

# **Read the Bible in a Year**

Week 51 – May 22-28

**Read on Your Own this Week:**

*Psalm 147-149*

*John 13-16*

**Readings in Class:**

1, 2, and 3 John

Jude 1

Zechariah 1-14

Malachi 1-4

## **Introduction to the Epistles of John**

The writer of the Epistles of John is none other than John the son of Zebedee, the disciple whom Jesus loved. It is generally believed that John wrote Revelation first, then his epistles, then his Gospel, though the dates are hard to pin down. These are most likely written late in the first century (AD 85-95). His first and second letters were written to believers in general and may not have had a specific audience. The third was written to Gaius, likely a lay member of a Church, who supported and showed hospitality to missionaries.

### **A brief summary of 1 John**

- The incarnation (1:1-4)
- Walking in the Light (1:5-2:17)
- Warning Against Antichrists (2:18-27)
- Children of God (2:28-3:10)
- Love One Another (3:11-24)
- Test the Spirits (4:1-6)
- God's Love and Ours (4:7-21)
- Faith in the Son (5:1-12)
- Conclusion (5:13-21)

### **A brief summary of 2 John**

- Salutation (1-3)
- Commendation (4)
- Exhortation and Warnings (5-11)
- Conclusion (12-13)

### **A brief summary of 3 John**

- Salutation (1-2)
- Commendation of Gaius (3-8)
- Condemnation of Diotrephes (9-10)
- Exhortation to Gaius (11)
- Example of Demetrius (12)
- Conclusion (13-14)

### **Gnosticism**

A big emphasis in the first two letters is Gnosticism. Gnosticism is a heresy that at its center teaches that the spirit is good and the physical world is evil. John addresses an early form of the heresy. Because they believe that matter is bad, they generally deny in some form the incarnation of Jesus. They also think that our bodies are bad and that it's fine to break God's law. Salvation is also thought to be achieved through secret knowledge (gnosis) and not through faith in Christ. John's purpose in writing these letters is to expose the false teaching and to offer assurances of salvation through Jesus Christ to his readers.

### **Missionaries**

Both the second and third letters have to do with support of missionaries who traveled from place to place spreading the Gospel. These missionaries relied on the support of Christians and established churches. In the second letter John is warning Christians to be discerning about who they support. Anyone who supports a false teacher is complicit in the spread of heresy. In the third letter, John is commending Gaius for supporting missionaries while also calling out Diotrephes for his lack of support.

### **They Will Know We are Christians By Our Love**

Anyone who reads John's epistles will notice how much he talks about love. He loves the Church. Love one another. Don't love the world. God is love. Of course it is from John's Gospel that we get the most famous verse of the Bible "For God so loved the world...." (John 3:16). Just as James talks about how faith without works is dead, John follows a similar thought process how a Christian should live and why. "Since God so loves us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11). We know what love is because Jesus laid down his life for us.

## **Introduction to Jude**

Jude was most likely written by Jude the half-brother of Jesus. The author refers to himself as the “brother of James” which is most likely a reference to James who wrote the epistle of James and was a leader of the Church in Jerusalem. He is writing to Christians to “contend for the faith” because false teachers had infiltrated the Church. Because of its similarities to 2 Peter, it is believed that Peter borrowed language from Jude or vice versa. In either case, false teaching and heresy was already widespread at the time and would have been a common concern. This also means that Jude was most likely written around AD 65, though it also could be dated as late as AD 80.

### **A brief summary of Jude**

- Salutation (1-2)
- Occasion for the Letter (3-4)
- Warning against False Teachers (5-16)
- Exhortation to Believers (17-23)
- Concluding Doxology (24-25)

### **Gnosticism Again**

The heresy that Jude is dealing with is likely the same as John is dealing with: an early form of Gnosticism. Those that he is warning about use the grace of God as a license to sin (“I love to sin. God loves to forgive”). Jude tells Christians to be on guard and be aware that scoffers will come into the Church. He also encourages his readers by saying that God is able to keep us from falling and bring us to salvation through Jesus.

### **The body of Moses? Enoch? What?**

There are two references in Jude that may confuse the average reader: Michael disputing with the devil about the body of Moses and a quotation from Enoch. Neither of these accounts can be found in the Old Testament, but from uninspired literature (The Assumption of Moses and the Book of Enoch. Enoch was the seventh in line from Adam. See Genesis 5). Because of this, some have discounted Jude and don’t consider it canonical. However, it has been accepted by the Church from very early on. The use of such books as illustrations does not mean Jude was not inspired. Even Paul quotes from uninspired literature (such as pagan poets and philosophers).