

**“Through the Bible in a Year with Pastor Don and the FBC Family”**  
**June 30, 2016**

**Esther 8:1–10:3.** From Victims to Victors.

**3 John 5–15.** Gaius, the man of virtue vs. Diotrephes, the church dictator.

**Psalms 118:17–29.** The Stone of God that was rejected.

**COMMENTS:**

**Esther 8:1–10:3.** Haman was dead, but his murderous edict was still very much alive. Long after wicked people are gone, the consequences of their evil words and deeds live on. Even today, people continue to suffer long after past evildoers have gone to their grave, this is especially true in politics. In this section of Esther, unless something intervened, within nine months the Persians would attack the Jews and wipe them off the face of the earth. There were about 15 million Jews among the estimated 100 million people in the empire. Therefore, the odds were definitely against God’s people. Of course, God’s people have always been a minority; and ‘one with God is always a majority.’ The Lord had brought Esther and Mordecai to the kingdom “for such a time as this,” and they were prepared to act. Note in the opening in this section that everything that Haman had acquired from the king by his scheming, Mordecai received as gifts. God doesn’t always give this kind of a “happy ending” to everybody’s story. Today, not all faithful Christians are promoted and given special honors. Some of them get fired because of their stand for Christ! God hasn’t promised that we’ll be promoted and made rich, but He has assured us that He’s in control of all circumstances and that He will write the last chapter of the story. If God doesn’t promote us here on earth, He certainly will when we get to glory. In chapter nine we see the tables turned as the Jews killed 75,000 of their enemies who were threatening their very existence. Chapter 9 also records the celebration of the Feast of Purim, which was a two-day feast designed to remember the goodness of God working through a number of circumstances to protect His people from extinction. Esther closes with the description of the greatness of Mordecai. As the original Jewish readers read this account they would have been struck by the way God was sovereignly protecting them, often when they did not even know it. Many things in the Book of Esther happened that were beyond anyone’s control except that of God, who oversees history. And the Book of Esther is filled with irony, with ways in which events turned out unexpectedly and in favor of God’s people. Queen Vashti, a Persian, was deposed so that Esther, a Jewess, could become queen and save her people. Haman, once exalted, was brought low, and Mordecai and the Jews, once hated, were exalted and honored. A decree that would have wiped out the Jews was overruled by one which led to the destruction of nearly 76,000 enemies of the Jews. No wonder Purim was celebrated yearly with such rejoicing: to help the Jews remember that God is in control and that people should faithfully worship and serve their great God, who is always there.

**3 John 5–15.** Note how Gaius’s natural and spiritual virtues are extolled. He was a *fellow helper* to the truth (3 John 8). Gaius not only received the truth and walked in the truth, but he was a “jointworker” who helped to further the truth. We do not know what his spiritual gifts were or how he served in the congregation, but we do know that Gaius helped extend and defend the truth by assisting those who taught and preached it. This means that in practical ways, he assisted those who were ministering the Word. We have no indication that Gaius himself was a preacher or teacher, but he opened his heart and home to those who were. Note how Gaius is also commended for showing hospitality to the true ministers of the Word. Gaius was an encouragement, not only to the brethren in general, but especially to “strangers” who came to fellowship with the church and to minister. Gaius not only opened his home, but he also opened his heart and his hand to give financial help to his guests. The phrase “*bring forward on their journey*” means “to assist on their journey.” This could have included providing money and food as well as washing and mending clothing (see 1 Cor. 16:6; Titus 3:13). His love is expressed and actualized by deeds, not just words (1 John 3:16–18). Note how this activity “*honors God.*” The phrase *after a godly sort* in 3 John 6 means “worthy of God, as befits God.” We are never more “godlike” than when we are reaching out with His love to help others. We also see him as a faithful *witness to the lost* (3 John 7). Keep in mind that there were many wandering teachers in that day, sharing their ideas and begging for money. While the Lord Jesus taught definitely that God’s servants deserve support (Luke 10:7), the standard in the New Testament is that this support comes from God’s people. “*Taking nothing of the Gentiles*” means that these itinerant workers would not solicit help from the unsaved. Support is to only come from those who are being taught the Word: Galatians 6:6–10 makes it clear that those who receive *spiritual* blessings from the minister of the Word ought to share with him in *material* blessings. Following the commendations to Gaius, we have the introduction of **Diotrephes the Dictator**. Churches have always had problems with those who insist on “being boss,” having their own way. Sometimes it is the pastor and other times it is some malcontented believer. Regardless of who is trying to be the boss at church, such an attitude is motivated by pride. In this case, note that Diotrephes “*would not receive John*” (9). It is hard to believe that a church leader (Diotrephes may have even been an elder) would not have fellowship with one of our Lord’s own apostles! Why did Diotrephes reject John? The obvious reason seems to be that John challenged the man’s right to be dictator in the church. John was a threat to Diotrephes, because John had the authority of an apostle. John knew the truth about Diotrephes and was willing to make it known. Diotrephes was “bringing false and empty charges against us.” What Diotrephes was saying about John was sheer nonsense, but there are people who love to hear such talk and who will believe it! Apparently, Diotrephes had made these accusations against John at one of the church meetings when John was not present to defend himself. But John warned that the day would soon come when he would settle accounts with Diotrephes the dictator. Christians must be careful not to believe everything that they read or hear about God’s servants. God only knows how many believers were sucked into the lies of Diotrephes against John, the beloved of Jesus Christ. Church “dictators” are dangerous people but, fortunately, they are easy to recognize. They like to talk about themselves and what they have “done for the Lord.” They also have the habit of judging and condemning those who disagree with them all the while they do little to nothing to help the church; often, they do not even attend regularly. They base their fellowship on personalities and personal whims, not the doctrines that are fundamental to the faith. The tragedy is that these “dictators” actually believe that they are serving God and glorifying Jesus Christ.

**Psalm 118:17–29.** The background is probably the dedication of the restored walls and gates of Jerusalem during the Feast of Tabernacles in 444 B. C. in the time of Ezra and Nehemiah. The Jews in the city were surrounded by enemies who first ridiculed them and then threatened to attack them and stop the work (10–14). The rebuilding project took fifty-two days, and the report of this remarkable accomplishment astounded the nations (15–16, 23–24). The psalm mentions gates (vv. 19–20) and building (vv. 22) and certainly expresses the joy the people experienced as they beheld what the Lord had done. The people were careful to give the Lord all the glory for what Israel had done in the restoring of the city. Israel has been sorely chastened, but Israel will not die (17–18). A festive procession came to the gates of the city, the temple courts (27), for the celebration would involve sacrifices offered at the temple. In 22-29 we have emphasis on the Stone, which was rejected by man. In Scripture, the stone is a familiar image of the Lord God (18:2, 31, 46; Gen. 49:24; Deut. 32:4, 15, 18, 30–31; 2 Sam. 22:2–3, 32, 47; Isa. 17:10; 26:4; 30:29; 33:6). It particularly points to the Messiah (Isa. 8:14; 28:16; Dan. 2:34–35, 45; Matt. 21:42–44; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17–18; Acts 4:11; Rom. 9:32–33; 1 Cor. 10:4; 1 Peter 2:6–8). Peter made it clear that the Jewish leaders (“builders”) had rejected their Messiah, the Stone (Acts 4:11), and He became to them a stone of stumbling (Isa. 28:16; Rom. 9:32–33). But in His death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ has become the chief cornerstone of the church, God’s temple, binding Jews and Gentiles together in one sanctuary (Eph. 2:19–22). One day Jesus will return as the Stone of judgment and crush the arrogant kingdoms of this world (Dan. 2:34, 44–45). Every Christian should praise the Lord the salvation provided in Jesus Christ, whom we recognize as the precious stone (1 Pet. 2:6).

*Romans 11:36 For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*

*Pastor Don*