comparison to help us understand. A body without a spirit is not considered a living human. It is dead. It might look like a person, but there is no real life inside. In the same way, a person who only talks like a Christian can have a dead faith. Someone can say that he is a Christian and believes in Jesus, and maybe even talk about Jesus or pray in his Name. But if his life does not show that his faith has changed the way he lives, James teaches us that his faith is dead and worthless. Talking about faith without living according to faith is meaningless.

Most people would agree that our faith should direct our lives, causing us to be kind, gracious, generous, and honest. So why are these verses considered controversial. If we read verse 24, we will see: “You see that a person is justified by works and not by faith alone.” What do we do with that? If you remember from New Testament Survey 2, the most important theological theme of Galatians is that we are justified by faith alone, not by works of righteousness. Is James disagreeing with Paul here? The answer is no. To understand this, we need to understand the message that each writer was trying to teach. On one hand, Paul was writing to the Galatian believers who were listening to false teachers claiming that they can only be saved if they have faith in Jesus AND also follow all of the Old Testament law. Paul is shouting that this is not true! We are forgiven and saved only putting our faith in Jesus, believing that He must save us because we cannot save ourselves. On the other hand, James is writing to Christians who were fleeing persecution and probably afraid to draw attention to themselves. Some of them might say they believed in Jesus if they were asked, but they did not want to do anything that might bring them trouble or help others who were in trouble. They wanted a quiet faith that did not cause problems. James is teaching that this is no kind of faith at all! So Paul is teaching that we cannot add our works to what Jesus has done in order to be saved. James is teaching that true faith must change our lives and behaviors, otherwise we do not have true faith at all. We are saved only through faith in Jesus, but true faith in Jesus ALWAYS produces good works from those who believe.

- *Humble Yourselves before the Lord (4:1-10)*

The way that James teaches and writes often sounds like Jesus. He takes important theological truth and applies it both to our actions and to our hearts. Just as Jesus insisted that sin is not just on the outside of our lives, but in our hearts, James teaches us that our faith should change the attitudes we hold inside as well. In this passage, we see that the fighting, jealousy, and frustration that we experience comes from a heart that is divided. We say that we have faith in God, but our heart still desires the things that this world offers – power, pleasure, and prosperity. But James teaches us, “Whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (verse 4). You must make a choice; you cannot live by faith and still chase after the world’s



promises. God will not allow it. But if you humble yourself to follow Jesus and choose his promises over the world, he gives us a powerful promise and reassurance. “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you” (verses 7-8). Pride tells us that we can have eternal life from Jesus while still loving the pleasures of the world. But humble faith hopes only in Jesus, knowing that this world and all that it offers is passing away soon.

- *The Prayer of Faith (5:13-18)*

In these verses, James gives both instructions and strong encouragement to pray in faith. If we are suffering, we are directed to pray. If we are cheerful, then we rejoice in song (a prayer set to music). Then we receive very interesting instructions. If you are sick, call the elders to anoint you and pray. Confess your sins so that you may be healed. “The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working” (verse 16). These verses contain beautiful and powerful truth, but it is also a teaching that can be misunderstood. Anytime we read a verse that mentions power, people become very interested. These verses teach that our prayers can be very powerful, so how should we understand this? A good way to approach this is to ask ourselves what is the true source of the power that James is describing. Does the power come from our righteousness and goodness? No, of course not. Many people believe that our faith is what gives prayers power. They often believe that if they just have enough faith, then God will answer their prayers. But faith is only as good as the object it believes in. The person who thinks, “If I just have enough faith, then God will hear,” is not believing in God but believing in his own power to have faith. This is the same as the person who would believe in his own righteousness to have power. If I am believing in the power of my faith, then I am believing in myself. But we know that true power to heal comes only from God. Our faith is not our own goodness, or in the power of our own prayer. We pray in faith because we trust in God alone to bring healing. We also pray knowing that God may not always give the solution or healing we desire. This is why Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, “Not my will, but yours, be done” (Luke 22:42). We pray with complete hope that God alone will heal us, and at the same time we are humble to confess that God knows and sees more than us, and He may have a greater plan than what we are asking.

#### (4) Important Theological Theme

- *Faith that works.*

We are saved by faith alone in Christ and what He has done for us. But we are saved “to do good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). James brings this teaching to our lives and shows us how to live as Jesus lived. True faith brings joy and perseverance in trials. True faith brings patience and wisdom to listen. True faith controls the tongue. True faith cares for those who are vulnerable: the poor, the orphan, and the widow. True faith treats all people as valuable and honored. True faith desires God’s promises and rejects the world. True faith trusts God in humility, putting no trust in the future or in riches. True faith waits

for God to bring justice and judgment to the wicked, praying in hope that God will meet all of our needs.

## **Part 2 –Interpretive Journey Practice**

Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of James 1:22-25. This is now the third course in our New Testament Survey, and students should be very familiar with the Interpretive Journey by now. Therefore, these notes do not provide as many answers as the practice studies in earlier courses. Encourage students to find the necessary information by reviewing their notes or by carefully studying the text of Scripture. Try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take about 30 minutes, and students will not be able to work out every detail or question they may have about the question. Help them focus on the most important points in this passage.

Read James 1:22-25.

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in the mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

### Step One – Grasp the Text in Their Town

Instruct the group to look closely at the verses and answer as many of the following questions as possible just from reading the text. Refer to information from earlier in this lesson about interpreting the book of James.

ASK

#### Observing the Text

- What is written in this passage? Describe the text.  
*Students should work together to rephrase the passage in their own words. Include as many details as possible, including specific explanations and instructions.*
- When was this written?
- Who wrote this book?
- What is the author's relationship to the audience before this letter?
- Who is being spoken to?
- What is the author's attitude toward the audience?
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?

#### Observing the Context

- Historical Context
  - Where does this book fit in the history of the New Testament?

- What was the local situation for the audience receiving this letter?
- What was the attitude and life situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
- Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?
- Literary Context
  - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
  - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
  - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
  - Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the middle? Is it a summary at the end?

### Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.  
*Example: In James 1:22-25, James instructs the Christians who have fled Jerusalem to actively obey what is taught in Scripture instead of hearing and agreeing only. He gives reassurance that those who act on their faith will find God's blessings as they obey.*

### Step Two – Measure the Width of the River to Cross

For this step, encourage the students to discuss what they know of each of the major categories listed below.

- Language – What language did Paul write in? Do the differences between their languages and the language that we are speaking influence how we understand this?
- Time – When was all this happening? What do we know today that they did not know?
- Culture – What was important to the disciples in their culture that is not as familiar to us today?
- Situation – What are some significant ways that our situation is similar to or different from the situation the disciples were in?
- Relationship to God – What was the disciples' relationship to God in this story? What about the original readers of Galatians? How is their relationship to God like ours or different from ours?

ASK: What are the most important similarities between this story (their town) and our story (our town)? What are some important differences?

ASK: Would you consider the river between their town and our town to be extremely wide (major, important differences), narrow (small differences), or something in between? Why do

you think that?

### Step Three – Cross the Bridge of Timeless Truth

Instruct the students to think carefully about everything learned about this passage in the first two steps. Re-read the passage once or twice if necessary.

ASK: Now work together to write a short sentence using present tense verbs that communicates that timeless truth taught in this passage. Remember the guiding questions for this step.

- Is this truth reflected clearly in the text?
- Is this truth timeless and not tied to a specific situation?
- Is this principle universal and not tied to a particular culture?
- Does this principle agree with the teaching of the rest of the Bible?
- Does this principle apply both the biblical audience in “their town” and today’s Christians in “our town?”

Write the Timeless Truth that is found in this passage:

- *Example: “Christians are commanded to do all that is taught in Scripture, not to simply listen and agree. And God promises that those who live according to the truth found in the Bible will be blessed by God as they obey.”*

### Step Four – Consult the Biblical Map

At this time, help the students to compare their timeless truth to other verses and passages in the New Testament to see whether there are any problems with their interpretation.

ASK: What other verses in the New Testament can support or contradict the timeless truth we have discovered in this passage?

ASK: Based on these other verses you have suggested, does the timeless truth we discovered in this passage agree with the rest of God’s Word?

### Step Five – Grasp the Text in Our Town

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we believe?

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we do?

ASK: How can we begin to obey this biblical principle?

ASK: How does this biblical principle apply to the different relationships in our lives?

ASK: What would happen if everyone in our church believed and obeyed this biblical principle?

ASK: Look at all the suggested applications that we have found for teaching this timeless truth to people in “our town.” If you were teaching a Bible study on this passage, which

applications would you include in your lesson? Choose two or three and explain why you would want to include them.

### Part 3 – Review

1. Which passage in the book of Hebrews teaches that God no longer speaks to us through prophets, but now speaks through his Son?  
*Hebrews 1:1-4*
2. What is the most important theological theme in the book of Hebrews?  
*Christ is greater than all Old Testament personalities and religious forms.*
3. Who is the author of the book of James?  
*James, the half-brother of Jesus, son of Joseph and Mary*
4. When was the book of James written?  
*Approximately AD 45.*
5. What was the situation that caused James to write his letter to the Jewish Christians?  
*Persecution in and around Jerusalem had scattered Jewish Christians and caused them to settle in various places outside of Jerusalem and Judea.*
6. Explain the difference between Paul’s statement that “a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16) and James’s teaching that “a person is justified by works and not by faith alone” (James 2:24).  
*To understand this, we need to understand the message that each writer was trying to teach. On one hand, Paul was writing to the Galatian believers who were listening to false teachers claiming that they can only be saved if they have faith in Jesus AND also follow all of the Old Testament law. Paul is shouting that this is not true! We are forgiven and saved only putting our faith in Jesus, believing that He must save us because we cannot save ourselves. On the other hand, James is writing to Christians who were fleeing persecution and probably afraid to draw attention to themselves. Some of them might say they believed in Jesus if they were asked, but they did not want to do anything that might bring them trouble or help others who were in trouble. They wanted a quiet faith that did not cause problems. James is teaching that this is no kind of faith at all! So Paul is teaching that we cannot add our works to what Jesus has done in order to be saved. James is teaching that true faith must change our lives and behaviors, otherwise we do not have true faith at all. We are saved only through faith in Jesus, but true faith in Jesus ALWAYS produces good works from those who believe.*

## Lesson 3 – 1 Peter, 2 Peter, Jude

### Introduction

We only have a few letters remaining in the New Testament, and each of these is loaded with important truth for Christians to know and believe. What does God say about who we are as Christians in an unbelieving world? What does God say about our eternal life in Christ, and what does that mean for us today? How can we know for certain that God has truly saved us? How should we respond when we find ourselves surrounded by people teaching strange and false things in the name of Jesus? All of these questions and others receive clear answers in the books we will be studying in the next two lessons. In this lesson, we will explore the books of 1 Peter, 2 Peter, and Jude. Just as we did in the previous lesson, we will (1) learn the historical facts about these letters, (2) look at a basic outline of their contents, (3) explore some of the noteworthy passages in a little more detail, and (4) think about the important theological themes found each book. After we have learned all these things, we will use our new knowledge by practicing the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to study a section of one of these books together.

### Part 1 – 1 Peter

#### (1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Peter

The author of this letter is Simon Peter, brother of Andrew, one of the twelve called by Jesus and the leader of the apostles.

- **When was it written?**

Approximately AD 62-63

This is another letter written in response to persecution in the early church. 1 Peter was probably written in the early 60s during the persecution of the Emperor Nero.

- **Where was it written?**

Rome

According to 1 Peter 5:13, this letter was written in “Babylon.” Since we know that the Babylon we read about in the Old Testament was a deserted city at this time, Peter is most likely using the name Babylon symbolically for Rome, the seat of worldly power at that time.

- **To whom was it written?**

Christians in northern Asia Minor (modern day northern Turkey)

Peter writes in 1:1 that this letter is addressed to Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia. These are all provinces in the northern part of Asia Minor, an area that today is part of the country of Turkey.

- **What was the situation that caused Peter to write this letter?**

Persecution of the church.

As written above, Peter wrote this letter around the time of the persecution of Nero. Peter and others with him would have been experiencing this in Rome, but this letter makes it clear that Christians in other parts of the Roman empire were experiencing serious persecution at this time as well.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing 1 Peter?**

To encourage persecuted Christians to remain faithful.

Like many of the letters at the end of the New Testament, 1 Peter was written to encourage persecuted Christians to persevere in their faith in spite of the suffering they may experience.

- **What is the most important theological theme?**

Living as a Christian in a hostile world.

<b>Key Historical Facts</b>	
Who is the author?	Peter
When was it written?	Approximately AD 62-63
Where was it written?	Rome
To whom was it written?	Christian living in northern Asia Minor
What was the situation in the church?	Persecution of the church
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To encourage persecuted Christians to remain faithful.
What is the most important theological theme?	Living as a Christian in a hostile world.

## (2) Basic Outline

Peter's letter is organized in a way that is similar to many of Paul's letters. The first section introduces important spiritual truths to help these Christians understand their place in this world. The second section is a series of instructions and encouragements to continue living their faith and showing their obedience to Christ in all things. Peter also adds a third section that urges all Christians, and especially those serving as elders or pastors, to live peacefully together and remain faithful to the calling and responsibilities they received in Christ.

- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
- II. The Status of the People of God (1:3-2:10)
  - A. Their Standing in Christ (1:3-12)
  - B. Ethics of Their New Life (1:13-25)
  - C. Growth in Their New Life (2:1-10)
- III. The Responsibilities of the People of God (2:11-4:11)
  - A. The Behavior of God's People (2:11-3:12)
    - 1. Temporary Residents (2:11-12)
    - 2. Submitting to Unbelieving Governments (2:13-17)
    - 3. Submitting to Unbelieving Masters (2:18-25)
    - 4. Submitting to Unbelieving Husbands (3:1-7)
    - 5. Suffering for Doing What is Right (3:8-12)
  - B. The Promise of Justice (3:13-4:6)
    - 1. The Witness of Believers (3:13-17)
    - 2. The Witness of Christ (3:18-22)
    - 3. Call to Suffer Like Christ (4:1-6)
  - C. The End is Near (4:7-11)
- IV. The Responsibilities of the Church and the Elders (4:12-5:9)
  - A. Response to the Fiery Trial (4:12-19)
  - B. Relationships in the Church (5:1-9)
- V. Conclusion (5:10-14)

### (3) Noteworthy Passages in 1 Peter

- *Chosen by God, Strangers in the World (2:9-12)*  
 One of the most important and powerful passages in 1 Peter is teaching about the true identity of Christians in this world. At a time when many were facing persecution and feeling rejected and homeless in this world, Peter reminded these Christians of the identity they have received from God. They have been chosen by God because of his love and mercy. They are a holy people, called to serve God and represent him in this world. As those who have received true mercy from the living God, their lives shine as a testimony to the saving power and grace of God. Because of that God-given identity, Peter urges them to live like strangers and foreigners in this world, behaving in a way that even those who want to reject them are forced to confess their goodness on the day that Christ returns as Judge.
- *Shepherd the Flock of God (5:1-4)*  
 These verses bring a needed word of exhortation to the elders and pastors leading the churches in Asia Minor. Peter charges them to “shepherd the flock of God that is among you” (verse 2). Peter expects these pastors to feed, guide, protect, and care for the people who have been entrusted to them by God. Not only that, he says they must do this willingly and humbly. Pastors cannot be motivated by gaining wealth, and they cannot be harsh, forceful, or dominating in their leadership over the church. The word pastor means “shepherd,” and every pastor is called to shepherd his people the



same way that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, cares for them. All of this is still true today. If you are a pastor of a church – even if you have a different leadership role where you are serving the church under the pastor’s leadership – you are called and required to love your people. God has given you responsibility for the spiritual health of people who are saved by Son of God who died for them. You cannot take this lightly. Consider the calling to shepherd God’s people a holy privilege and responsibility, and treat his people like they are God’s own treasure, because that is what they are.

#### (4) Important Theological Theme

- *Living as Christians in a hostile world.*  
Today we are fortunate that we do not live with the kind of persecution that Christians knew in the first century (although we have thousands of brothers and sisters around the world today who are experiencing this). Peter’s letter gives encouragement and strength by reminding Christians that we are chosen and loved by God, even though the world rejects us. He also reminds us that experiencing difficulty in this world does not give us a reason to stop following the example of Jesus. We still obey authorities in government and at work, and we still submit to one another in the home. We still pursue holiness, not because the world claps for us when we do this (they do not), but because we are living as God’s people and showing his grace to others.

## **Part 2 – 2 Peter**

### (1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**  
Peter
- **When was it written?**  
Approximately AD 65-66

Christian tradition teaches that Peter died during Nero’s persecution in the 60s. 2 Peter was most likely written a few years after 1 Peter and only a short time before his death.

- **Where was it written?**  
Rome

This letter does not say where it was written. However, if 1 Peter was written in Rome and Peter died in Rome shortly after this letter, we can conclude that 2 Peter was also written in Rome.

- **To whom was it written?**  
Christians in northern Asia Minor (modern day northern Turkey)

This letter does not say exactly who is receiving, but we have one important clue. In 2 Peter 3:1, Peter writes, “This is now the second letter that I am writing to you.” This makes it appear that 2 Peter is written to the same group of people as 1 Peter.

- **What was the situation that caused Peter to write this letter?**

False Teaching

The most common reason for letters to be written in the New Testament was to combat false teaching and clarify true doctrine for churches who were being troubled by false teachers. This is the reason for 2 Peter to be written as well. Peter knew that his death was probably near, so he is writing these churches one more time to urge them to reject these teachings and hold on to the truth.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing 2 Peter?**

To refute the false teaching in the church.

Peter knew that his death was probably near, so he is writing these churches one more time to urge them to reject these teachings and hold on to the truth. In this case, false teachers had come into the church and claimed to be Christian teachers (not prophets) and began gathering groups of church members around them to teach false ideas. These teachers denied that Christ would be returning and taught that the world would continue as it always had without God acting in any way. They were known to twist the words of the apostles, including Paul, and Peter is warning the believers not to listen to these liars.

- **What is the most important theological theme?**

The dangers of false teachers.

<b>Key Historical Facts</b>	
Who is the author?	Peter
When was it written?	Approximately AD 65-66
Where was it written?	Rome
To whom was it written?	Christian living in northern Asia Minor
What was the situation in the church?	False teaching
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To refute the false teaching in the church
What is the most important theological theme?	The dangers of false teachers

## (2) Basic Outline

Peter’s second letter has three major parts, just like his first letter. In this letter, the first section is a word of encouragement, reminding the believers of all that God has done for their good. He also reassures them that the gospel they had heard from Peter and the other apostles was the true teaching they had received from Christ Jesus himself. In the second section,

Peter describes and condemns the false teachers who had crept into these churches. In the final section, Peter closes with a strong reminder that the Day of the Lord is truly coming, and on that day he will bring perfect justice and judgment for all.

- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
- II. Encouragement to Grow in Godliness (1:3-21)
  - A. The Pursuit of Christian Virtues (1:3-11)
  - B. The Reason Peter's Letter (1:12-15)
  - C. Defending the Testimonies of the Prophets (1:16-21)
- III. Condemnation of False Teachers (2:1-22)
  - A. The Danger and Nature of False Teachers (2:1-3)
  - B. God's Judgment in the Past (2:4-10)
  - C. The Godless Character of False Teachers (2:10-16)
  - D. Description of the False Teachers (2:17-22)
- IV. Refuting and Responding to False Teachers (3:1-13)
- V. Conclusion (3:14-18)

### (3) Noteworthy Passages in 2 Peter

- *His Power Has Given Us Everything (1:3-8)*

Many different false teachers and prophets have come throughout history and are still with us today. Almost of them teach in one way or another that what we have received from Christ is incomplete. They will say that we need a new revelation or a new prophecy, maybe even new apostles and a new church. This passage in 2 Peter gives us one of the clearest and easiest to understand answers to these people. We do not need more than we received in Christ and the Scripture. We do not need a new message. According to these verses, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence" (1:3). Through his perfect power and wisdom, God has already given us everything that we need in order to live and serve him faithfully. His gift is complete. Jesus his Son has given himself as the perfect sacrifice, then rose from the grave showing his power over death. He sent the Holy Spirit to give us eternal life and to dwell within us. He has given us the Scriptures which show us the life and teachings of Jesus and the apostles that He commissioned to establish his church. In these things, we have all that we need. Any person or church that claims that we need something more than this is saying that these verses are untrue and God himself is a liar. These verses go on to explain that God has given us his promises as a precious gift, and that through believing them we grow in union with our Lord, growing from one virtue to another until we are mature and complete in our faith.
- *Waiting Patiently for the Day of the Lord (3:1-13)*

Peter understood that sometimes we just need to be reminded of where our true hope lies. False teachers were causing trouble for these churches by saying that waiting for Christ to return is nonsense. They would mock the words of the apostles and prophets who spoke of the Day of the Lord, saying that time will always continue just as it has

been in the past. But God has given us a true hope. Time will not always continue as it has. We may not be able to understand the Lord's timing, but his promises are certain. As Peter reminds us, "But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar... Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God!" (verses 10-12). We do not know when the day will come, but we know that the day is coming. We will see Jesus return as King, and we wait patiently in faith until that moment comes.

#### (4) Important Theological Theme

- *The dangers of false teachers.*  
Satan has always tried to distract, discourage, and disrupt the Lord's church through all kinds of false teachings. He is the great deceiver. Peter warned these Christians to be on guard against these attacks. They present themselves like they are Christians. They use the name of Jesus, but they twist the words of Scripture and they speak of spiritual things with pride and confidence, even though they do not understand. "They promise them freedom, but they themselves are slaves of corruption" (2:19). Still today we must be on guard against this danger. False teachers claim the name of Christ, but they set aside or twist the Word of God to teach all kinds of false things that lead people away from true faith in Jesus.

### **Part 3 – Jude**

#### (1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

Jude

Jude introduces himself in an unusual way as, "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ, and a brother of James" (verse 1). Instead of naming his father, he named his brother. Why? There are at least two good reasons Jude introduced himself this way. First, his brother is James, leader of the church in Jerusalem and author of the book of James. James was very well-known to all Christians at this time, so identifying himself as the brother helped people recognize who he is. Remember also that James was a half-brother to Jesus, which means that Jude is also a half-brother to Jesus. However, Jesus is the Son of God and King of Heaven, so it makes sense that both James and Jude call themselves "servants" of Jesus and "brothers" to one another.

- **When was it written?**

Approximately AD 55-62

The books of Jude and 2 Peter are similar in content, and many theologians believe that 2 Peter is an expanded and more detailed explanation of the topics addressed in Jude. If this is true, then Jude must have been written sometime before 2 Peter.

- **Where was it written?**

Unknown

Very little is known about Jude’s location when he was writing. His brotherly connection to James may have kept him in Jerusalem, but we do not have any evidence that tells us whether that is true.

- **To whom was it written?**

A church with a high number of Jewish Christians

The letter does not say directly that it is written to Jewish Christians, but Jude’s appeal to the Old Testament means that he expected his readers to be familiar with it, something that would only be true of Jewish background Christians.

- **What was the situation that caused Jude to write this letter?**

False teaching and sinful behavior in the church

Again this is similar to 2 Peter. Jude is addressing the problem of false teachers and also calling Christians to live holy lives. It appears that some had fallen into sinful habits and lifestyles, and Jude urges others to warn them and call them back to Christ.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Jude?**

To contend for the faith entrusted to the believers.

Jude does not use many words, but the words he uses are clear and serious. He is calling these Christians to hold onto truth and fight against false teachers. For those who are true believers but entangled and sin and falsehood, Jude urges that they be brought back in any way they can.

- **What is the most important theological theme?**

Hold on to the true faith and reject false teaching.

<b>Key Historical Facts</b>	
Who is the author?	Jude
When was it written?	Approximately AD 55-62
Where was it written?	Unknown
To whom was it written?	A church with a high number of Jewish Christians
What was the situation in the church?	False teaching and sinful behavior in the church
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To contend for the faith entrusted to the believers.
What is the most important theological theme?	Hold on to the true faith and reject false teaching.

## (2) Basic Outline

Jude's short letter is divided into three parts. At the beginning he greets the believers and explains his reason for writing. In the middle section of the letter, he declares God's judgment on false teachers and warns the believers to reject them. At the end of the letter, he urges the believers to continue living in true faith and to bring those who have wandered or fallen into sin.

- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
- II. Situation and Reason for Writing the Letter (1:3-4)
- III. God's Judgment on Sinners (1:5-19)
  - A. Reminder of the Old Testament Teaching (1:5-7)
  - B. False Teachers (1:8-13)
  - C. A Quotation from Enoch (1:14-16)
  - D. Reminder of the Apostles' Prophecy (1:17-19)
- IV. Encouragement (1:20-23)
- V. Doxology and Conclusion (1:24-25)

## (3) Noteworthy Passages in Jude

- *Called to Persevere (1:17-23)*

Jude's final message to these Christians is very practical and direct. Because of the threat of so many false teachers, he gives plain instructions to help the believers. (1) Remember that the apostles told you that false teachers would be coming. (2) Guard yourselves by holding tightly to the true faith and praying in the Spirit. (3) Keep trusting in God's love as you wait for your final salvation. (4) Bring back those who have strayed, doing whatever you can to help them return to the truth. These instructions are just as important today. They will strengthen and encourage all who have believed the true gospel of Jesus Christ and put their faith in him.

## (4) Important Theological Theme

- *Hold on to the true faith and reject false teaching.*

We have seen this theme several times in the New Testament letters, and Jude is another strong word to point us back to Jesus. Jude helps us to recognize false teachers, stating that many of them speak boldly of their dreams and visions, proudly reject other authorities in this world, and even speak carelessly about spiritual things that they simply do not understand. Whenever we hear this kind of talk coming from self-proclaimed religious leaders, we need to avoid them and teach our people to reject them as well.

## Part 4 –Interpretive Journey Practice

Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of 2 Peter 1:3-8. This is now the third course in our New Testament Survey, and students should be very familiar with the Interpretive Journey by now. Therefore, these notes do not provide as many answers as the practice studies in earlier courses. Encourage students to find the necessary information by reviewing their notes or by carefully studying the text of Scripture. Try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take about 30 minutes, and students will not be able to work out every detail or question they may have about the question. Help them focus on the most important points in this passage.

Read 2 Peter 1:3-8.

His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire. For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are your and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### Step One – Grasp the Text in Their Town

Instruct the group to look closely at the verses and answer as many of the following questions as possible just from reading the text. Refer to information from earlier in this course about Paul, about interpreting the New Testament letters, and about 2 Peter.

ASK

#### Observing the Text

- What is written in this passage? Describe the text.
- When was this written?
- Who wrote this book?
- What is the author’s relationship to the audience before this letter?
- Who is being spoken to?
- What is the author’s attitude toward the audience?
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?

#### Observing the Context

- Historical Context
  - Where does this book fit in the history of the New Testament?
  - What was the local situation for the audience receiving this letter?

- What was the attitude and life situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
- Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?
- Literary Context
  - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
  - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
  - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
  - Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the middle? Is it a summary at the end?

### Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.  
*Example: In 2 Peter 1:3-8, Peter reminds a group of Christians who were troubled by false teachers that God has given them everything they need to know Christ and live for him. Then he encourages them to believe these promises and commit themselves to growing in Christian virtue and faith.*

### Step Two – Measure the Width of the River to Cross

For this step, encourage the students to discuss what they know of each of the major categories listed below.

- Language – What language did Paul write in? Do the differences between their languages and the language that we are speaking influence how we understand this?
- Time – When was all this happening? What do we know today that they did not know?
- Culture – What was important to the disciples in their culture that is not as familiar to us today?
- Situation – What are some significant ways that our situation is similar to or different from the situation the disciples were in?
- Relationship to God – What was the disciples' relationship to God in this story? What about the original readers of Galatians? How is their relationship to God like ours or different from ours?

ASK: What are the most important similarities between this story (their town) and our story (our town?) What are some important differences?

ASK: Would you consider the river between their town and our town to be extremely wide (major, important differences), narrow (small differences), or something in between? Why do you think that?



### Step Three – Cross the Bridge of Timeless Truth

Instruct the students to think carefully about everything learned about this passage in the first two steps. Re-read the passage once or twice if necessary.

ASK: Now work together to write a short sentence using present tense verbs that communicates that timeless truth taught in this passage. Remember the guiding questions for this step.

- Is this truth reflected clearly in the text?
- Is this truth timeless and not tied to a specific situation?
- Is this principle universal and not tied to a particular culture?
- Does this principle agree with the teaching of the rest of the Bible?
- Does this principle apply both the biblical audience in “their town” and today’s Christians in “our town?”

Write the Timeless Truth that is found in this passage:

- *Example: Christians can know that God has given us everything we need to know Christ and to live for him in this world. When we remember all the promises that God has given us, then we should commit ourselves to growing in Christian character.*

### Step Four – Consult the Biblical Map

At this time, help the students to compare their timeless truth to other verses and passages in the New Testament to see whether there are any problems with their interpretation.

ASK: What other verses in the New Testament can support or contradict the timeless truth we have discovered in this passage?

*Examples: Ephesians 2:8-10; Galatians 2:15-16; Colossians 1:21-23*

ASK: Based on these other verses you have suggested, does the timeless truth we discovered in this passage agree with the rest of God’s Word?

### Step Five – Grasp the Text in Our Town

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we believe?

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we do?

ASK: How can we begin to obey this biblical principle?

ASK: How does this biblical principle apply to the different relationships in our lives?

ASK: What would happen if everyone in our church believed and obeyed this biblical principle?

ASK: Look at all the suggested applications that we have found for teaching this timeless truth to people in “our town.” If you were teaching a Bible study on this passage, which applications would you include in your lesson? Choose two or three and explain why you would want to include them.

## Part 5 – Review

1. Who is the author of Hebrews?  
*Unknown*
2. Which chapter in Hebrews teaches that Jesus is greater than Moses?  
*Chapter 3*
3. Who is the author of the book of James?  
*James, son of Joseph, half-brother of Jesus, and leader of the church in Jerusalem*
4. What is the main theological theme of the book of James?  
*Faith that works.*
5. To whom was the book of 1 Peter written?  
*Christians living in northern Asia Minor*
6. What was the purpose or reason for writing the book of 1 Peter?  
*To encourage persecuted Christians to remain faithful*
7. When was the book of 2 Peter written?  
*AD 65-66, during the persecution of Nero*
8. What is the most important theological theme of the book of 2 Peter?  
*The dangers of false teachers*
9. What is the most important theological theme of the book of Jude?  
*Hold on to the true faith and reject false teaching.*
10. What has been the most helpful or interesting thing that you have learned in this lesson?

## Lesson 4 – The Letters from John

### Introduction

The apostle John wrote three letters that are given to us in the New Testament. The book of 1 John has been loved and treasured by Christians since the earliest days of the church. It calls all Christians to love God deeply and to love one another as brothers in Christ. It also gives us a mix of instructions for holy living and assurance that we truly belong to Christ. The books of 2 John and 3 John are also appreciated, but they have not been studied or discussed nearly as much as the first. All three of these letters will receive attention in this lesson as we are nearing the completion of our survey of the New Testament. Just as we did in the previous lessons, we will (1) learn the historical facts about these letters, (2) look at a basic outline of their contents, (3) explore noteworthy passages in a little more detail, and (4) think about the most important theological theme of these books. After we have learned all these things, we will use our new knowledge by practicing the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to study a section of one of these letters together.

### Part 1 – 1 John, 2 John, 3 John

#### (1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

John

John was one of the twelve disciples called to follow Jesus, the son of Zebedee and brother of James (together known as the “sons of thunder”). John wrote five of the books of the New Testament, including these three letters as well as the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation. He was one of the disciples who was closest to Jesus during his ministry on earth, even referring to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” in his gospel. John was also one of the most prominent leaders of the apostles in the early Church, along with Peter.

- **When was it written?**

AD 90-95

John’s letters were probably written after his gospel, and that was written in the mid 80s. Therefore, it is likely that these were written in the early to mid 90s, shortly before the death of the apostle. It is interesting to note that, according to Christian tradition, John is the only one of the apostles who was not martyred for his faith. He died as an old man, probably in or near the city of Ephesus.

- **Where was it written?**

Asia Minor

John is believed to have moved to the city of Ephesus in Asia Minor (modern day Turkey) and ministered in the church there until the end of his life. Ancient records from two early Christian leaders – Irenaeus and Polycrates – both mention John’s presence and ministry in that church.

- **To whom was it written?**

Churches in around Ephesus

John addresses 2 John and 3 John to the “elect lady and her children,” referring to the true church and its members. But he does not mention the names of the churches to whom he is writing. It is believed by most Christian pastors and teachers that these letters were shared among the church in Ephesus and other churches in the nearby areas.

- **What was the situation that caused John to write these letters?**

John is responding to false teachers and divisive individuals who have been troubling the church.

By the time that John was writing his letters, many different false teachings had infected churches in this area. The Judaizers who are condemned in Galatians were still active. Gnostic heresies had become common, a teaching which insists that only the spiritual realm is pure and the physical world (including our bodies) counts for nothing. Others were teaching that Jesus was not born as God in human flesh, but that the Spirit of God filled him at his baptism and left him on the cross (this called adoptionism). All of these false teachings were confusing Christians and causing trouble in the churches. John wrote his letters as a pastoral response to help the Christians who were struggling with these things.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing John’s letters?**

To encourage believers to love God and to reassure them they are his; and to give instructions for dealing with false teachers and problem people.

In response to so many false teachings and discouragement among Christians in the churches around him, John wrote these letters for two main reasons: (1) to give clear teaching and instructions about Christian doctrine and (2) to offer encouragement and reassurance to Christians who were beginning to doubt their salvation because of these false teachings.

- **What is the most important theological theme?**

Christian reassurance and walking in love and truth.

<b>Key Historical Facts</b>	
Who is the author?	John
When was it written?	90-95
Where was it written?	Asia Minor
To whom was it written?	Churches in and around Ephesus

What was the situation in the church?	John is responding to false teachers and divisive individuals who have been troubling the church.
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To encourage believers to love God and to reassure them they are his; and to give instructions for dealing with false teachers and problem people.
What is the most important theological theme?	Christian reassurance and walking in truth and love.

## (2) Basic Outline

The book of 1 John is difficult to outline in a clear and organized way. John mixes together the teaching of doctrine, encouragement to love one another, and words of reassurance to these Christians. The books of 2 and 3 John are much shorter, and their outlines are very simple.

### I. 1 John

- A. Introduction (1:1-4)
- B. Instructions for True Christians (1:5-2:27)
  - 1. Walk in the Light (1:5-2:2)
  - 2. Keep Jesus's Commandments (2:3-11)
  - 3. Grow in Christ and Do Not Love the World (2:12-17)
  - 4. Abiding and Departing (2:18-27)
- C. Ethics (2:28-3:24)
  - 1. Children of God Live in Holiness (2:28-3:10)
  - 2. Children of God Obey His Commands (3:11-24)
- D. Doctrine (4:1-5:12)
  - 1. Test the Spirits (4:1-6)
  - 2. The Basis of Brotherly Love (4:7-12)
  - 3. Confidence that comes from Correct Doctrine (4:13-21)
  - 4. Testimony and Proof (5:1-12)
- E. Conclusion (5:13-21)

### II. 2 John

- A. Introduction (1-3)
- B. Walking in the Truth (4-11)
  - 1. Requires Brotherly Love (4-6)
  - 2. Requires Guarding the Truth (7-11)
- C. Conclusion (12-13)

### III. 3 John

- A. Introduction (1-4)
- B. Approving Gaius and Demetrius; Condemning Diotrephes
  - 1. Gaius's Godly Behavior (5-8)
  - 2. Ungodly Behavior of Diotrephes (9-10)
  - 3. Approving Demetrius (11-12)
- C. Conclusion (13-14)

### (3) Noteworthy Passages in John's Letters

- *He is Faithful and Just to Forgive Us (1 John 1:5-10)*

Chapter one of first John includes two very important topics, and John wants to be certain that we hear and understand these things well. In the first section (verses 1-4), John reminds his readers about the truth of who Jesus is – “the word of life... which was with the Father and was made manifest (or revealed) to us” – and that John and the apostles are true witnesses of all that God revealed and did through Jesus.

In this section (verses 5-10), John explains how Christians are to respond to the light of Christ by living in the light every day. First, he explains that anyone who claims to know Jesus but “walks in darkness” (lives in a habit of sin) is lying and does not truly know him at all. But as Christians, when we “walk in the light” (live in a habit of righteousness), then we know that we have true life in Christ and fellowship with other believers. John explains that we are only deceiving ourselves if we claim that we have no sin at all. Until we are transformed into our eternal and sinless bodies at the time of Christ's return, we will continue to struggle with temptation and sin. In these verses, John is saying that a true Christian cannot live in a habit or a lifestyle of continuing sin. This is the difference between walking in darkness and walking in light. To walk in darkness means that sin and deception is normal in our lives, even though we may occasionally do what is good and true. To walk in light means that obeying Jesus and speaking the truth is our normal behavior, even though we may sin occasionally. And John gives helpful instruction and encouragement for those times that we do sin. Verse 9 says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

- *So That You May Know That You Have Eternal Life (1 John 5:13-15)*

John explains his reason for writing the gospel of John at the end of that book (John 20:21, “these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name”). In the same way, John explains his reason for writing 1 John at the end of this book. “I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God that you may know that you have eternal life” (verse 13). Reassurance is one of the important themes in this book, and John wants his readers to understand him clearly. God has not intended for his children to live in doubt and fear, feeling uncertain about their salvation or if their faith is true. The letter of 1 John is filled with teachings that are intended to help Christians know for certain that their faith is true and their salvation is assured.

- *Those Who Have God, and Those Who Do Not (2 John 8-10)*

The book of 2 John only has 13 verses. For that reason, we know that whatever John teaches must be said in a way that is very direct and very clear. In these verses, John tells us a simple way to know if someone truly knows God (that is, if they are a Christian). “Everyone who... does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God. Whoever abides in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.” To abide in the teaching of Christ means both to teach the things that He taught and to obey or to live out the way that Jesus lived. John is telling us that anyone who teaches things that do not agree with Jesus, and anyone whose way of living disobeys Christ, does not

truly know God. We should not listen to these people, even if they call themselves spiritual leaders. It is also true that if we are called pastors, deacons, or any other kind of leader, we must watch ourselves carefully to be certain that we are teaching what Jesus in truth and that we are living according to his teachings.

- *True Joy in Ministry (3 John 2-4)*

Much of what John has written in his letters is careful teaching or practical help for living a Christian life. But these verses help us to see and understand the shepherd's heart that John had for his people. What is John's desire for these people who are so precious to him? He wants them to be in good health. He wants them to be spiritually well. Even more than physical health and spiritual strength, he says, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in truth" (verse 4). Let this be a lesson to those of you who are pastors and those helping to lead in other ways. The greatest thing you can desire in your church, and the greatest thing that you can hope see develop in your people, is that they would walk in the truth of Jesus Christ. We want to see them gladly obeying all that Jesus commanded and loving one another. If you want to rejoice in ministry, let this be your greatest reason for joy. Growing churches and helping the community are good things, but they do not compare to this great joy. Pray for this, and work hard to see your people walking in the light of the glory of Christ.

#### (4) Important Theological Theme

*Christian reassurance and walking in truth and love.*

From the passages explained above, we can see that these two ideas fit together to be the major theme of John's letters. John was a pastor at heart. He loved these churches and the people in them. When he saw that they were confused and beginning to doubt what God had done for them, he was moved to respond and help them. He tells them that these things are written "so that you that you have eternal life" (1 John 5:13). He did not want his people to feel discouraged or afraid. The truth of the life that God has given us through faith in Jesus Christ is too great for that. Just as John worked hard to make sure that his people knew the truth and could live in faith and joy, we must also work hard for our people, teaching the truth in a way that they can hear, understand, believe, and obey all that we have received from Jesus.

## **Part 2 –Interpretive Journey Practice**

Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of Hebrews 1 John 2:1-6. This is now the third course in our New Testament Survey, and students should be very familiar with the Interpretive Journey by now. Therefore, these notes do not provide as many answers as the practice studies in earlier courses. Encourage students to find the necessary information by reviewing their notes or by carefully studying the text of Scripture. Try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take about 30 minutes, and students will not be able to work out every detail or question they may have about the question. Help them focus on the most important points in this passage.

Read 1 John 2:1-6.

My little children, I am writing these to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation (the sacrifice that brings peace and life) for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. Whoever says, "I know him," but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him, but whoever keeps his word, in him truly the love of God is perfected. By this we may know that we are in him: whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.

### Step One – Grasp the Text in Their Town

Instruct the group to look closely at the verses and answer as many of the following questions as possible just from reading the text. Refer to information from earlier in this lesson about interpreting John's letters..

ASK

#### Observing the Text

- What is written in this passage? Describe the text.  
*Students should work together to rephrase the passage in their own words. Include as many details as possible, including specific explanations and instructions.*
- When was this written?
- Who wrote this book?
- What is the author's relationship to the audience before this letter?
- Who is being spoken to?
- What is the author's attitude toward the audience?
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?

#### Observing the Context

- Historical Context
  - Where does this book fit in the history of the New Testament?
  - What was the local situation for the audience receiving this letter?
  - What was the attitude and life situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
  - Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?
- Literary Context
  - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
  - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?



- What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
- Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the middle? Is it a summary at the end?

### Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.  
*Example: In 1 John 2:1-6, John is teaching the Christians around Ephesus why there is hope for those who have sinned and how to know if we truly belong to God. He explains that Jesus is the One who has saved his people and is also the One who stands before God for them today. Obedience to the commands of Jesus and imitating his way of living is the evidence that someone is truly saved, and anyone who ignores these things proves that he is not a true Christian.*

### Step Two – Measure the Width of the River to Cross

For this step, encourage the students to discuss what they know of each of the major categories listed below.

- Language – What language did Paul write in? Do the differences between their languages and the language that we are speaking influence how we understand this?
- Time – When was all this happening? What do we know today that they did not know?
- Culture – What was important to the disciples in their culture that is not as familiar to us today?
- Situation – What are some significant ways that our situation is similar to or different from the situation the disciples were in?
- Relationship to God – What was the disciples' relationship to God in this story? What about the original readers of Galatians? How is their relationship to God like ours or different from ours?

ASK: What are the most important similarities between this story (their town) and our story (our town)? What are some important differences?

ASK: Would you consider the river between their town and our town to be extremely wide (major, important differences), narrow (small differences), or something in between? Why do you think that?

### Step Three – Cross the Bridge of Timeless Truth

Instruct the students to think carefully about everything learned about this passage in the first two steps. Re-read the passage once or twice if necessary.

ASK: Now work together to write a short sentence using present tense verbs that communicates that timeless truth taught in this passage. Remember the guiding questions for this step.

- Is this truth reflected clearly in the text?
- Is this truth timeless and not tied to a specific situation?
- Is this principle universal and not tied to a particular culture?
- Does this principle agree with the teaching of the rest of the Bible?
- Does this principle apply both the biblical audience in “their town” and today’s Christians in “our town?”

Write the Timeless Truth that is found in this passage:

- *Example: Christians believe that we have hope even when we sin because Jesus has given his own life to rescue us and now pleads for us before the Father. We know that we are truly his if we are obeying what He commanded and are living the way that He lived. Anyone who ignores these things proves that he is not a Christian.*

#### Step Four – Consult the Biblical Map

At this time, help the students to compare their timeless truth to other verses and passages in the New Testament to see whether there are any problems with their interpretation.

ASK: What other verses in the New Testament can support or contradict the timeless truth we have discovered in this passage?

ASK: Based on these other verses you have suggested, does the timeless truth we discovered in this passage agree with the rest of God’s Word?

#### Step Five – Grasp the Text in Our Town

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we believe?

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we do?

ASK: How can we begin to obey this biblical principle?

ASK: How does this biblical principle apply to the different relationships in our lives?

ASK: What would happen if everyone in our church believed and obeyed this biblical principle?

ASK: Look at all the suggested applications that we have found for teaching this timeless truth to people in “our town.” If you were teaching a Bible study on this passage, which applications would you include in your lesson? Choose two or three and explain why you would want to include them.

### **Part 3 – Review**

1. What was the situation that led to the unknown author writing the book of Hebrews?  
*Persecution of Christians that caused some to return to Judaism*

2. To whom was the book of James originally written?  
*Jewish Christians who were scattered in various places outside of Jerusalem*
3. What is the most important theological theme in the book of 1 Peter?  
*Living as a Christian in a hostile world.*
4. What was the purpose or reason for writing the book of 2 Peter?  
*To refute the false teaching in the church.*
5. When was the book of Jude written?  
*Approximately AD 55-62*
6. When were John's letters written?  
*AD 90-95*
7. Where was the apostle John when he wrote 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John?  
*Ephesus*
8. What is the purpose or reason for writing John's letters?  
*To encourage believers to love God and to reassure them they are his; and to give instructions for dealing with false teachers and problem people.*

## Lesson 5 – Revelation

### Introduction

Revelation is one of the most interesting and complicated books in the whole Bible. Some people love it and spend every moment possible studying it and discussing it with others. Other people are intimidated and confused by it, and they try to avoid it as much as possible. Almost everyone agrees that it is a challenge that is different from any other. The book of Revelation is a completely different kind of book from others in the New Testament. It combines three different styles of writing: letters, prophetic writing, and apocalyptic. Letters are what we have been studying in Paul's writings and the other books included in this course. Prophetic writing is what we find in the Old Testament prophets, messages that call God's people to repentance and faithfulness today while also including predictions of what God will do in the future. Apocalyptic writing is a kind of writing that reveals visions of what will occur in the final days before the return of Christ and his judgment. Apocalyptic writing is usually full of symbolic images and visions that communicate spiritual truths that are difficult to imagine and understand. Putting all of these things together makes Revelation a fascinating book to study. Whether you love it or are a little bit afraid of it, there is one word of encouragement. Revelation is the only book in the Bible that says you will be blessed just by hearing it and following its teaching: "Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near" (Revelation 1:3)

In this lesson, we will begin by discussing a few points to help us read the book of Revelation and interpret it well. Then we will study the historical facts, important passages, and theological theme of the book of Revelation. In the third section, we will practice using the steps of the Interpretive Journey to study and faithfully interpret the meaning of a passage from Revelation. Finally, the last section of this lesson includes a study guide to help students prepare for the final exam.

### Part 1 – Help for Interpreting Revelation

1. Be humble when you read this book.

This statement should be obvious, but it needs to be said clearly. The book of Revelation is possibly the most difficult and challenging book to understand in the entire Bible. This is because much of the book is written about visions of heavenly things that we cannot see, so we do not know exactly what John is describing to us. Therefore, we must be very humble when we attempt to read this book and interpret its meaning. Godly men and women have wrestled with these chapters for centuries, and we still cannot agree about exactly what each part means. As we read, we should pray for God's grace and wisdom, and be prepared to be gracious toward other believers who may interpret it differently than we do at some parts.

2. Do not try to connect every image in the book to today's news.  
Christians have been tempted to connect the images and figures in the book of Revelation to people and events of their lives for hundred of years. During the Reformation time in Europe (500 years ago), almost all Protestant Christians were certain that the Pope in Rome was the Antichrist written about in Revelation. During the 1990s, many Christians in America believed that Saddam Hussein (the dictator who ruled Iraq) was the Antichrist. It is always tempting to take the news events of our day and try to make them fit in the pages of Revelation. We should be careful not to do that, so far no one has been correct when they have tried.
3. Do not assume that everything in Revelation is written in chronological order.  
This rule can be tricky to understand and follow. We naturally want things to happen in the order they are written. We want the events of chapter two to come after chapter three. We want the events of chapter 14 to happen after the events we read about in chapters 12 and 13. But that is not always true when we read Revelation. It is a book of visions, an apocalyptic and prophetic work, and it does follow the rules of other stories we like to read.

Here is an example to consider. In Revelation 6:12-16, we read about the opening of the sixth scroll, and John describes this as the destruction of the world. He even writes, “for the great day of [God’s] wrath has come, and who can stand?” It appears obvious that this is describing the end of the world, but it is not the end of Revelation. Then in chapter 11, we read about the seventh trumpet. When this trumpet is blown, an angel announces, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever” (11:15). Then it goes on to describe the destruction of the world and the day of God’s judgment. This is the second time that the end of the world is described, but it is still not the end of Revelation. This also happens a third time. In chapter 16, when we read about the seventh bowl judgement, we again read about the destruction of the world and the final judgment of God. So what is happening? Does the world end three different times? Of course not. John was seeing a series of God’s judgments on the world. Each vision is a little bit different from the others, but they all end the same way. This is a common feature in Revelation. Things are not always reported in the order they happen in our world.

4. Try to discover the message to the original readers.  
We cannot forget that Revelation was written to an audience of real people who lived long ago in real cities. They were intended to read this book and understand its meaning. If we are careful in our study of Scripture, we need to remember that our goal is to understand what God was saying to those who received this book first. We can find its message for us today only after we have understood what God was communicating to the original recipients.
5. Take Revelation seriously, but do not always take it literally.  
Revelation is full of symbols and word pictures. Almost every number in the book is symbolic, and many of the characters included in the stories represent something else as well. For example, in chapter 12 we know that the woman represents Israel and the dragon represents Satan. If we try to interpret literally all

the different images and events that we read about in the chapters of Revelation, we will become very confused and misunderstand most of what the book is teaching.

6. Look to the Old Testament and the historical context of the book when interpreting images and symbols.

No book in the New Testament refers to the Old Testament as much as the book of Revelation does. Some people have said that the best way to interpret Revelation is to go to seminary and get a PhD in the Old Testament. So many of the prophecies, symbols, and descriptions found in Revelation are taken from the various prophets of the Old Testament, including Isaiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and many others. If you want to recognize the symbols in Revelation, study your Old Testament closely.

7. Follow the steps of the Interpretive Journey carefully and prayerfully.

Even though Revelation is complex and challenging, it can be a great encouragement and help to us. We must be careful to do everything we can to interpret it faithfully and accurately. To do that, follow the steps of the Interpretive Journey just as we have done with every other book in the New Testament. The book of Revelation might require you to take a little extra time and to do a lot more studying and praying to help you understand its message well.

## **Part 2 – Revelation**

### (1) Historical Facts

- **Who is the author?**

John

John was one of the twelve disciples called to follow Jesus, the son of Zebedee and brother of James (together known as the “sons of thunder”). John wrote five of the books of the New Testament, including these three letters as well as the Gospel of John and the book of Revelation. He was one of the disciples who was closest to Jesus during his ministry on earth, even referring to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” in his gospel. John was also one of the most prominent leaders of the apostles in the early Church, along with Peter.

- **When was it written?**

AD 95-96

Revelation is not only printed at the end of the New Testament, it was the last book to be written out of all the books in the New Testament. John was the last living apostle when he wrote this book, and he died a short time after it was finished.

- **Where was it written?**

Patmos

John spent many years living in Ephesus and leading the church there in the later part of his life. However, the Roman empire had sent John into exile on the island of Patmos, a small island in the Mediterranean Sea about 100 kilometers away from Ephesus. It was on this island that John received these visions and wrote the book of Revelation.

- **To whom was it written?**

The 7 churches of Asia Minor

In chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation, Jesus speaks messages directly to seven different churches that were located in different cities of Asia Minor in the first century. (There were more than seven churches at that time, but these are the ones who were spoken to by the Lord.) The messages to the seven churches are combined with John’s record of the visions that he saw to make the book of Revelation, and the book was shared among all seven of the churches mentioned.

- **What was the situation that caused John to write this letter?**

The churches were experiencing serious persecution, and John had received visions from God with messages to send the churches.

John had been sent into exile on Patmos as part of the persecution occurring across the Roman empire at this time, and the Christians remaining in this area were also experiencing imprisonment, abuse, and even death for their faith in Christ. The book of Revelation is written in response to their suffering and to the heavenly visions that John had seen.

- **What was the purpose or reason for writing Revelation?**

To encourage persecuted Christians to endure in faith by describing the final judgment of the world and Christ’s victorious return.

How can Christians remain faithful to Jesus when their lives are being threatened? The book of Revelation is written to provide an answer to that question. The messages and the visions written in this book are given to strengthen the faith of believers who were living in fear, to call them return to holy living in the eyes of Jesus, and to help them endure suffering and doubt by assuring them Jesus is the victorious and all-powerful King, and in the end He will save his people and destroy all of his enemies.

- **What is the most important theological theme?**

Jesus, the slain and resurrected Lamb, is returning as the Eternal King and Judge.

<b>Key Historical Facts</b>	
Who is the author?	John
When was it written?	AD 95-96
Where was it written?	Patmos

To whom was it written?	The 7 churches of Asia Minor
What was the situation in the church?	The churches were experiencing serious persecution, and John had received visions from God with messages to send the churches.
What was the purpose or reason for writing?	To encourage persecuted Christians to endure in faith by describing the final judgment of the world and Christ's victorious return.
What is the most important theological theme?	Jesus, the slain and resurrected Lamb, is returning as the Eternal King and Judge.

## (2) Basic Outline

People have tried to organize the book of Revelation into many different forms of outlines. Some are very simple and easy to read, but they do not always help us understand how the parts of the book fit together. Other outlines are very detailed and complicated, but they can be confusing. The outline below helps us to see the book of Revelation in the way that John may have been thinking about it when he wrote it. Revelation describes four different visions that John saw while he was on the island of Patmos. Each of the visions begins with John either hearing the voice of the Lord speaking so that he turns to see (1:12) or with an angel saying to him, "Come, and I will show you..." (4:1, 17:1, 21:9). The longest of these visions is vision two in which John saw a series of events from the viewpoint of heaven itself. These include the famous sets of judgments (the scrolls, the trumpets, and the bowls). It is important to remember that John reports his visions in the order that they were revealed to him, but that does not necessarily mean it is the order that these things occur in history and time.

- I. INTRODUCTION (1:1-8)
- II. VISION ONE (ON PATMOS): THE GLORIFIED CHRIST WHO INVESTIGATES HIS CHURCHES (1:9-3:22)
  - A. The First Vision of Jesus Christ (1:9-20)
  - B. The Message to the Seven Churches of Asia Minor (2:1-3:22)
- III. VISION TWO (IN HEAVEN): THE DIVINE COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE TRIAL OF THE NATIONS (4:1-16:21)
  - A. The Throne and the Court of Heaven (4:1-5:14)
  - B. The 7 Seals (6:1-17)
  - C. The Protective Sealing of God's People (7:1-17)
  - D. The 7 Trumpets (8:1-9:21)
  - E. God's People as Prophetic Witnesses (10:1-11:19)
    - 1. Angel with the Little Scroll (10:1-7)
    - 2. John's Prophetic Commission (10:8-11)
    - 3. The Protective Measuring of the Temple (11:1-2)
    - 4. The Two Witnesses (11:3-13)
    - 5. The Seventh Trumpet (11:14-18)
    - 6. Transition: Heavenly Temple Opened (11:19)
  - F. The Signs - God's People in Holy War (12:1-15:8)
    - 1. First Sign (12:1-2): The Heavenly Woman (Israel)
    - 2. Second Sign (12:3): The Red Dragon (Satan)



3. Holy War with Satan in Historical View (12:4-6)
4. Holy War with Satan in Heaven (12:7-12)
5. Holy War with Satan Against Believers on Earth (12:13-18)
- G. The Woman Persecuted (12:13-18)
- H. The Beast from the Sea: Political War Against Believers (13:1-10)
- I. The Beast from the Earth: Religious War Against Believers (13:11-18)
  1. The Lamb with the 144,000: The Triumph of Believers (14:1-5)
  2. Three Angels Announcing Judgment (14:6-13)
  3. Harvest of Grain: Harvesting the Believers for Reward (14:14-16)
  4. Harvest of Grapes: Harvesting the Sinners for Wrath (14:17-18)
  5. Third Sign: The Victory of Believers (15:1-4)
  6. Transition: Heavenly Temple Opened (15:5-8)
- J. The 7 Bowls: Final Judgments (16:1-21)
- IV. VISION THREE (IN THE DESERT): THE DESTRUCTION OF BABYLON AND THE RETURN OF CHRIST (17:1-21:8)
  - A. Transition: “Come, I will show you the judgment of the notorious prostitute” (17:1-3).
  - B. The Prostitute City Babylon Described (17:3-6)
  - C. The Prostitute City Babylon as Rome (17:7-18)
  - D. The Trial and Sentencing of Babylon (18:1-24)
  - E. Heavenly Celebration of Babylon’s Destruction (19:1-10)
  - F. The Divine Warrior and Final Tribunal (19:11-20:15)
  - G. The Renewal of Creation and the Arrival of the New Jerusalem (21:1-8)
- V. VISION FOUR (ON A MOUNTAIN): BELIEVERS’ REWARD AND THE RENEWAL OF CREATION (21:9-22:5)
  - A. Transition: “Come, I will show you the Bride” (21:9-10)
  - B. The Description of the New Jerusalem Descending from Heaven (21:11-27)
  - C. The Paradise of God: The Renewal of Creation (22:1-5)
- VI. Conclusion (22:6-21)

### (3) Noteworthy Passages in Revelation

- *Vision of the Son of Man (1:8-18)*  
 Much of the New Testament describes Jesus as “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). But in chapter one of Revelation, John sees a vision of Jesus in his heavenly glory. John saw something similar to the vision of the Son of Man that is recorded in Daniel 7. In heaven, Jesus is no longer the sacrificial lamb and the suffering servant. He is the glorious and reigning King of Kings and Lord of Lords. John’s description includes seeing Jesus with a long robe and a golden sash (majesty and authority), brilliant white hair (perfect wisdom), eyes like a flame of fire (complete and pure knowledge), feet like bronze (perfect strength), a voice like roaring waters and two-edged sword from his mouth (indescribable power), and his face shining like the sun (radiant glory). On earth, Jesus was humble and obedient to the Father, living in complete holiness and setting for the perfect example to follow. In heaven, He is exalted, glorious, and unmatched by any other. We can understand why this image is important in a book like Revelation. The Christians reading this

were facing real persecution, and their lives were in danger for following Christ. They needed to remember that He is truly awesome, glorious, holy, and powerful. Knowing that Christ is victorious and reigning, they could find strength to endure the trials they were facing.

- *Letters to the Churches (chapters 2-3)*

Chapter two and three include seven short messages, one for each of the seven churches who were the original recipients of the book of Revelation. Jesus speaks directly to each of the churches about the situation they are in. Each of the letters is similar in its structure. It begins with an introduction of Jesus as the One who is speaking, using one of the descriptions found in the vision of chapter one. Then it lists one or more good things in the life of the church; these are reasons for Jesus to commend them. After this, Jesus gives a word of correction or warning to the church. This is followed by a call to repent and a promise of reward for all who persevere in their faith. The letters help us to understand the challenges facing the churches and what Jesus expects of them. They were not only facing persecution in their churches. Different churches also have problems with apathy (Ephesus), false teaching (Pergamum), immorality (Thyatira), hypocrisy (Sardis), and lukewarmness (Laodicea). Each of these problems are still present in our churches today. If we study Jesus's words to these churches, we will find a message that is still powerful and relevant for us, calling us faithfulness, holiness, and endurance as we follow Jesus.

- *The Multitude Which No One Can Number (7:9-12)*

Revelation 7 includes one of the most glorious and exciting pictures in the entire Bible. In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), Jesus commands his followers to "make disciples of all nations." In this chapter, we see the final result of that command. John looks to the throne in heaven and declares, "Behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" (verses 9-10). God will accomplish all that He desires. He will be worshiped and glorified by an uncountable number of saints gathered from every nation and tribe of the world. This is the reward that Jesus has purchased with his own life and blood. There is one more glorious detail to mention as well. These are the only verses where you can see yourself in the Bible. When you read about the "great multitude that no one can number" gathered around the throne, that includes us! Every person who has trusted in Christ and received him as Lord and Savior is part of this picture. John saw us as part of that crowd. This is more encouragement to remain faithful; the reward is eternal and wonderful.

- *The Defeat of Satan (20:1-10)*

Many Bible scholars and pastors have struggled and debated to determine what the details of this passage mean, especially the reference to the 1000 years (this is called the millennium in theological discussions). Is the millennium a literal 1000 years or is it a symbolic number? Does it happen before Jesus returns or after? We do not have

time to explain every detail of that debate here. (Perhaps you will explore it in one of your courses on Christian doctrine.) For this lesson, focus on the main truths. When Christ returns, Satan will finally and completely be defeated, then he will be cast into the lake of fire for eternal punishment. This passage includes some uncomfortable information as well. The Scripture tells us that before his destruction, Satan will lead one final grand war and rebellion against Jesus, but they will not be successful. Christ will return in glory, Satan and those with him will be destroyed. And all who have been faithful to Christ will be resurrected to reign with him forever and ever. This is our blessed hope as Christians.

- *The New Heaven and the New Earth (21:1-8)*

Have you ever wondered what the end will truly be like? What will we see and what will seem important to us on the Day when Jesus finally returns and brings his eternal Kingdom. These verses answer those questions. Read them out loud slowly, or encourage one of your students who reads well to stand and read these verses slowly. Encourage the students to imagine all that these verses are describing. This is not telling us what heaven will look like. It is telling what is important about the new heaven and the new earth. What will really matter to us on the Day? Listen:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne say, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give from the spring of the water of life without payment. The one who conquers will have this heritage, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake of fire that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death."

Before you continue this lesson, pause and pray with your class. Lead them in rejoicing and praising God, giving thanks for this glorious vision. This is the reward that is waiting for those of us who belong to Christ! It is only right that we should take time to praise God and thank him for what He has promised us.

#### (4) Important Theological Theme

- *Jesus, the slain and resurrected Lamb, is returning as the Eternal King and Judge.* No other theme could truly encourage and strengthen genuine Christians to remain

faithful in the face of persecution, even if it meant they would die. We need to be reminded of how this world, and our story in this world, will end. Jesus is the glorious King of Heaven at this moment. One day soon He will return and rule as the true and eternal King here as well. He will put an end to sin, suffering, death, and Satan. We will be resurrected to reign with him in glorified bodies. John saw this vision, and God commanded him to write it down so that he could share it with all believers, those living in the first century and those of us still living today.

### **Part 3 –Interpretive Journey Practice**

Now guide the students through the five steps of the Interpretive Journey to discover the meaning of Revelation 3:14-22. This is now the third course in our New Testament Survey, and students should be very familiar with the Interpretive Journey by now. Therefore, these notes do not provide as many answers as the practice studies in earlier courses. Encourage students to find the necessary information by reviewing their notes or by carefully studying the text of Scripture. Try to keep the class moving quickly through this practice. This should take about 30 minutes, and students will not be able to work out every detail or question they may have about the question. Help them focus on the most important points in this passage. Remind them that in the book of Revelation many details are symbolic, and we should not interpret them literally. For example, in this passage, Jesus commands the church to buy gold and white garments from him. These are not commands to seek wealth and fine clothes. It means they should seek the reward that can never be taken away (gold or treasure in heaven) and to be clothed in true righteousness (the pure righteousness of Christ himself).

Read Revelation 3:14-22.

And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: ‘The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God’s creation.

I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, so be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.’

#### *Step One – Grasp the Text in Their Town*

Instruct the group to look closely at the verses and answer as many of the following questions as possible just from reading the text. Refer to information from earlier in this lesson about interpreting the book of Hebrews.

## ASK

### Observing the Text

- What is written in this passage? Describe the text.  
*Students should work together to rephrase the passage in their own words. Include as many details as possible, including specific explanations and instructions.*
- When was this written?
- Who wrote this book?
- What is the author's relationship to the audience before this letter?
- Who is being spoken to?
- What is the author's attitude toward the audience?
- What does the author or speaker expect the hearers to do in response?

### Observing the Context

- Historical Context
  - Where does this book fit in the history of the New Testament?
  - What was the local situation for the audience receiving this letter?
  - What was the attitude and life situation of the people who received this message? Are they free or slave? Rich or poor? Male or female? Young or old? Jew or Gentile? Happy, unhappy, confused, hurting?
  - Did this passage occur before or after the death and resurrection of Jesus? Before or after Pentecost?
- Literary Context
  - What is the genre – or kind of writing – you are studying in this passage?
  - What happened or what is written immediately before and after the passage you are studying?
  - What is the main theme of the book you are studying? How does this passage relate to that theme?
  - Where does this passage fit in the flow and outline of the entire book? Is it part of the beginning? Is it a critical explanation in the middle? Is it a summary at the end?

### Create a Short, Simple Statement

- Explain the most important truth that is taught in this passage.  
*Example: In Revelation 3:14-22, Jesus is speaking to the Christians in the church of Laodicea in the first century. He criticizes them for being "lukewarm" because they have believed that their wealth and comfort means that God is satisfied with them, and they do not realize they have become spiritually poor and shameful in God's eyes. Jesus calls them to repent and commit themselves to pursuing spiritual treasure and righteousness again, and he promises that he will fellowship with anyone who responds to his invitation.*

### Step Two – Measure the Width of the River to Cross

For this step, encourage the students to discuss what they know of each of the major categories listed below.

- Language – What language did Paul write in? Do the differences between their languages and the language that we are speaking influence how we understand this?
- Time – When was all this happening? What do we know today that they did not know?
- Culture – What was important to the disciples in their culture that is not as familiar to us today?
- Situation – What are some significant ways that our situation is similar to or different from the situation the disciples were in?
- Relationship to God – What was the disciples’ relationship to God in this story? What about the original readers of Galatians? How is their relationship to God like ours or different from ours?

ASK: What are the most important similarities between this story (their town) and our story (our town?) What are some important differences?

ASK: Would you consider the river between their town and our town to be extremely wide (major, important differences), narrow (small differences), or something in between? Why do you think that?

### Step Three – Cross the Bridge of Timeless Truth

Instruct the students to think carefully about everything learned about this passage in the first two steps. Re-read the passage once or twice if necessary.

ASK: Now work together to write a short sentence using present tense verbs that communicates that timeless truth taught in this passage. Remember the guiding questions for this step.

- Is this truth reflected clearly in the text?
- Is this truth timeless and not tied to a specific situation?
- Is this principle universal and not tied to a particular culture?
- Does this principle agree with the teaching of the rest of the Bible?
- Does this principle apply both the biblical audience in “their town” and today’s Christians in “our town?”

Write the Timeless Truth that is found in this passage:

- *Example: Christians cannot assume that wealth or comfort in this world is a sign of God’s approval. We are called to seek spiritual treasures and live in true righteousness. Those who have sinned will find that Jesus calls us to repentance, and he will fellowship with anyone who responds to him.*

#### Step Four – Consult the Biblical Map

At this time, help the students to compare their timeless truth to other verses and passages in the New Testament to see whether there are any problems with their interpretation.

ASK: What other verses in the New Testament can support or contradict the timeless truth we have discovered in this passage?

ASK: Based on these other verses you have suggested, does the timeless truth we discovered in this passage agree with the rest of God’s Word?

#### Step Five – Grasp the Text in Our Town

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we believe?

ASK: According to this biblical principle, what must we do?

ASK: How can we begin to obey this biblical principle?

ASK: How does this biblical principle apply to the different relationships in our lives?

ASK: What would happen if everyone in our church believed and obeyed this biblical principle?

ASK: Look at all the suggested applications that we have found for teaching this timeless truth to people in “our town.” If you were teaching a Bible study on this passage, which applications would you include in your lesson? Choose two or three and explain why you would want to include them.

### **Part 4 – Final Exam Preview**

Explain to the students what will be required for their final exam. The exam includes two parts.

The first part is a written exam. Each student will take the written exam individually. The written exam will include 20 questions worth 2 points each. A score of 50% is needed to pass.

For this exam, students should carefully review all the notes that have been covered throughout this course. They need to remember the important details of Paul’s life and conversion, as well as the guidelines for reading and understanding letters in the New Testament. They should know all of the historical facts (see the informational tables in this section of each lesson) for all of Paul’s letters. They should be familiar with the important theological themes from all 13 books. Also, students should be able to explain in one or two sentences at least one significant truth found in each of the following key passages studied in this course:

- God Speaks Through His Son (Hebrews 1:1-4)
- Faith Without Works Is Dead (James 2:14-26)
- Shepherd the Flock of God (1 Peter 5:1-4)

- True Joy in Ministry (3 John 2-4)
- The Multitude Which No One Can Number (Revelation 7:9-12).

The second part of the exam is a group project. The group will work together for 30-45 minutes to follow the steps of the Interpretive Journey to the best of their ability. You will assign them a specific passage from one of the gospels or Acts to study and interpret. They can talk, use their Bibles and study Bibles, or use their class notes to complete the study. Smart phones and computers should not be allowed. The instructor will observe how well the group follows the five steps and assign a grade of “Pass” or “Fail.”

Each student must pass both the written exam and the group project to complete this course successfully.



## New Testament Survey 3

### Final Exam

1. Who is the author of the book of Hebrews?
  - a. Peter
  - b. John
  - c. Luke
  - d. Unknown
  
2. Which chapter in Hebrews is called the “Hall of Faith” chapter and includes the examples of many Old Testament heroes of faith?
  - a. Chapter 2
  - b. Chapter 6
  - c. Chapter 11
  - d. Chapter 13
  
3. What is the most important theological theme in the book of Hebrews?
  - a. Christ is greater than all Old Testament personalities and religious forms.
  - b. We can never lose our salvation.
  - c. God saves everyone who believes in him.
  - d. Jesus has power over all of creation.
  
4. When was the book of James written?
  - a. AD 45
  - b. Early to mid-60s
  - c. AD 325
  - d. 1964
  
5. What was the situation that caused James to write his letter?
  - a. False teachers were telling people to follow the Old Testament Law.
  - b. This letter was written to be shared among Christians in many places who had fled Jerusalem because of persecution.
  - c. Some Christians were afraid that they would miss the Second Coming of Christ.
  - d. Church members were worshiping idols.
  
6. Where was Peter when he wrote the book of 1 Peter?
  - a. Jerusalem
  - b. Rome
  - c. Galilee
  - d. London

7. What is the most important theological theme in the book of 1 Peter?
  - a. Living as a Christian in a hostile world
  - b. The Holy Spirit gives us power over evil
  - c. God will judge sinners
  - d. Pastors should love their churches
  
8. To whom was the book of 2 Peter written?
  - a. Jews living in Jerusalem
  - b. Christians living in Rome
  - c. Christians living in northern Asia Minor
  - d. Everyone in the world
  
9. What was the purpose or reason for writing 2 Peter?
  - a. To call the Christians to repent of sin
  - b. To condemn Caesar
  - c. To encourage believers to continue in their faith
  - d. To refute the false teaching in the church
  
10. When were the letters of 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John written?
  - a. AD 45
  - b. AD 55
  - c. AD 90-95
  - d. AD 2001
  
11. Which passage in 1 John includes the verse that says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"?
  - a. 1 John 1:5-10
  - b. 1 John 2:4-11
  - c. 1 John 4:1-14
  - d. This verse is not found in 1 John.
  
12. What is the most important theological theme in the letters of John?
  - a. Jesus is Lord of all
  - b. Satan will be defeated
  - c. Christian reassurance and walking in truth and love.
  - d. Salvation by faith, not by works

13. What was the purpose or reason for writing the book of Jude?
- To contend for the faith entrusted to the believers
  - To show that faith is more powerful than fear
  - To call Christians to repentance
  - To encourage Christians to do good works
14. Who is the author of the book of Revelation?
- Peter
  - Paul
  - John
  - Unknown
15. What was the purpose or reason for writing the book of Revelation?
- To encourage persecuted Christians to endure in faith by describing the final judgment of the world and Christ's victorious return.
  - To declare that Christians are free from sin
  - To correct false teaching in the church and call believers to chase divisive people out of the churches
  - To explain the gospel clearly so that people can be saved

Write one or two sentences to explain at least one important truth taught in each of the following passages:

16. Hebrews 1:1-4 | God Speaks Through His Son

17. James 2:14-26 | Faith Without Works Is Dead

18. 1 Peter 5:1-4 | Shepherd the Flock of God

19. 3 John 2-4 | True Joy in Ministry

20. Revelation 7:9-12 | The Multitude Which No One Can Number

## New Testament Survey 3

### Final Exam – MASTER COPY

*Correct answers are in **bold letters**. Each correct answer is worth two points. This exam is worth a total of 40 points.*

1. Who is the author of the book of Hebrews?
  - a. Peter
  - b. John
  - c. Luke
  - d. Unknown**
  
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  - a. Chapter 2
  - b. Chapter 6
  - c. Chapter 11**
  - d. Chapter 13
  
3. What is the most important theological theme in the book of Hebrews?
  - a. Christ is greater than all Old Testament personalities and religious forms.**
  - b. We can never lose our salvation.
  - c. God saves everyone who believes in him.
  - d. Jesus has power over all of creation.
  
4. When was the book of James written?
  - a. AD 45**
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  - a. False teachers were telling people to follow the Old Testament Law.
  - b. This letter was written to be shared among Christians in many places who had fled Jerusalem because of persecution.**
  - c. Some Christians were afraid that they would miss the Second Coming of Christ.
  - d. Church members were worshiping idols.
  
6. Where was Peter when he wrote the book of 1 Peter?
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- Living as a Christian in a hostile world**
  - The Holy Spirit gives us power over evil
  - God will judge sinners
  - Pastors should love their churches
8. To whom was the book of 2 Peter written?
- Jews living in Jerusalem
  - Christians living in Rome
  - Christians living in northern Asia Minor**
  - Everyone in the world
9. What was the purpose or reason for writing 2 Peter?
- To call the Christians to repent of sin
  - To condemn Caesar
  - To encourage believers to continue in their faith
  - To refute the false teaching in the church**
10. When were the letters of 1 John, 2 John, and 3 John written?
- AD 45
  - AD 55
  - AD 90-95**
  - AD 2001
11. Which passage in 1 John includes the verse that says, “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness”?
- 1 John 1:5-10**
  - 1 John 2:4-11
  - 1 John 4:1-14
  - This verse is not found in 1 John.
12. What is the most important theological theme in the letters of John?
- Jesus is Lord of all
  - Satan will be defeated
  - Christian reassurance and walking in truth and love.**
  - Salvation by faith, not by works
13. What was the purpose or reason for writing the book of Jude?
- To contend for the faith entrusted to the believers**
  - To show that faith is more powerful than fear
  - To call Christians to repentance
  - To encourage Christians to do good works

14. Who is the author of the book of Revelation?
- Peter
  - Paul
  - John**
  - Unknown
15. What was the purpose or reason for writing the book of Revelation?
- To encourage persecuted Christians to endure in faith by describing the final judgment of the world and Christ's victorious return.**
  - To declare that Christians are free from sin
  - To correct false teaching in the church and call believers to chase divisive people out of the churches
  - To explain the gospel clearly so that people can be saved

Write one or two sentences to explain at least one important truth taught in each of the following passages:

16. Hebrews 1:1-4 | God Speaks Through His Son

**According to these verses, God now speaks to us by his Son. That is a positive way of saying that God does not reveal himself or send his messages through prophets today in the way that He did in the Old Testament. Now we hear God speak through his Son, Jesus. In the New Testament, we find God's Word delivered to us through the teachings of his Son and the apostles who were trained and sent by Christ. Verses 2-4 explain why we should prefer listening to Jesus over prophets. Jesus himself is the exalted and glorious Son of the Most High. "He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature." If we can learn directly from Jesus and his apostles by studying Scripture, why would we want to set this aside and listen to those who call themselves prophets today?**

17. James 2:14-26 | Faith Without Works Is Dead

**The summary of the whole passage is verse 26: "For as the body apart from the spirit is dead, so also faith apart from works is dead." This is a great comparison to help us understand. A body without a spirit is not considered a living human. It is dead. It might look like a person, but there is no real life inside. In the same way, a person who only talks like a Christian can have a dead faith. Someone can say that he is a Christian and believes in Jesus, and maybe even talk about Jesus or pray in his Name. But if his life does not show that his faith has changed the way he lives, James teaches us that his faith is dead and worthless. Talking about faith without living according to faith is meaningless.**

18. 1 Peter 5:1-4 | Shepherd the Flock of God

**These verses bring a needed word of exhortation to the elders and pastors leading the churches in Asia Minor. Peter charges them to "shepherd the flock of**

**God that is among you” (verse 2). Peter expects these pastors to feed, guide, protect, and care for the people who have been entrusted to them by God. Not only that, he says they must do this willingly and humbly. Pastors cannot be motivated by gaining wealth, and they cannot be harsh, forceful, or dominating in their leadership over the church. The word pastor means “shepherd,” and every pastor is called to shepherd his people the same way that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, cares for them. All of this is still true today. If you are a pastor of a church – even if you have a different leadership role where you are serving the church under the pastor’s leadership – you are called and required to love your people. God has given you responsibility for the spiritual health of people who are saved by Son of God who died for them. You cannot take this lightly. Consider the calling to shepherd God’s people a holy privilege and responsibility, and treat his people like they are God’s own treasure, because that is what they are.**

**19. 3 John 2-4 | True Joy in Ministry**

**These verses help us to see and understand the shepherd’s heart that John had for his people. What is John’s desire for these people who are so precious to him? He wants them to be in good health. He wants them to be spiritually well. Even more than physical health and spiritual strength, he says, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in truth” (verse 4). Let this be a lesson to those of you who are pastors and those helping to lead in other ways. The greatest thing you can desire in your church, and the greatest thing that you can hope see develop in your people, is that they would walk in the truth of Jesus Christ. We want to see them gladly obeying all that Jesus commanded and loving one another. If you want to rejoice in ministry, let this be your greatest reason for joy. Growing churches and helping the community are good things, but they do not compare to this great joy.**

**20. Revelation 7:9-12 | The Multitude Which No One Can Number**

**Revelation 7 includes one of the most glorious and exciting pictures in the entire Bible. In the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), Jesus commands his followers to “make disciples of all nations.” In this chapter, we see the final result of that command. John looks to the throne in heaven and declares, “Behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with loud voice, ‘Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!’ (verses 9-10). God will accomplish all that He desires. He will be worshiped and glorified by an uncountable number of saints gathered from every nation and tribe of the world. This is the reward that Jesus has purchased with his own life and blood. There is one more glorious detail to mention as well. These are the only verses where you can see yourself in the Bible. When you read about the “great multitude that no one can number” gathered around the throne, that includes us! Every person who has trusted in Christ and received him as Lord and Savior is part of this picture. John saw us as part of that crowd. This is more encouragement to remain faithful; the reward is eternal and wonderful.**



## **New Testament Survey 3**

### **Group Project**

For this part of the final exam students must work as a group to study a passage from the New Testament following the steps of the Interpretive Journey. Select one of the passages listed below for the student project. Instruct them to talk through all five steps of the Interpretive Journey together. The group should be allowed 30-45 minutes to complete this study. They should write down the following notes to show the work they have done:

- (Step One) Write a short, simple statement to summarize the message that God was revealing to the original audience.
- (Step Three) Write the timeless truth (or truths) that you discovered from studying this passage.
- (Step Five) Write two or three specific applications of your timeless truth that you would teach to others in your church.

Passages for Interpretive Journey Group Project:

- Full Assurance of Faith – Hebrews 10:19-25
- Sin of Partiality – James 2:1-13
- Children of God – 1 John 3:4-10

#### **How to grade the group project:**

After giving the students full instructions, watch them closely for the entire time of the project. Try to give as little help as possible; encourage them to follow the steps of the Interpretive Journey as they have learned. You should be able to see that the group has learned all five steps of the Interpretive Journey, the key questions for each step, and how to complete each step in the process. They are free to use their Bibles and any notes they have, but no cell phones or computers are allowed. The group should submit the statements they have written for steps 1, 3, and 5 as noted above.

The group will be graded as a whole with either a ‘pass’ or ‘fail.’ If you see that everyone in the group has learned the steps, understands how to follow the Interpretive Journey process, and shows some ability to interpret the passage in a faithful and accurate way, then award them a grade of ‘pass’ for their work on this project.