

Reading Together
New Testament Bible Reading
July 11 – July 17

Monday, July 11 – 1 John 5: 1 – 21

Pay careful attention to John's argument here in the first few verses of chapter 5. John starts with the fact that being born of God starts with belief in Jesus. Next, John says that our belief is born out by the way we love God and carry out his commands. But then John says something very interesting. John says that God's commands are not burdensome, and that everyone born of God overcomes the world. Remember that the main reason John wrote this letter was to combat the Gnostic heresy that our bodies and spirits are separate and have no bearing on each other. Think about what John says here to combat that; spiritual rebirth brings about a change in the way we live. There is a connection between our body and spirit. But John's argument doesn't end with that. When we read that belief in Christ helps us to overcome the world it can make us fearful and question our belief, because often times we feel like the world overcomes us rather than the other way around. But look at verse 5. Who is it that overcomes the world? It's Jesus. It is not by our actions that we overcome the world; it is by Jesus' actions. We overcome the world through faith in Jesus who has already defeated Satan, sin and death for us. While our lives will surely change for the better as a result of our belief in Christ, we must also remember that Jesus has already won. We must rest alone in that victory.

Verses 6-12 deal with the testimony of God concerning who Jesus is; notice that John says that there are three things that testify as to who Jesus is—the water, the blood, and the Spirit. The water points to the fact that Jesus was baptized, which testifies that he was one of us. The blood represents his death on the cross which testifies that he died for us, and the Spirit testifies to our hearts that what we believe is true.

John's concluding remarks in this short letter deal once again with overcoming sin in our lives. Just another reminder that sin is overcome by belief in Christ who died for us.

Tuesday, July 12 – 2 John 1

In many ways 2nd John is a very brief summary of 1st John. The dear lady that John is writing to is the church, so in a very real way this letter is written to us. Notice that once again John stresses that belief in Christ leads us to love. To walk in obedience to Christ means to walk in love. Notice also that John stresses that we must continue to follow the teaching of Jesus and not man-made heresies. Anyone who teaches anything that is contrary to the teachings of Christ should be completely ignored. That is why it is important that we continually search the Scriptures for ourselves to see if what our teachers are teaching us lines up with what Jesus taught.

Wednesday, July 13 – 3 John 1

We do not know who the Gaius is that John wrote to in this letter, because Gaius was a very common Roman name. Notice that Gaius was an example of all that John talked about in his previous two letters. He was faithful to the truth (verses 3-4). He showed love to brothers in Christ, even if they were strangers. Contrast Gaius' behavior with that of Diotrephes, who John wrote about in verses 9-10. Diotrephes was part of the church, but he loved to be first, which is the exact opposite of all the things John has been teaching concerning living in love. Love demands that we put others ahead of us and our desires, just as Christ put us ahead of himself and his desires.

Thursday, July 14 – Philemon 1

The book of Philemon is actually a short letter that Paul wrote to one of his friends. Philemon owned a slave named Onesimus, who had run away from him and had come to Paul. Both Philemon and Onesimus were believers, so Paul inserts himself into the middle of their conflict to try to resolve it. Notice how Paul commends Philemon for his love and faithfulness in verses 4-7, and then Paul makes his appeal to Philemon to welcome Onesimus back not as a slave but as a brother in Christ. Onesimus had become very helpful to Paul—he calls Onesimus his very heart in verse 12, and Paul says he would have liked to have kept Onesimus with him, because he was such a help to Paul. In an effort to right the wrong Onesimus has done Paul offers to pay any expenses for any harm that has come to Philemon as a result of Onesimus' actions.

By doing this Paul is imitating Christ, who willingly bore the expense of our sin on the cross.

Friday, July 15 – Luke 1: 1 – 38

Luke was not one of Jesus' disciples, but he was a traveling companion of Paul's. He was apparently a doctor and well educated. He was also a Greek. Based on the introductions of the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts, both books were written by Luke to a man name Theophilus, who was probably a high ranking government official, who was possibly involved somehow in Paul's trial in Rome. Notice what Luke says in 1:3. His gospel is an orderly account that is based on a careful investigation that Luke has made about the life of Jesus. His Gospel account is very similar to Matthew's and Mark's except that Luke wrote his Gospel for a Gentile audience and therefore his emphasis is different from the other Gospels. Luke very much emphasizes the inclusiveness of the good news of Jesus Christ, and the salvation that is available to all through Christ.

Luke's Gospel places more emphasis on the births of John the Baptist and Jesus. Luke's Gospel opens with an account of the prophecies leading up to John the Baptist's and Jesus' birth. Notice how both births were miraculous. John the Baptist's birth was to parents who were well advanced in years, and Jesus' birth was to a virgin. The virgin birth of Jesus isn't just a curiosity, it is a necessity. Only a human being, one of Adam's race, could die for Adam's race and pay the debt for our sin. But no human could live the perfect life that would be necessary in order for them to be the sacrifice for the sin of Adam's race. The only solution is to have one who is born of a woman, but born without a sinful nature and never stained by original sin. The only way for this to happen is by way of a virgin birth.

Saturday, July 16 – Luke 1: 39 – 56

After Mary found out that both she and Elizabeth (the mother of John the Baptist and Mary's aunt) were pregnant, Mary goes to visit her. Notice the reaction of John the Baptist as a baby in Elizabeth's womb as he meets Jesus (who is still in Mary's womb) for the first time. Clearly even before his birth there was something very special about Jesus! Verses 46-55 are a song of praise that Mary composed to celebrate the Lord's grace in her life. This song is often referred to as The Magnificat,

and it is a compilation of two Old Testament songs composed by Hannah (1 Samuel 1 and 2), Deborah (Judges 5) and Miriam (Exodus 15). The reason the song is referred to as The Magnificat is because the first line of the song literally says my soul magnifies (makes large) the Lord. The song is about how God raises up the humble and brings down the proud. Mary was a peasant girl from very humble origins and yet she was chosen to literally be the mother of God.

Sunday, July 17 – Luke 1: 57 – 80

At the end of chapter 1 Luke recounts the miraculous birth of John the Baptist. It was miraculous because of the age of John the Baptist's parents and because Zechariah was able to speak once again after John was born. Zechariah also composed a hymn of praise to the Lord, which ends with Zechariah predicting what John the Baptist would do to prepare the way for Jesus.