

Intro to I II III JOHN

Authorship and Readership: The writer of these three letters is the Apostle John, a disciple and one of the closest followers of Jesus Christ. John is attributed with having written 5 books of the Bible, the three epistles here, the Gospel of John, and the Revelation of John. John was exiled on the island of Patmos when he wrote The Revelation, and it is thought that after his release, he settled down in the city of Ephesus. It is from Ephesus that John wrote these three books to the believers in the surrounding towns. He writes them as an encouragement to them and an appeal for them to express their faith through genuine agape love, which serves as the theme of the three letters.

The Word of Life (I John 1:1-4)

His opening declaration is similar to the one he opened his Gospel with. “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched...this we proclaim concerning the Word of Life.” It is clear from these opening verses that the topic for consideration here is Jesus Christ—the Living Word.

A Call to Confession (I John 1:5-2:2)

Here John establishes the true nature of God...He is a God of light and cannot tolerate darkness. In order for us to be able to stand in his presence, cleansing and purification is necessary. The first component in that purification process is for us to realize that we need it. “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves.” But the good news, the “gospel,” is that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

The Road Less Travelled (2:3-17)

Here John describes the natural response that should come from a purified life...a walk down the path of obedience. “We know that we have come to know him...if we obey His commands.” The evidence of a life changed is a life of obedience. The other road that John describes in detail is the way of the world in verses 15-17. And he categorizes the three areas of temptation for a believer to stumble as the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

The Emergence of False Prophets (2:18-29)

John warns the readers that in the last days, there will be those who will seek to deceive the church. There will be antichrists—those who will be opposed to the work of God—but John says there will be one ultimate Antichrist. Who are the antichrists? The ones who deny that Jesus is the Christ. He encourages the believers to hold fast to the truth that they have heard from the beginning. And he reassures them that his intention for writing is to warn against those who would seek to lead them astray.

The Great Love of the Father (3:1-10)

John goes into an eloquent discourse of how God has bestowed, or “lavished” us with his infinite love. And that because of this love, we can actually be called the children of God—“tekna” of God—as children born by natural means to a parent.

Loving God and Loving Others (3:11-4:21)

John then spends much of the middle part of the letter addressing how this love of the Father should elicit a response from us in like kind...that the obvious expression of thanks for the love that God has shown to us is our fervent love for Him. Then, that love for God should be a natural flow of love for others. Agape love is the obvious theme to this first letter from John, with the word, “love,” appearing 35 times in the book.

The Expression of Faith (5:1-21)

John ends his letter with a statement of how faith and love work together. Belief in the Son should naturally flow into love, and love should flow into obedience. “This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands. This is love for God: to obey his commands.”

The “bottom line,” according to John is this: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life, and he who does not have the Son does not have life.” The key, as we know, and as John underscores, is total and complete belief in the Son, Jesus Christ.

Intro to **II JOHN**

In his second letter, John addresses his remarks to the “elect lady,” or the chosen lady and her children. There is some difference of opinion as to who this is referring. Some believe it to be a faithful lady, a deaconess perhaps, to whom John was writing. Others believe it to be John’s use of a metaphor to address the church and its members...possibly a specific church, to which he had a personal connection.

In terms of message, it holds to form with his first letter, and some of the same themes are repeated, namely, the love of God, and how the discovery of that love should result in loving Him in return and walking in obedience. The one difference is the use and emphasis of the word, “truth.” In his salutation and greeting he begins with “To the lady elect and her children—whom I love in the truth, and not only I, but also all who know the truth, because of the truth, which lives in us and will be with us forever. His emphasis seems to be our conviction that the faith that we profess is ultimate truth and that we should walk firmly in it.

Intro to **III JOHN**

John’s third letter is addressed to a believer named Gaius, whom John says, he loves in the truth. In this letter, John seems to present two types of believers, in his comments to Gaius for his faithfulness, and his mention of Diotrephes, a believer who has a problem with pride and arrogance. In presenting these two types of believers, it becomes a lesson for us as to how we walk in our own journey of faith. Gaius is faithful, and shows love and hospitality even to those he doesn’t know all that well. He is committed to the truth and endeavors to walk in it. Diotrephes, on the other hand, seeks his own first, and feels himself to be too good to associate with the likes of John. To add insult to injury, he also gossips about the brothers he refuses to associate with. John’s instruction to Gaius, in light of this, is to imitate the good, rather than the evil. Good is from God and evil obviously is not.

Intro to **JUDE**

The book of Jude, the next to the last book of the Bible, was written by Jude, who is thought to be the half brother of Jesus. Jude writes to Christian believers, but his words address those who have been steeped in the Hebrew tradition and the fathers of that faith. He reminds the reader of those who came out of Egypt who abandoned belief in God, and the judgment that came to them. He speaks of men who were godless, and who received the punishment of God for their transgression. Jude uses this as a springboard for the message he delivers, that being, a call for the faithful to stay faithful. “In the last days there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires...but you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.” In addition, he, like John, encourages them to remain entrenched in the reality of the love of God. Jude ends his letter with the doxology, “to him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Saviour, be glory, majesty, power, and authority through Jesus Christ, our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore. Amen.