

**WELCOME TO THE
NEW TESTAMENT**

A Survey

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Welcome to the New Testament



Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.

2 Timothy 2:15

A New Testament survey course is one which reviews the **content, unity, and progression** of the New Testament. Its purpose is to explore God's Word on a brief book-by-book basis to see how each fits into the overall plan of the New Testament. It is, thus, a survey of the pages of the New Testament, just as a surveyor might explore a piece of real estate to determine its boundaries and makeup. George Washington surveyed much of the early frontier of America, particularly the Commonwealth of Virginia. He learned much about this great Commonwealth performing his surveys. May God richly bless you in this survey of His Word.

This course needs to be distinguished from those taught in Bible colleges and seminaries which are referred to as "Introductions." An "Introduction" course explores manuscript issues of each book. This type of course would look at the problems of authorship and the creation, transmission, and preservation of each book, as well as the theology of each book. This study you are about to embark upon may touch upon these issues, but a detailed discussion is not part of the intended subject matter.

A comment or two about the materials for this course are in order. First, the prime course book is the **Bible**. It is suggested that you read much of each book the week prior to its study. But if you cannot, please do not allow this to keep you away. The concept of a survey course assumes some knowledge of each part of the New Testament, but this knowledge need not be very deep for this course to be of benefit.

Secondly, I pray that these course materials will provide a quick, easy to read survey work. Again, it will be helpful, but not necessary, if you read this information in advance of each class. For those desiring further study, a bibliography will be attached at the end of these materials.

It is not the intention to create a school type atmosphere as we perform our survey. However, the more you read God's Word and the better prepared you are by reading the student materials, the more you will benefit from your attendance. To assist you in this, each week's lesson will end with a suggested key (memory) verse(s) and set of readings for the next week. You are encouraged to make use of your time by reading these materials.

Jim Arthur
Calvary Road Baptist Church
August, 1999



What do you know about the Bible?

What do you hope to learn from this course?



Do you want to learn about history?

Do you want to learn about the Bible?



Do you want to learn about the beliefs and practices of the early church?



15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. 16 For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. 17 For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth.

Hebrews 9:15-17



Covenants

The Bible, if you think about it carefully, really teaches us only two things.

First, the Bible teaches us **How to Find God**.

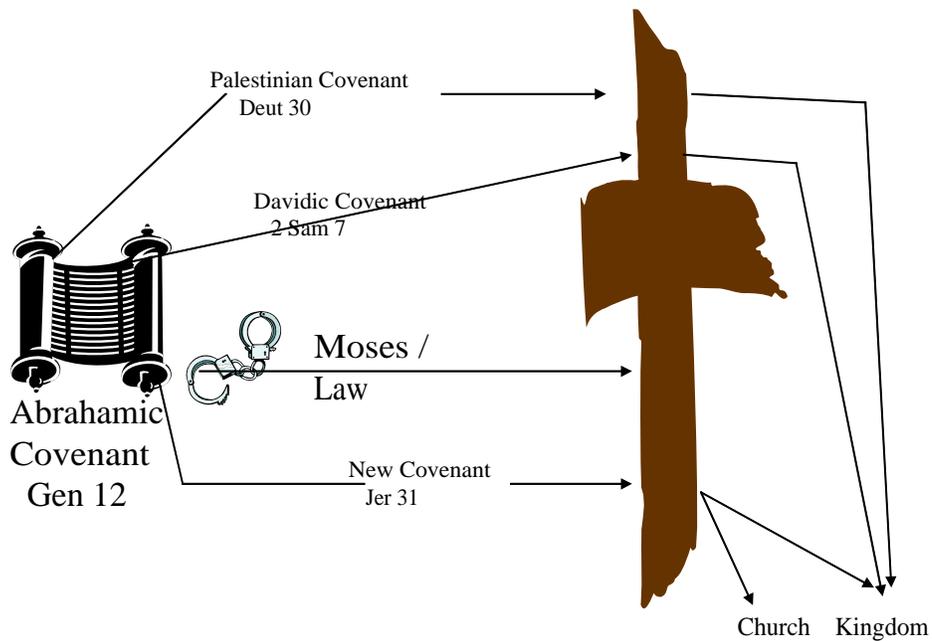
Second, the Bible teaches us **How to Live** once we have found Him.

The Old Testament is primarily the story of man's efforts at attempting to find God. It is true the occasional Old Testament hero discovers true fellowship with God. Such a hero is, however, the exception to the rule. The Old Testament is primarily about the relationship between God and the Nation of Israel. As God deals with the Nation, the Old Testament reflects a group of people who never grasp this concept of true fellowship for any length of time. As a result, the Nation walks without the power and wisdom and peace which only come from true fellowship with God.

The entire relationship of the Nation of Israel with God is initially based upon the Abrahamic Covenant. This unconditional promise is made by God to Abraham in Genesis 12:1-3. There are several promises contained in this covenant. Some are to Abraham personally, others to his offspring. Note especially three of these.

- † First is the promise of the people and land. This is reflected in more detail in the Palestinian Covenant given in Deut 30. This is a promise to the Nation of Israel and has not yet been fulfilled.
- † Second is the promise of a king. This is given in greater detail in the Davidic Covenant found in 2 Sam 7:5-16. This promise also has not yet been fulfilled in an earthly sense.
- † Third is the promise of peace with God and blessings on the Gentiles. This covenant is reflected in the New Covenant stated in Jeremiah 31:31-34. This is the condition of God's law being written on the heart of the God's people. This is the promise which flows to the Gentiles and is currently found in God's people, the Church of Jesus Christ. It has not been fulfilled in so far as the Jewish Nation is concerned.

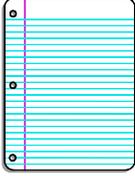
Note that there is no mention in the Abrahamic covenant of the law (Exod 20:1-17). The giving of the law is called the Mosaic covenant and is not part of the blessings seen in the New Covenant when God's law is written on the hearts of the people and not on tablets of stone.



The above diagram shows the relationship of the Nation of Israel, the Church and the covenants in picture form.

The Old Testament, then, is the ground of preparation for the coming of Christ.

What needs to be gleaned from all of this is the place of the New Testament in this scheme. If the Bible teaches man how to find God and then how to live, where does the New Testament fit?

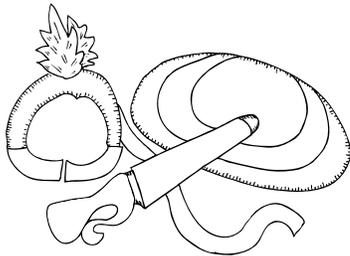


The Greek word translated “testament” may also be translated “covenant.” In other words, the title of the second part of God’s Holy Book could be called the New Covenant. This is because Jesus Christ fulfilled all of the requirements set forth in the Old Testament as being necessary to find God. **Fulfillment** becomes a major theme of the New Testament. Indeed, for our purposes, the New Testament is the fulfillment and answer of the first question, namely, **HOW TO FIND GOD**. Then, as if this is not enough, the New Testament continues on to teach us **HOW TO LIVE** as part of God’s family.

This is possible because all of Scripture is about or points to Jesus Christ. Since the New Testament is about Jesus, God come to earth as man, it is easy to see how the New Testament is designed to answer the two questions necessary for man to have a proper relationship with God. Just as it was necessary for God to come to earth to bring man back into fellowship with Him, so, too, is it necessary for God to provide each succeeding generation with this same information. The prophets are gone. They have been replaced by the New Testament.

Background and History

Abraham lived around 2,100 B.C. His great-grandson Joseph lived around 1,900 to 1850 B.C. It was at this time that the Nation of Israel “moved” to Egypt. The great Exodus under Moses occurred around 1,450 B.C. From then until 721 B.C., the history of the Nation is a series of spiritual ups and downs – mostly downs!



In response to a complete lack of faith on the part of Israel, God sent the Assyrian nation against the ten Northern tribes. The Assyrians carried the Northern tribes into captivity in about 721 B.C. Later, God allowed the Babylonians to conquer the Assyrians. Then, in the period of 605-to-586 B.C., the Babylonians made a series of invasions against the remaining two tribes of Judah and Benjamin, carrying them into captivity. In the process, the Jewish Temple was destroyed. This is the story of 2 Kings 25, 2 Chronicles 36, Jeremiah, Daniel, and Ezekiel.

In 539 B.C., the Persians under Cyrus defeated the Babylonians. Cyrus issued a decree allowing the Jews to return to Palestine. The Old Testament books of Ezra and Nehemiah are about this return, while the books of Haggai and Zechariah are about the rebuilding of the Temple. Still, some of the Jews remained in Persia (Esther) and the Nation acted no differently under Persian rule than they had under God’s rule. They still fell away and worshiped other gods, breaking the “rules” God had set for them.



Have you found God?

What rules do you break? And, how often?
Why?



Who is your master?



God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, 2 Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; 3 Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; 4 Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Hebrews 1:1-4

Fullness of Time



But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law,

Galatians 4:4

Certainly, the fullness of time means the time when God invaded earth as man to bring to fruition the plan of salvation. But God is a God who works in history. So another way of looking at the fullness of time is to see how God structured history for the coming of Christ.

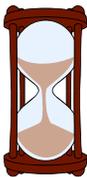
As set forth above, the Old Testament is the story of the Jewish Nation. The Old Testament ends with the prophet Malachai (c. 400-350 B.C.) exhorting the people to return to God. His closing verses hold forth the promise that God will return to them.



5 Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: 6 And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.

Malachi 4:5-6

And then, there followed “400 years of silence” during which time the voice of God was not heard in the land of Israel.



But as Paul says in Galatians, God was not silent. He was merely preparing the earth and its people for the next step. **The fullness of time was being shaped.**

In about 335/333 B.C. twenty-some year old Alexander started his amazing accomplishments. Alexander the Great took his Greek army and swiftly defeated

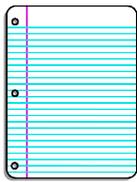
the Persians in 331 B.C. In ten short years, Alexander conquered the world. Palestine and the Jews fell under a new master, one who treated them well.

Alexander's rapid conquest caused the equally rapid spread of Greek culture, *Hellenism*. The world not only had a new master, the world became Greek. And it would stay this way for a long time.

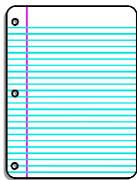
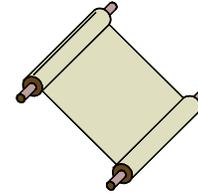
Alexander left no heir. Upon his untimely death at the age of thirty-three his four generals divided the territories. Two of these, Ptolemy and Seleucus, are important for our discussion. The Ptolemies ruled Egypt and Seleucus ruled the region around Syria. Notice that Palestine lies between the two and the Holy Land became the pawn in the efforts of these two families to rule the world around them. Frequent wars and skirmishes were fought on the Jewish homeland.

Although the Ptolemies ruled Egypt for a considerable time period, our real interest lies in their reign only so far as it influences or affects Israel. For example, you all know one "great" Ptolemy – Cleopatra! But her reign around 55 B.C. had little or no effect on Israel.

The Ptolemies ruled the Promised Land from 321 to 198 B.C. In general, the Jews were treated favorably during this period. One major event occurred which would have lasting influence.

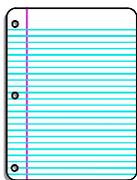


During this time, there were a large number of Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt. Many had been born and raised there and understood Greek much better than Hebrew. Ptolemy Philadelphus (285-247 B.C.) brought Jewish scholars and rabbis from Jerusalem to Alexandria and had the Old Testament translated into the Greek language. This is the first translation of the Bible. This translation is called the Septuagint. It became a significant document for the Jewish community living outside of Palestine. It is frequently the source of Old Testament quotes in the New Testament and was the Bible of the early church.



Septuagint means 70. The legend exists that the translation received this name because the number of scholars involved in the translations was 72 and that the translation was completed in 72 days. They rounded these numbers down to 70 in order to give the translation a name.

In 198 B.C., Antiochus III, a Seleucid, defeated the Ptolemies and took over rule of Palestine. This victory by Antiochus brought the true spread of Hellenism to the Holy Land. His son, Antiochus IV or Antiochus Epiphanes, promoted Hellenism and attacked the Jewish religion. In 168 B.C., after a humiliating defeat at the hands of the Egyptians, Epiphanes desecrated the Temple in Jerusalem by offering a pig on the holy altar and by erecting a shrine of Zeus in the Temple. This is a picture of the actions of the anti-Christ (cf Matt 24:15).



For those with a good study Bible, the history of these two families, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids, may be reviewed in Daniel chapter 11. The family stories, in very abbreviated version, are set against the backdrop of Scripture proving that God truly is a God of history. The New Schofield, Ryrie, and NIV Study Bibles (among others) all relate Scripture to the actual persons of the Ptolemies and Seleucids.

Epiphanes' actions were more than some Jews could take. Mattathias, a priest in the town of Modein, defied the Syrians' requirements to offer sacrifices to pagan Gods. The revolt began. Mattathias fled to the hills with his five sons, where the old priest soon died. His son Judas took over the fight. His nickname became "the hammer" or in the Hebrew, *Maccabeus*. The revolt takes its name after Judas, the Maccabean revolt. In December 165 B.C., the Maccabees defeated Epiphanes and recaptured Jerusalem. Their Temple cleansing/dedication ceremony became known as the Festival of Lights and is still celebrated annually by the Jews. You might know it better as Hannakah..

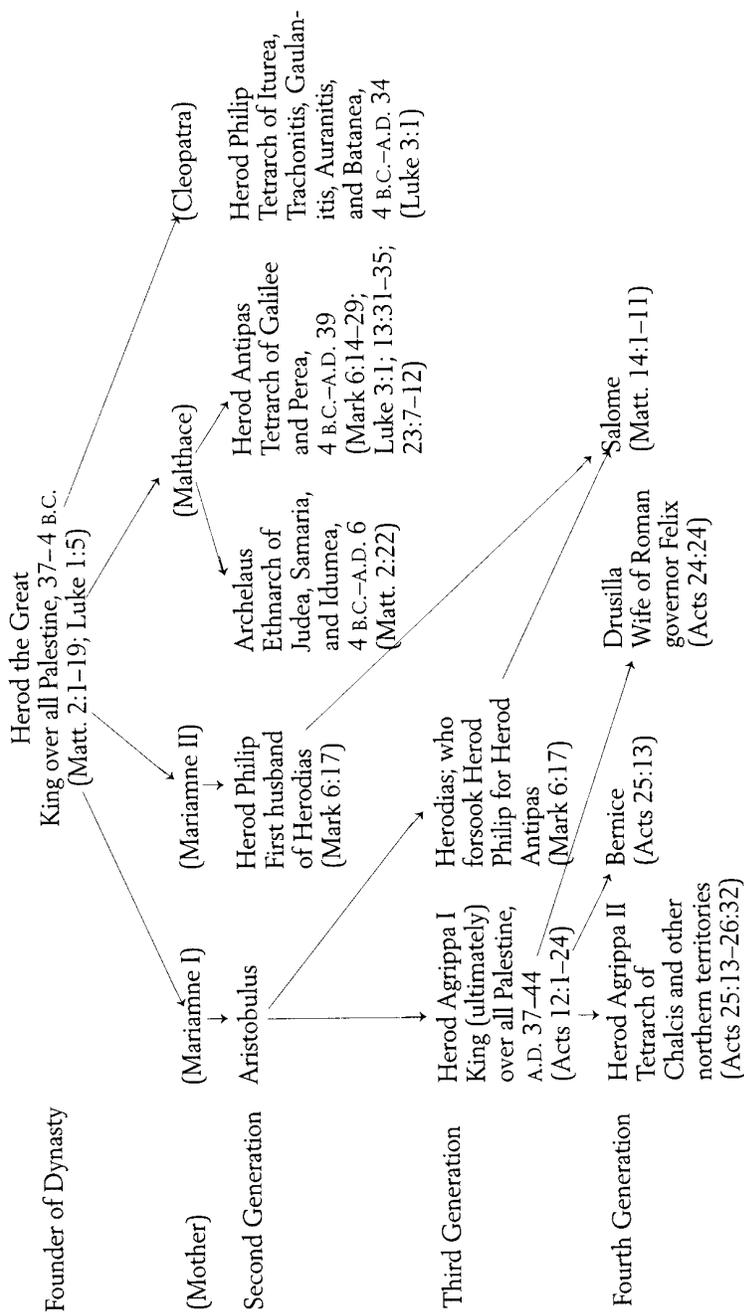


In 143 B.C. peace was achieved with Syria and the Maccabees became the rulers of the Nation of Israel. Judas's brother Simon became the first ruler of the Nation. Their rule became known as the Hasmonean rule after the family name of Mattathias, Hashmon. Much of this period was characterized by strife and power struggles, so it was not a time of peace for Israel. Simon and his two sons were murdered, leaving the door open for another of the sons, John Hyrcanus, to become ruler. He was a successful leader and won many battles. He also negotiated a peace with Rome leaving the Nation independent of Roman rule.

By this time in history, the Edomites (the children of Esau) are known as Idumeans. One of Hyrcanus' missteps was the forcing of the Jewish religion upon the Idumeans. Since they were not of Jewish blood, this was viewed as a desecration of the covenant relationship with God. Further, the Hasmonean's served as priests even though they were not descendants of Aaron.

Finally, in 63 B.C., a threatened Hasmonean civil war was more than Rome could stomach. An Idumean, Antipater, found favor with Rome and he was able to get one of his sons placed in a position of power in Palestine. This son, Herod the Great, would become king of the region. Antipater's family plays an ongoing role in Biblical history during the life of Christ and the early church. Herod, three of his sons, a grandson, and a great grandson are all named in Scripture. The family was less than ideal and moral, as may be seen by the inter-marriages and relationships shown on the chart on the next page.

A PARTIAL GENEALOGICAL CHART OF THE HERODIAN FAMILY*



* Because it covers only that part of the Herodian family which touches the New Testament story, the chart contains numerous omissions. For example, only four of Herod the Great's ten wives appear above.

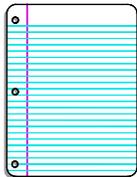
¹ The Family of Herod

¹Robert H. Gundry, A Survey of the New Testament, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994, 40, used by permission.

Before concluding our study of the background history of this time, a couple of points need to be made.

First, although the Romans did not enter into the history of the region until “late,” the Roman empire played a considerable role in God’s “fullness of time.” The Romans were a very “civilized” people who viewed their comforts as a necessity. Many of these comforts are of the same type that we enjoy today. There was peace in the land – Pax Roma. Admittedly this peace was originally created by the army, and was also enforced by the army, but it was an empire-wide peace. This allowed trade and people to move about the entire region without visas or trade barriers. Further, being a people of comfort, the Romans built a massive road system throughout the empire. This made travel all the much easier. The means of spreading the Gospel message of Christ was now in place.

There was also a commonality of speech throughout the empire. It was not, however, the language of Rome. Rome may have conquered the land, but Alexander the Great still ruled the peoples’ hearts. Three hundred years after his death, common Greek, or *Koine*, was the language of trade, commerce, and diplomacy. Just as today everyone speaks American, in the days of Jesus everyone spoke Greek. Even in Rome this was the language of culture, business, and politics.



Koine is also the language of the New Testament. All the books of the New Testament were originally written in Greek.

Religions - Jewish and Others

Before actually investigating the New Testament, one final set of conditions must be explored. This is the area of religion. While Greek and Roman influences battled with each other for control of land and language, in religious circles the results were different. Over the years the great Greek gods and the equally great Roman gods all merged into a set of matched deities. The great gods and goddesses were identified one with the other, although by the time of Christ, their influence was on the wain. However, Acts 14 reflects their continued existence.

Emperor worship was another religion of the region. While the deification of the emperors usually occurred after their death, some, like Nero, would declare themselves gods while still ruling. Nero was the emperor at the time of Paul’s

and Peter's time in Rome. Christians could not / would not worship the emperor, creating conflict with the ruling powers.

Mystery religions also existed. These used ecstatic experiences, secret rites and rituals, ceremonial washing, blood sprinkling, intoxication, emotional frenzy, pageantry, and temple prostitutes as a means of coming into union with the gods. Gnosticism, Epicureanism, stoicism, cynics, and skeptics all are religions or philosophies which existed or arise, at least in their rudiments, during the early days of the church. For example, Colossians and 1 John were probably dealing with early forms of Gnosticism.

Lastly, it is necessary to understand the Jewish religious structure and the important political parties of Israel in order to understand the tensions of the New Testament. The institutions, religious cults, and political groups which make up Israel at the time of Christ and the early church may be briefly outlined as follows:

Pharisees: Their name comes from a Hebrew word meaning “to separate.” The Pharisees probably grew out of an early sect known as the *Hassidim* or pious ones. In today's Jewish community, the Hasidic Jew, those with the black coats, black wide brimmed hats, and flowing beards, are the equivalent of the *Hassidim*. The Pharisees promoted tradition to the level of Scripture. They probably only numbered about 6,000 at the time of Christ, but they represented the people and, thus, wielded a strong influence.

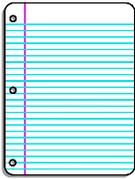


Scribes: These are the “lawyers” of the community. Their job was to teach and interpret the law. Part of their task was to formulate the oral law. Later, into the second century, their formulations were reduced to writing in what is known as the Talmud. Because of this knowledge of the law, the scribes were responsible to determine who broke the law. All scribes were Pharisees, but not all Pharisees were scribes.

Sadducees: Their name may have been derived from the name “Zadok” whom David made high priest. On the other hand, their name may also come from the Hebrew word *zedekah*, which means righteousness. Less numerous than the Pharisees, the Sadducees were the rich and political members of the Nation, the “rich and famous.” It is possible the Sadducees grew out of the Hasmonean family since their descriptions are much the same. The Sadducees felt that only the books of Moses (Genesis to Deuteronomy) carried any authority. They did not believe in angels, demons, resurrection, or a coming Messiah. This put them at odds with the Pharisees.



Essenes: Not mentioned in Scriptures, some feel that John the Baptist may have had contact with this sect. Pious and studious, they lived near the Dead Sea in an isolated community. Their library collection was discovered in the late 1940s and is popularly known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. These scrolls help to confirm the accuracy of the Old Testament critical manuscripts. However, there are no New Testament books among the collection.



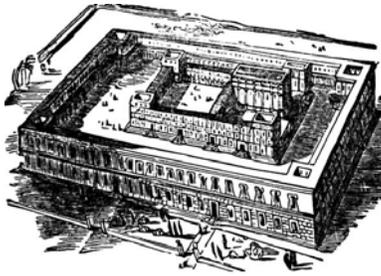
A critical manuscript is a composite effort by scholars and students of the Bible to create a document which is as close to the original as possible. The Jewish community known as the Massorettes worked from about A.D. 400 to 1,000 creating a critical Hebrew manuscript. This is still the primary manuscript for studying and translating the Old Testament and is now known as the *Biblia Hebraica*. The current critical manuscript of the New Testament is printed by the United Bible Societies (among others) and is in its 4th edition. It is based upon the work over the past century known as the Nestle-Aland manuscript which is in its 28th edition. Part of the controversy over modern translations has to do with one's opinion of the accuracy and conclusions which have gone into the creation of these critical manuscripts.

Herodians: This is the political party and, as may be deduced by the name, this group supported Herod the Great and his successors. It is probable that many of the Jewish tax collectors were Herodians. Could this have included Matthew?

Zealots: These are the revolutionists of the Jewish culture. They wanted to take Rome on head-to-head and through the foreigners out of Israel. They were responsible for a number of revolts throughout the first century A.D. It was their activities in A.D. 66-72 which brought the Roman army to Jerusalem and resulted in Titus destroying the Temple in A.D. 70. There is speculation that Judas Iscariot was a Zealot. Simon the Apostle was probably also a zealot (Matt 10:4 NIV).

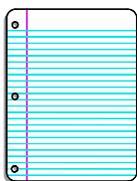
Sanhedrin: This was the Supreme Court of Israel. The Great Sanhedrin sat in Jerusalem and ruled the country. Smaller sanhedrins could be found throughout the Nation. The council had seventy-one members. There were 24 "chief priests" representing the priesthood, 24 elders, the elders of the people (Matt 21:23), and 22 scribes, plus the high priest who acted as its president.

Synagogue: This is the local Jewish church. Probably this institution was commenced during the Babylonian captivity when the Nation was in exile and the Temple destroyed. Ten pious men can start a synagogue, so they were numerous. The story is told that when the Temple was destroyed by Titus there were 450 synagogues in existence in Jerusalem! The services enjoyed great freedom which allowed both Jesus and Paul to make use of them for purposes of spreading the good news.

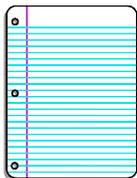


The Temple: This is the Second Temple, the one built by Ezra. Herod the Great undertook a renovation project which brought him great favor in Jewish religious circles. Herod's renovations were commenced in 19 B.C. but were not completed until well after his death. The Temple work was finished in A.D. 64, just six short years before the Roman army reduced the Temple to rubble. The Temple was actually a series of courtyards and buildings. The outer courtyard was known as the Court of the Gentiles. Anyone could enter this area. This most likely is the area of the merchants and moneychangers attacked by Jesus. Next is the court of women. Gentiles faced death if they entered this court. Lastly is the court of Israel. Only Jewish men could enter this court. Inside the court of Israel stood the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, patterned after the Tabernacle constructed by Moses in the wilderness. Of course, at this time in the Jewish history, there was no Ark of the Covenant or mercy seat. It should also be noted that the Romans allowed the Jews to have their own Temple police. This is possibly the band which arrested Jesus. The entire complex was surrounded by a series of porches where rabbis, including Jesus, taught their disciples. It is also possible these porches provide an alternative location for the merchants and money-changers.

The **Jewish people** must be viewed as a composite group, regionally different, similar to the American concepts of an "Easterner," a "Southerner," a "Westerner," or a "Californian"! Those who lived in Jerusalem viewed themselves as the keeper of the religion. **Galileans** were "country cousins," Jewish, but a little "different."



On the other hand, notice as we review the Gospels that eleven of the twelve apostles were from Galilee. Judas Iscariot is the only one from Judah. Notice also that about 2/3rds (23, depending upon how one considers some events and "counts") of the miracles performed by Christ take place in Galilee while only 6 occur in Jerusalem.



It should be noted that the Jewish population at the time of Christ is estimated at 4 million, about 7% of the total population of the Roman Empire. Only about 700,000 of the total Jewish population called Palestine home. There were more Jews living in Alexandria, Egypt at this time than there were in Jerusalem.

Totally different were the **Samaritans**. At the time of the exile of the Northern kingdom in 721 B.C., the Assyrians left some remnant of Israelites in the land. At the same time, they brought outsiders into the area to help settle, preserve and work the land. Not surprisingly, the two groups intermarried. The result were the Samaritans, a people racially distinct from the Jews. This group set up their own centers of worship during the exile and changed their methods of worship. But, they still viewed themselves as worshiping the God of the Jews. Needless to say, the Jews did not see it this way, creating friction. This friction is the backdrop of several episodes in Scripture.

This, then, is the political, cultural, and religious background which makes up the “fullness of time” into which God stepped.

Notes on Structure



The New Testament is the story of this coming, this fulfillment of the God’s events and plans.

To better understand the structure of the New Testament, let us review the make-up of the writings. We have all heard the first five books of the Old Testament referred to as the “books of the law.” How does the New Testament break down in such a comparison? Consider some of the details.

OLD TESTAMENT

39 books

929 chapters

Written over 1100 years (1450 to 350 B.C.)

NEW TESTAMENT

27 books

260 chapters

Written over 50-55 years (A.D. 45 to 95-100)

Covers over 4,000 years

Covers about 100 years

About 31 authors

About 9 authors

Another break down concerns the divisions of materials:

TYPE	OLD TESTAMENT	NEW TESTAMENT
Beginnings / Law	Gen – Deut	Matt – John
History	Judges - Esther	Acts
Wisdom/Poetry	Job – Song of Sol.	Epistles Romans - Jude
Prophecy	Isaiah - Malachai	Revelation

The order of the New Testament is one of logical sequence, not one of chronology. This is especially true if one views the order of writing. The letter of James is probably the first of the books of the New Testament to be reduced to writing. It covers the concepts of how a Christian should live his life. James assumes his audience has already received salvation. The writings of John, including his Gospel, are the last books of the New Testament to be written. Viewed in this fashion, the order is wrong, since one cannot be a Christian and be concerned about the matters of James until one has learned who Christ is and how one brings Him into one's life. This is the material of John's Gospel!

There is much disagreement among scholars and learned pastors over the centuries on the dating of some of the books of the New Testament. Some many think John wrote in the late 60s, not at the end of the century. Some think Galatians was written much later in Paul's life (closer to A.D. 60) than in the late 40s. These differences do not affect the validity of what is said in the writings, nor their inclusion in God's Bible. These differences generally arise from theological presuppositions rather than from any specific information supporting a different date. A generally accepted set of dates is as follows:

BOOK	DATE A.D.	BOOK	DATE A.D.
James	45	Luke	61-63
Galatians	49	1 Peter	63-67
1-2 Thess.	50/51	1 Timothy	63/64
Mark	50s or 60s	Titus	63/64
Matthew	50s or 60s	Acts	64/65
1 Cor	54/55	2 Peter	64-67
2 Cor	55/56	2 Timothy	64/65
Romans	56/57	Hebrews	68/69
Colossians	61/63	Jude	68/69
Ephesians	61/63	John	85-95
Philippians	61-63	1,2,3 John	85-95
Philemon	61-63	Revelation	85-95



What difference does this history make to you?
Why?



Describe the Pharisee, scribes, and Sadducees. Do they resemble anyone in the modern day church?

Is a synagogue like a church? Why? Why not?

What does church do for you?



22 How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? And the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? 23 Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. 24 Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; 25 But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: 26 I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; 27 When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. 28 Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: 29 For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the LORD: 30 They would none of my counsel: they despised all my reproof. 31 Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. 32 For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. 33 But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.

Proverbs 1:22-33



This is the world without Christ. Does it resemble anyone you know?

How do they live?



What do you do about it?

Canon



The list of books included in the Bible are referred to as the “canon.” This is a transliteration of a Greek word which means rule, rod, or straight line. In other words, the books of the Bible are the straight line of God. Other works which might claim some divine origin are not part of this straight line. Being crooked they do not represent God’s truth.

In general, the test for inclusion in the New Testament rests on three principles.

First, is the work “apostolic” in origin? This does not mean that an Apostle actually wrote the book, but that it may be connected to an apostle in some fashion. For example, Mark’s Gospel is based mostly upon Peter’s experiences.

Second, is the book consistent with the Old Testament and the other New Testament teachings? God never contradicts Himself, so if the Old Testament is accepted as God’s Word, the books of the New Testament will never contradict the Old Testament. Nor will it contradict any of the other New Testament books. The Roman Catholic Church in 1546 accepted certain books generally referred to as the *apocrypha* as being part of the Bible. Protestants do not accept these books as part of the Canon. Among the major reasons for not accepting these books is that they frequently contradict parts of the Old Testament. Further, there are other “gospels” and letters written after Christ. They claim to contain other knowledge about Jesus. They, too, are not part of the Canon, for they have no apostolic origin, nor are they consistent with the other books of Scripture, Old or New.

The books of the apocrypha are as follows:

- Letter of Jeremiah (317 B.C.)
- Tobit (250-175 B.C.)
- Baruch (200 B.C.-A.D. 70)
- Ecclesiasticus (Sirach) (190 B.C.)
- Additions to Esther (180-145 B.C.)
- Judith (175-110 B.C.)
- Song of the Three Children (167-163 B.C.)
- 1 Esdras (150 B.C.)
- Bel and the Dragon (150-100 B.C.)
- Prayer of Manasseh (150-50 B.C.)
- Wisdom of Solomon (150 B.C.-A.D. 40)
- 1 Maccabees (103-63 B.C.)
- 2 Maccabees (100 B.C.)
- Susanna (100 B.C.)

2 Esdras (A.D. 70-135).

The **third** test of the Canon is that the works were widely circulated by the early church. This test is not as simple as it may seem. Remember, there were no photocopy machines in those days. Most of the New Testament was originally written as a letter to one or more local churches. The intent of the writers was that the church would pass either the original or a copy of the letter onto other churches. The test is whether or not a particular book of the Bible was truly circulated in this fashion. This test produced early controversy in the church since some of the books were less widely circulated than others or some churches failed to agree upon the theology or purpose a given manuscript.

Still and all . . .



*20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy
of the scripture is of any private interpretation.
21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the
will of man: but holy men of God spake as they
were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

2 Peter 1:20-21



*16 All scripture is given by inspiration of
God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof,
for correction, for instruction in righteousness:
17 That the man of God may be perfect,
thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

2 Timothy 3:16-17

The Holy Spirit guided the hand of the church in selecting the books to be included in the Bible. Early controversies during the second century show the existence of a Canon which is virtually the same as today's. And in A.D. 397 the Council of Carthage "approved" the Canon as it now exists. Man had finally gotten to the point of accepting what God wanted them to read!

The Bible, then, both Old and New Testament, must be viewed as follows:

- † The Bible is a supernatural book, God's written revelation given to prepared and selected spokespersons by inspiration.
- † It is authoritative and true.
- † It manifests unparalleled spiritual worth and a capacity to change lives.
- † Its divine authorship conveys to the Bible an inherent unity.

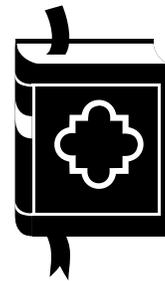
- † It is understandable – there are no “hidden” codes or meanings which only scholars or those with special knowledge may discern.
- † The 66 books of the Bible are the “canon” or proper books which God inspired. There are no others.
- † The views of **1 Corinthians 2:12-16** are true, that only through the Holy Spirit may man truly understand the meanings and purposes of the Bible.



12 Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 13 Which things also we speak, not in the words which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. 14 But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. 15 But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man. 16 For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

Translations

With this background, a brief word is in order on the topic of Bible translations. You must understand that the Bible is the most documented work in the history of the ancient world. While our focus will be on the New Testament, the same proofs and arguments may be found for the Old Testament.



The New Testament was originally written in Greek, the “world language” of the time. Today there exists over 24,000 New Testament ancient manuscripts, of which over 5,300 are Greek. Compared to other ancient manuscripts, the weight of authority favors the accuracy and reliability of the Bible manuscripts. For example, only 643 copies of Homer’s *Iliad* exist today. Homer wrote in about B.C. 900, but the most ancient manuscript dates only to B.C. 400. In comparison, the Rylands Fragment containing the Gospel of John dates to within less than 40 years of the actual writing of the Gospel. If one were to compare the manuscripts, noting differences, the Bible is 98-99% accurate, while the *Iliad* is only about

95% accurate.² In other words, there is little doubt about the basic concepts of God's Word being authentic.



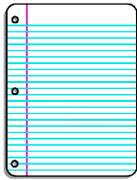
Keep in mind the meaning of accuracy here. We all know that all Scripture is inspired by God. This means the *original manuscripts* were 100% accurate. Over time, with all of the hand copying which was done, there were errors which entered into the copies. This is because the copies were from men. So when we speak of the accuracy of the manuscripts, we are referring to the composite accuracy when all existing manuscripts are considered and compared.

So, then, why so many translations? This is a complex question. One answer is that in this day and age, the economy drives some decisions. Publishers each want a Bible they can sell with unique notes. This has added to the list of translations and to the over abundance of study Bibles. But I want to, at least, suggest to you that there is no one "good" translation. The issues involve many difficult concepts which are present in any language-to-language translation. For example, how does one recognize slang? And, how do you translate it? Or, for that matter, what about terms that have changed their meaning over the centuries?

Further, there are in the scholarly community differences of opinion over which old manuscripts, if any, should be given priority when there are differences in the Greek texts. How does one solve such a problem? Do you use the majority? Or some other method? What other methods are there? All of these questions give rise to emotional debates. The books on each side are often written with much sarcasm and ridicule. Many of the conclusions on all sides are subjective in nature. There is much about the Greek language, the early manuscripts, and the culture that is unknown. In other words, there are no finite answers to many of these questions.

Remember that the intent of most translating committees does involve an attempt to be faithful to the Word of God. After careful study, it is my opinion that there are so few actual differences, and no doctrinal differences, between the key, major translations that it makes no difference which version of the Bible you use. For this purpose, I would define major translations as being the King James (KJV), the New King James (NKJV), the New American Standard (NASB), and the New International (NIV).

²McDowell, Josh, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Volume 1, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1972, 1979, Chapter 4, Pages 39ff.



There is also a new translation, the New English Translation or NET. This title was adopted because this translation was first published solely online at the translator's WEB site. Since it is available for free, there seems to be no commercial intent behind the translation. The translating group are graduates or professors from Dallas Theological Seminary, the school where Chuck Swindoll is now President. The Southern Baptist Convention and Broadman-Holman Publishers have recently announce a new translation which is to be available about 2002.

Keep in mind as well that the idea of translations is not new. What is new is the large number which have arisen in a comparably short time mixed with the controversy over the King James versus other translations. Look at the list:

GREEK TRANSLATION OF OLD TESTAMENT Septuagint (c. 250 B.C.)	PRINTED ENGLISH NT Tyndale (1525, 1535) ENGLISH PENTATEUCH	RHEIMS NT (1582) DOUAY OT (1610) KING JAMES BIBLE [KJV] (1611)	ENGLISH OLD TESTAMENT JEWISH PUBLICATION SOCIETY [JPS] (1917)
LATIN VULGATE Jerome (c. A.D. 400)	PRINTED LATIN BIBLE PAGNINUS (1528)	TEXTUS RECEPTUS (1624)	PAPYRI DISCOVERED (1930)
ANGLO-SAXON PARAPHRASES (c. 700-1000) GOSPEL OF JOHN BEDE (735)	GERMAN OT Luther (1534) PRINTED ENGLISH BIBLE COVERDALE (1535)	IMPORTANT MANUSCRIPTS DISCOVERED (1840)	MOFFATT BIBLE (1924-1926-1935) SMITH-GOODSPEED BIBLE (1927, 1935)
9TH-CENTURY BIBLE MSS Oldest known until 1947	MATTHEW'S BIBLE (1537) GREAT BIBLE (1539)	ENGLISH REVISED NT [RV] (1881) ENGLISH REVISED OT [RV] (1885)	REVISED STANDARD VERSION NEW TESTAMENT (1946-1952)
ENGLISH BIBLE Wycliffe (c. 1380- 1384)	TAVERNER BIBLE (1539)	PAPYRI DISCOVERED (1897)	CONFRATERNITY NEW TESTAMENT ROMAN CATHOLIC (1946)
PRINTED LATIN BIBLE GUTENBERG (C. 1456-1457)	GREEK NEW TESTAMENT Stephanus (1550)	AMERICAN STANDARD VERSION [ASV] (1901)	DEAD SEA SCROLLS DISCOVERED (1947)
PRINTED HEBREW OT	GREEK NEW TESTAMENT	WEYMOUTH NEW	

(1482)	Beza (1557)	TESTAMENT (1902)	
PRINTED GREEK NT Erasmus (1516)	GENEVA BIBLE (1560)	CENTENARY NEW (1904)	THE HOLY BIBLE KNOX (1944-1955)
GERMAN NT LUTHER (1522)	BISHOPS BIBLE (1568)		REVISED STANDARD VERSION OLD TESTAMENT, APOCRYPHA (1952)
	THE MODERN LANGUAGE BIBLE BERKELEY (1959)	JERUSALEM BIBLE (1966)	NEW INTERNATIONAL VERSION [NIV] (1979)
NT IN PLAIN ENGLISH WILLIAMS (1952)	THE AMPLIFIED BIBLE (1958-1965)	NEW ENGLISH BIBLE [NEB] (1970)	READER'S DIGEST BIBLE (1982)
CONFRATERNITY BIBLE (1952, 1955)	ANCHOR BIBLE (1964)	NEW AMERICAN BIBLE [NAB] (1970)	JPS TANAKH [OT] (1985)
THE AUTHENTIC NEW TESTAMENT SCHONFIELD (1955)	THE NEW JEWISH VERSION JPS (1962-1982)	THE LIVING BIBLE (1971)	NEW KINGS JAMES VERSION [NKJV] (1982)
NT IN MODERN ENGLISH, PHILLIPS (1958)	NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE [NASB] (1966)	GOOD NEWS BIBLE [TEV] (1976)	NEW JERUSALEM BIBLE (1985)

3



How is the Canon important to you?

One of the great causes of the Reformation was a desire to allow the people and not just the priests to read the Bible in their own language. Luther and others

³Geisler, Normal L., and Nix, William E., *A General Introduction to the Bible*, Revised and Expanded, Chicago, IL: Moody Press, 1986.

immediately set about translating the Bible into German, French, Swiss, and other languages. Today the Bible is translated into over 2100 different languages.



For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12

Purpose of the Gospels

Let us, then, commence to turn our attention to the actual books of the Bible. The Gospels tell the story of the life of Jesus Christ. The term “gospel” means good news in the Greek and was not directed towards any particular type of writing or event. There could be “good news” about anything. During the first couple of hundred years in the life of the church, the Gospels were simply known as “According to Matthew,” or Mark, or so on. Only after much usage and preaching did the term “gospel” take on the special meaning we associate with it today, the Good News of Jesus Christ.

The four Gospels are a thematic presentation of the life of Christ. While the books are biographical in nature, they are not biographies. Their purpose is to present to certain audiences with the story of Jesus. For this reason, different events, different themes, and different approaches are taken by each writer.

† Matthew presents an argument to the Jewish community that Jesus is the Messiah. To accomplish this presentation, Jesus is portrayed as King.



†

Mark writes to the Romans. His presentation shows Jesus as servant.

† Luke’s audience is the “Greeks,” the Gentiles of the land. His arguments are aimed at showing the humanity of Christ, the “Son of man.”



† John writes to the Church. His presentation demonstrates the meaning of “Son of God” as he argues for Christ being God.

Note also that the endings of each Gospel shows a unique **progression** of development in the presentation of God’s Plan.

- † Matthew ends in the Lord’s Resurrection (Matt 28)
- † Mark ends in the Lord’s Ascension (Mark 16:19-20)
- † Luke ends in the blessed promise of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49)
- † John ends with the promise of the Second Coming (John 21:2-23)

Many see a direct parallel between the structure of the Gospels and the description of the living creatures in **Ezekiel 1:10**.



As for the likeness of their faces, they four had the face of a man, and the face of a lion, on the right side: and they four had the face of an ox on the left side; they four also had the face of an eagle.

The lion equals strength or kingship. This is Matthew. The ox is the symbol of hard working service. This is Mark. The man is the sign of the highest order of intelligence and creation. This is Luke. The eagle soars into the heavenly bodies, thus, is symbolic of Divinity. This is John. The living creatures are a picture of the structure of the Gospels.

<u>Gospel</u>	<u>View</u>	<u>Creature</u>	<u>Purpose</u>
Matthew	King	Lion	Sovereignty
Mark	Servant	Ox	Humility
Luke	Man	Man	Humanity
John	God	Eagle	Deity

Each Gospel, then, carries different shades of presentation about Jesus Christ. It is only by combining the teachings of all four that one may commence to understand who Jesus Christ truly is and what His purpose was in coming to earth. Each Gospel is a different color on the canvas of Christ. Only by

combining all four may one truly see the full picture. In the end, all answer the question of Matthew 16:15:



He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?



The Synoptic Problem

Matthew, Mark, and Luke are referred to as the “Synoptic” Gospels. This term means “seeing together” or “having a common view.” The reason for this description is that each presents much of the same material as the others. The approach of each writer, although to a different audience and for a different purpose, is much the same. A reading of John’s Gospel will show why it is viewed differently from the other three.

Since the three Gospels are similar, scholars over the ages have developed a long winded discussion usually referred to as the “Synoptic problem.” It should be noted that much of the “research” arises from those who, at best, can be labeled skeptics. The issue reduces itself to a simple question. If the authors are all writing about the same Person and the same events, why are there differences in the presentations? What sources did they use to provide the details of the individual presentations? The discussions all assume some type of literary dependence between Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

Several “solutions” have been proposed.

- † Oral tradition;
- † The existence of a source document not part of the Scriptures, commonly referred to as “Q”;
- † The existence of two or more source documents, either in place of or in addition to Q;
- † The “Mark” theory, namely that Mark was first. Matthew drew from Mark and Luke drew from Mark.
- † The “Matthew” theory, that Matthew wrote first and both Mark and Luke drew from his materials independently.
- † Combinations of many of these theories.



Before one worries too much about this problem, one must first reflect upon the reasons behind each Gospel. Then one must remember that each was written by or at the hand of an apostle. Lastly, one must remember that the Holy Spirit guided each writer. When viewed in this perspective, the seeming problems slowly dissolve and disappear.

A COMPARISON OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

COMPARISONS	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Christ viewed as	King	Servant	Man	God
Written to	Jews	Romans	Greeks	Church
Number of chapters	28	16	24	21
Unique Material	42%	7%	59%	92%
OT Quotes	53	36	25	20



Is there a reason to worry about the “differences” in a given account in the Gospels?
Why?



And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luke 24:27

It's All About Christ



It must be remembered that the entire Bible is about Jesus Christ. The “seed” of woman which will bruise the heel of the serpent (Gen 3:15) is Jesus. The “King of Kings and Lord of Lords” who is the ultimate ruler (Rev 19:11) is Jesus Christ. As you read and study all of Scripture, but especially the New Testament, this must be remembered. Accordingly, it is good to have a perspective on the actual chronology of Jesus’s life as a man. This means rearranging the material of the Gospels into a time frame based upon Christ’s life on earth. Such an effort is commonly called a harmony of the Gospels. Very detailed harmonies have been published and may be found in many study Bibles. A study of all these harmonies will reveal differences of opinion over the location of some events. For example, are the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-6-7) and the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 11) the same event?

Our study does not require a detailed, verse-by-verse harmony. But it is good to have a basic understanding of how the Gospels fit together. Following is such a general harmony. Please note in reviewing these harmonies, man’s lust of detail and knowledge creates one final survey issue. When did Christ commence His ministry? Or stated another way, when was Christ crucified?

Our modern calendar was developed under the reigns of Julius Caesar and Pope Gregory. In 46 B.C., Julius Caesar adapted a new calendar to correct the dates of the calendar to the seasons. This calendar was designed to have the civil and religious and solar calendars all in accord. This correction occurs today as leap years.

As the Christian religion became the predominate religion the Roman empire, people began to reckon time from the birth of Christ rather than from day 1 on the Julian calendar. What would have been the year 47 became A.D. 1.

However, the Julian calendar proved to be defective. In 1582, the Gregorian calendar skipped ten days to again adjust the “leap years,” restoring the concurrence of solar and civil years. It is referred to as the Gregorian calendar and is the calendar in use today, even though it took about 200 years for the majority of the world to switch to this calendar for dating purposes..

Around 1600, the movement was put forth that the calculations of the early Christians as to the date of birth of Christ was not correct. Records discovered

over the past couple of hundred years support this argument. Based upon biblical statements as the key to the timing of events, Jesus was actually born in 4/5 B.C. Modern historical information shows that Herod the Great died in April, 4 B.C. He was king when Jesus was born. Further, in order to fit with the story of the Magi (Matt 2:16), Jesus was probably born at least one year before Herod's death.

Luke 3:1 tells us John the Baptist began his ministry in the 15th year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar. This appears to be 28/29 A.D. Christ's public ministry commenced shortly thereafter, probably then in the summer or fall of A.D. 29. This would make Jesus 32 or 33 years of age, "about" the age of thirty as stated by Luke 3:23.

Jesus was crucified on the Jewish feast of Passover (John 12:1; 13:1; 18:28). Since the date of Passover may be calculated because it occurs on the same Jewish calendar date each year, Nisan 14, there are only two options during this period for a Friday date. One was in A.D. 30 and the other in A.D. 33. This last date is the most likely and fits with the chronology of John's Gospel. John specifically mentions three different Passovers, John 2:13, 6:4, and 11:55. A review of all the Gospels suggest a fourth Passover at John 5:1. This, then, coincides with a date of death in A.D. 33.

A harmony of the life of Christ then looks like this:

Event	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Preview of Christ	1:1		1:1-4	1:1-13
Genealogy of Christ	1:2-17		3:23-28	
Birth of John the Baptist			1:5-25	
			1:39-80	
Birth of Christ	1:18-25		1:26-38	1:14-18
			2:1-39	
Christ's youth	2:1-23		2:40-52	
John Baptist's ministry	3:1-12	1:1-8	3:1-18	1:19-28
Baptism of Christ	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-22	
Christ's temptation	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	
Early Ministry				
First Disciples				1:29-51
Galilean Ministry	4:12-17			2:1-12
	4:23-25			4:43-45
Judean Ministry				2:13-3:36

Samaritan Ministry				4:1-42
Galilean Ministry				
John's Question	11:2-19	6:24-29	3:19-20	
Disciples	4:18-22	2:13-14	5:1-11	
	10:1-11:1	1:14-20	5:27-32	
		3:13-19	6:12-16	
			8:1	
Teachings	5:1-7:29	2:15-28	4:14-32	5:10-47
	13:1-52	4:1-41	5:33-6:11	
			6:17-49	
Miracles	8:1-9:38	1:21-2:12	4:33-44	4:46-5:9
	12:15-21	3:1-12	5:12-26	
			7:1-8:56	
Opposition	11:20-30	3:20-25		5:10-47
		5:1-43		
	12:1-14	6:1-6		
	12:22-45			
Changes in Ministry	12:46-12:50	6:7-13	9:1-27	
	16:1-20			
Death of John the Baptist	14:1-12	6:14-23	(9:7-9)	
Training the Apostles				
Withdrawal with them	15:21-39			6:1-3
Focus on them	16:21-16:28	6:30-9:1	9:37-52	6:4-7:1
		9:14-50		
Judean Ministry				
Opposition			11:14-54	7:2-8:11
				9:13-34
				10:19-21
Teachings			10:1-12:59	8:12-10:18
Perean Ministry				
Notable Events	14:13-15:20	6:14-29		10:22-42
				11:45-12:11
Transfiguration	17:1-13	9:2-13	(9:28-36)	
Notable Miracles			17:11-21	11:1-44
			18:35-43	
Notable Teachings	17:14-20:34	10:1-52	13:1-19:28	
The Last Days				
Palm Sunday	21:1-17	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:12-50
Monday				
Cursing Fig Tree	21:18-22	11:12-14		

Cleansing Temple	21:12-13	11:15-19	19:45-48	
Tuesday				
Debates w/leaders	21:23-23:39	11:20-12:40	20:1-21:4	
Olivet Discourse	24:1-25:46	13:1-37	21:5-36	
Judas Betrays Him	26:1-16	14:10-11	22:3-6	
Wednesday -- no events				
Thursday				
Last Supper	26:17-29	14:12-25	22:7-20	13:1
Upper Room Discourse				13:2-14:31
To the Garden				15:1-18:1
In the Garden	26:30-46	14:26-42	22:39-46	
Friday				
Betrayal	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:2-12
Trial of Jesus				
before Annas				18:13-24
before Caiaphas	26:57-68	14:53-65		
Peter's Denial	26:69-75	14:66-72	22:54-64	(18:16-17)
				18:25-27
Judas' Death	27:2-10			
before Sanhedrin	27:1	15:1-5	22:65-23:5	18:28-37
	27:11-14			
before Herod			23:6-12	
before Pilate	27:15-26	15:6-15	23:13-25	18:38-19:16
Crucifixion	27:27-56	15:16-41	23:26-49	19:17-30
Sayings				
Father, forgive			(23:34)	
Today, you shall			(23:43)	
Woman, behold				(19:26-27)
My God, My God	(27:46)	(15:34)		
I am thirsty				(19:28)
It is finished				(19:30)
Father, into Thy			(23:46)	
Burial	27:57-66	15:42-45	23:50-56	19:31-38
Resurrection Appearances				
Easter Sunday				
to Mary Magdalene	28:1-8	16:1-11	24:1-12	20:1-18
to other women	28:9-10			
to Peter			24:34	
to Emmaus Disciples		16:12-13	24:13-35	

to 10 disciples		16:14	24:36-43	20:19-25
A Week Later				
to 11 disciples				20:26-31
In Galilee				
to 7 disciples				21:1-25
to 11 disciples	28:11-20	16:15-20		
40 Days Later				
to 11 disciples			24:44-53	
Resurrection Appearances Recorded elsewhere in Scripture				
On Easter Sunday to Peter			1 Corinthians 15:5	
To 11 disciples a week later			1 Corinthians 15:5	
To 500 at one time, a week later (?)			1 Corinthians 15:6	
To James, a week later (?)			1 Corinthians 15:7	
to 11 disciples, 40 days later			Acts 1:3-12	
Event	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Preview of Christ	1:1		1:1-4	1:1-13
Genealogy of Christ	1:2-17		3:23-28	
Birth of John the Baptist			1:5-25	
			1:39-80	
Birth of Christ	1:18-25		1:26-38	1:14-18
			2:1-39	
Christ's youth	2:1-23		2:40-52	
John Baptist's ministry	3:1-12	1:1-8	3:1-18	1:19-28
Baptism of Christ	3:13-17	1:9-11	3:21-22	
Christ's temptation	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	
Early Ministry				
First Disciples				1:29-51
Galilean Ministry	4:12-17			2:1-12
	4:23-25			4:43-45
Judean Ministry				2:13-3:36
Samaritan Ministry				4:1-42
Galilean Ministry				

John's Question	11:2-19	6:24-29	3:19-20	
Disciples	4:18-22	2:13-14	5:1-11	
	10:1-11:1	1:14-20	5:27-32	
		3:13-19	6:12-16	
			8:1	
Teachings	5:1-7:29	2:15-28	4:14-32	5:10-47
	13:1-52	4:1-41	5:33-6:11	
			6:17-49	
Miracles	8:1-9:38	1:21-2:12	4:33-44	4:46-5:9
	12:15-21	3:1-12	5:12-26	
			7:1-8:56	
Opposition	11:20-30	3:20-25		5:10-47
		5:1-43		
	12:1-14	6:1-6		
	12:22-45			
Changes in Ministry	12:46-12:50	6:7-13	9:1-27	
	16:1-20			
Death of John the Baptist	14:1-12	6:14-23	(9:7-9)	
Training the Apostles				
Withdrawal with them	15:21-39			6:1-3
Focus on them	16:21-16:28	6:30-9:1	9:37-52	6:4-7:1
		9:14-50		
Judean Ministry				
Opposition			11:14-54	7:2-8:11
				9:13-34
				10:19-21
Teachings			10:1-12:59	8:12-10:18
Perean Ministry				
Notable Events	14:13-15:20	6:14-29		10:22-42
				11:45-12:11
Transfiguration	17:1-13	9:2-13	(9:28-36)	
Notable Miracles			17:11-21	11:1-44
			18:35-43	
Notable Teachings	17:14-20:34	10:1-52	13:1-19:28	
The Last Days				
Palm Sunday	21:1-17	11:1-11	19:29-44	12:12-50
Monday				
Cursing Fig Tree	21:18-22	11:12-14		
Cleansing Temple	21:12-13	11:15-19	19:45-48	

Tuesday				
Debates w/leaders	21:23-23:39	11:20-12:40	20:1-21:4	
Olivet Discourse	24:1-25:46	13:1-37	21:5-36	
Judas Betrays Him	26:1-16	14:10-11	22:3-6	
Wednesday -- no events				
Thursday				
Last Supper	26:17-29	14:12-25	22:7-20	13:1
Upper Room Discourse				13:2-14:31
To the Garden				15:1-18:1
In the Garden	26:30-46	14:26-42	22:39-46	
Friday				
Betrayal	26:47-56	14:43-52	22:47-53	18:2-12
Trial of Jesus				
before Annas				18:13-24
before Caiaphas	26:57-68	14:53-65		
Peter's Denial	26:69-75	14:66-72	22:54-64	(18:16-17)
				18:25-27
Judas' Death	27:2-10			
before Sanhedrin	27:1	15:1-5	22:65-23:5	18:28-37
	27:11-14			
before Herod			23:6-12	
before Pilate	27:15-26	15:6-15	23:13-25	18:38-19:16
Crucifixion	27:27-56	15:16-41	23:26-49	19:17-30
Sayings				
Father, forgive			(23:34)	
Today, you shall			(23:43)	
Woman, behold				(19:26-27)
My God, My God	(27:46)	(15:34)		
I am thirsty				(19:28)
It is finished				(19:30)
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To James, a week later (?)			1 Corinthains 15:7	
to 11 disciples, 40 days later			Acts 1:3-12	

4



Is the actual date of Jesus' death important?

One way to think of Christ's ministry is to group it as three years and consider each year as having a theme. In this approach, the

- † First Year is the year of Obscurity
- † Second Year is the year of Popularity
- † Third Year is the year of Rejection

⁴Based upon outline of Paul N. Benware, *Survey of the New Testament*, Everyman's Bible Commentary, Chicago: Moody Press, 1990, 59ff. I have made a some additions and modifications to the outline. It is not completely chronological, but is close. Items marked in parenthesis are included twice.

As you review the chronology, note that parables, miracles, teachings to crowds, and talks with individuals are all mixed together. In today's world of efficient evangelism, we may become too involved in worrying about what our evangelistic style is and how to use it. When we do this we lose sight of our audience. Jesus kept His audience in sight at all times. He used different styles of reaching out in differing situations, all based upon the audience. Remember how Paul phrases it.



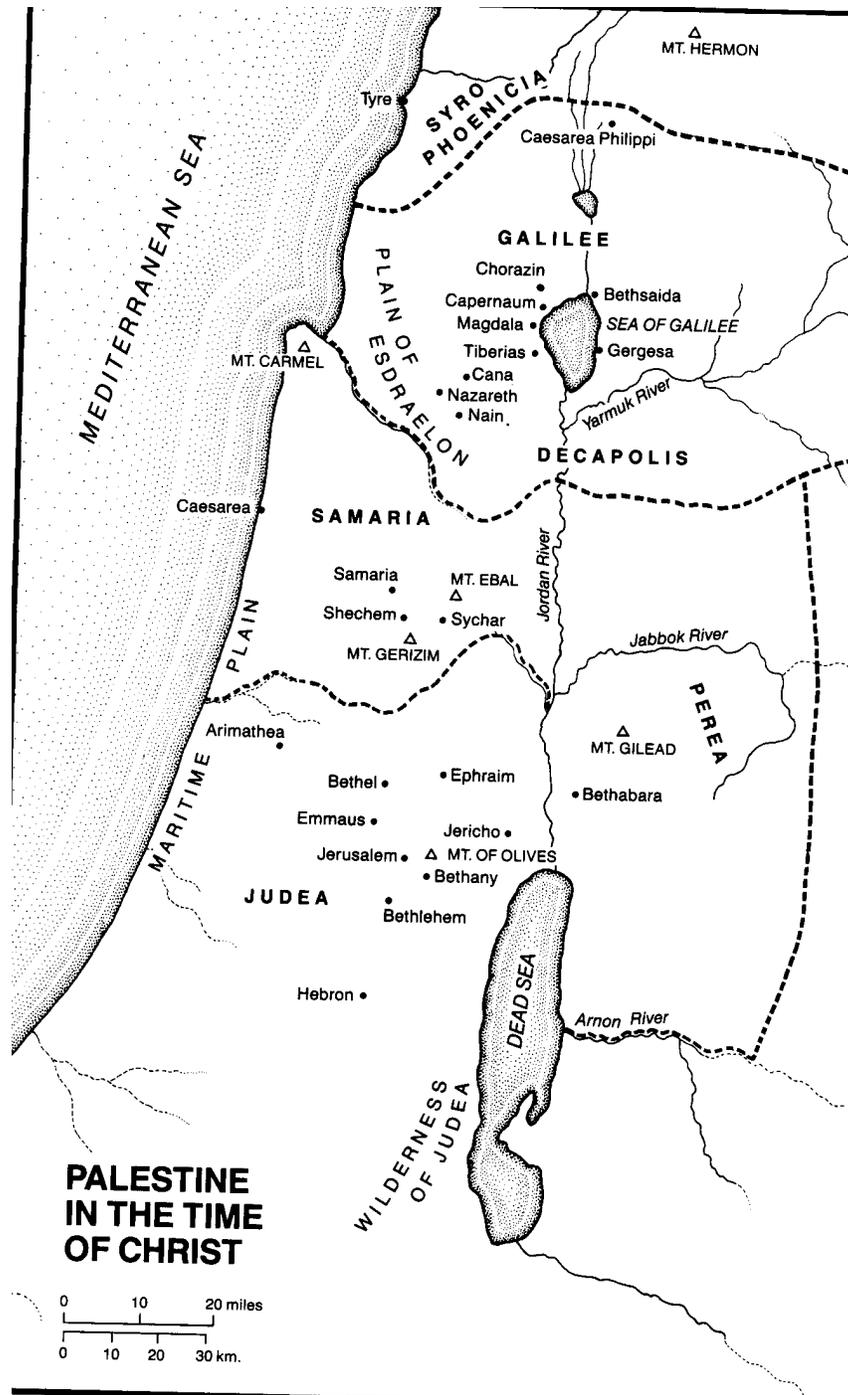
20 And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; 21 To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. 22 To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.

1 Corinthians 9:20-22



Are you like Paul?

How well do you do?



⁵Map of Palestine in the Time of Christ

⁵Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah*, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1993, 1112.

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

The Gospel of Matthew

Key Verse(s):

1:20-21

16:15-19

28:18-20

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 1

Chapter 12

Chapter 28

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Messiah

Kingdom

Consider:

Who is the author?

How do you know this?

Who is the audience?

How do you know this?

Is there a particular problem?

Is there a key theme to the book?

How is Jesus presented?

What geographical area does Matthew use in his Gospel?

How is a Christian to live?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

Chapters 5-7

Chapter 16

Chapters 24-27

Matthew

The first Gospel, as well as the first book, of the New Testament is that of Matthew. This seems appropriate since it is the Gospel to the Jewish people and “*salvation is of the Jews*” (John 4:22). Indeed, the opening verses which provide the genealogy of Jesus commence with the proposition that He is the Son of David and Abraham.



The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Matthew 1:1

Theme and Purpose

A review of this book shows several reasons or purposes behind Matthew’s effort. All of these are related to the basic purpose of the book, namely, that Jesus is the Messiah, the King of the Jews. The purposes might be listed as follows:



- † Fulfillment – Jesus is the Messiah and the major events of Christ’s life took place in fulfillment of prophecy. The Gospel contains the phrase “that it might be fulfilled” twelve times.
- † The comprehensiveness of the Good News of salvation to include the Gentiles.
- † An apologetic nature for the many questions which would have been raised against Jesus -- illegitimacy of birth, residence of Jesus in Nazareth rather than Bethlehem, stealing of the body of Jesus, and so on.
- † A presentation of the commandments and teachings of Jesus. He does this through the use of five major discourses throughout the book.
- † A demonstration of why the message moved beyond the Jews to the Gentiles (the Jews’ apathy and rejection of the King).

† God's kingdom program has not failed.



An *apology* or an apologetic argument is a defense of a given position. When we speak of Matthew as being an apologetic against the illegitimacy of Jesus, we mean that the Gospel presents the arguments to prove that Jesus' birth was supernatural and not illegitimate.

Authorship and Date

This Gospel, as with the other three, never names its author. The testimony of the early church is that the Apostle Matthew wrote this book. The earliest manuscripts uphold this tradition, naming the work "According to Matthew." Internal evidence supporting Matthew's authorship includes his using his apostolic name rather than the name Levi which is used by Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27, the lack of a descriptive "his" in front of the story on the banquet (9:10 - Mark and Luke include the "his"), and the details of events such as the temple tax story (Matt 17:24-27). There is no specific negative evidence against Matthew being the author.



Apostle comes from the Greek meaning one sent forth with an order, a messenger.

Suggested dates of the writing for this Gospel depend upon whether it was the first written Gospel. The fact that the destruction of the Temple is still future (Matt 24:2) strongly suggests a date before A.D. 70. The use of the word "church" suggests a later date as well. If so, this places a later date on the materials.

This, in turn, brings one back to the Synoptic Problem. Was Matthew or Mark written first? If Matthew is first, then a date as early as A.D. 45-50 is reasonable. If Mark is first, then a later date, say A.D. 55-60 is more probable. It should be noted that modern scholarship generally favors Mark as the first of the Gospels, a point we will consider in more detail in the chapter on Mark. To balance this trend, the early church fathers, at least according to later quotes, favor Matthew as being the first of the four Gospels.

Who is Matthew?

Matthew was a publican or tax collector. This means he was a Jew working for the Romans. Generally, the arrangements between Rome and the publicans was such that Rome expected to receive a certain amount of funds per year. To the extent the tax collector was able to bully his “clientele” into paying a larger amount, the tax man kept the difference. Thus, an unscrupulous tax collector could easily become a wealthy man. Matthew’s tax booth appears to be on one of the busiest roads in Palestine, so he probably was very wealthy, most certainly the wealthiest of the Apostles. When he walked away from this to follow Jesus, he truly did leave everything.



27 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. 28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him. 29 And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.

Luke 5:27-29

Uniqueness of the Gospel

As will be evident from this study, each of the Gospel writers selected material which would best support their purpose in writing. In Matthew’s case, the themes of Kingdom and Messiahship are the driving forces of the book. Jesus performed thirty-six miracles as recorded in Scripture. Matthew’s account contains twenty of these, but only four are unique. These are the healing of the two blind men (9:27-31), the healing of the dumb demoniac (9:32-33), the deliverance of the blind and dumb demoniac (12:22), and the fish with the coin in its mouth (17:24-27). This last fits with the story of the Temple tax and may be included because of Matthew’s tax collecting background.

About sixty percent of the Gospel deals with Christ’s teachings. These are presented in five major discourses – the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29), the instructions to the twelve (10:1-42), the kingdom parables (13:1-52), the teachings

on greatness and forgiveness (18:1-35), and a long discourse covering the rebuke of the religious leaders (23:1-39) and the Olivet Discourse (24:1-25:46). Those who prefer the concept of five discourses suggest a parallel has been drawn by Matthew from the five books of Moses. Others divide the last discourse into two separate speeches, finding a total of six in the book rather than five.

Matthew's Gospel contains the most material from the Old Testament. While he shows some leaning to the use of the Septuagint, most of his quotes appear to be free translations of the Hebrew text.



It is interesting to note that most of these usages stress fulfillment and are used in a literal sense without any allegorizing. This should strongly recommend to us a historical, normal interpretation of the materials found in Scripture, taking into account, of course, any special literary styles, such as poetry or prophecy.

Special Consideration of Kingdom



And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 3:2



In the Greek, the word for “kingdom” may mean sovereignty, dominion, or rule. This concept requires a ruler who has the power to rule and a people over whom this power is exercised. Finally, there must be an actual exercise of this power. Throughout Scripture, God is recognized as the ultimate ruler. The Old Testament portrays the Israelites as God's chosen people. They are, therefore, the ones to be ruled. The proclamation of Matt 3:2 suggests that the King is at hand. This is Matthew's prime theme. The Jews simply never recognize this concept.

The spiritual kingdom is present as well as the earthly one. The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29) is an expression of how the Ruler expects His people to live their lives. This spiritualness is seen especially in 6:33 and in 19:23. The parables of Chapter 13 also

demonstrate this concept of the kingdom. These parables might be viewed as showing the “mystery” of God’s kingdom.



In biblical terms, a *mystery* is something previously hidden from God’s people which is now being revealed.

To Matthew and the Jews, there is / will be a fulfillment of the Davidic kingship as well. When the Jews rejected Jesus (11:2-12:50), the stage is set for Jesus to explain the mysteries of the kingdom (13:1-52) and, then, to offer the kingdom to the Gentiles.

Chapter 1 sets forth the genealogy of Christ to demonstrate His fulfillment of the line of David for the purposes of proving His kingship. The genealogy also relates Christ to Abraham and the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant. Further, 1:20-21 is a key verse giving the statement of Christ’s mission on earth. Since the Abrahamic covenant deals with both Jews and Gentiles, one can anticipate the ultimate offering of the kingdom to the Gentiles through Jesus.



Note the temptation of Christ (4:1-10) is presented in a form to cover body (stones-to-bread), soul (cast thy body down), and spirit (worship me, the devil). Jesus was tempted in all ways just as we are tempted daily in all ways (Heb 2:18; 4:15).

The Sermon on the Mount (Chps 5-6-7), sets forth the rules for living in the kingdom. These three chapters, along with the parables of the kingdom in Chapter 13, give the clearest definitions of the kingdom in Scripture. This may help to explain why Matthew is the most frequently quoted book of the New Testament.

Chapter 12 sets forth the rejection of Christ by the Jewish Nation. This rejection is shown in very similar fashion in Mark 8:27-30 and Luke 9:18-22. John demonstrates the rejection differently. This sets the stage for Peter’s confession in **16:15-18**:



15 He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the

Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. 18 And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.



There is some controversy amongst scholars over the exact meaning of verse 18. The Roman Catholic Church uses this verse as a demonstration that Peter was the first Pope proving, thus, that the successor to Peter, the Pope, has full power over the church. In the Greek, Peter's name *petros*, means rock or stone. However, a different Greek word, *petra*, is used in the phrase "upon this rock I will build my church." Christ is the rock upon which the church is built.



Church, Greek *ekklesia*, means a gathering of citizens called out from their homes into some public place, an assembly. This is the only mention of the church in the Gospels. This church is yet future, being formed at Pentecost (Acts 2).

In reviewing the materials of Chapters 16-23, notice that Jesus never mentions the Crucifixion apart from the Resurrection (16:21; 17:22,23; 20:17-20, 28-32). The Resurrection is the capstone of salvation, for it is in the Resurrection that Christ overcame death and Satan.

Chapters 24 and 25 are called the Olivet Discourse. This discourse is delivered to His disciples on Mt. Olivet in response to their question:



And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. 2 And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? Verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. 3 And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? And what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

Matthew 24:1-3

The Olivet Discourse is the great Prophecy of Christ concerning the end times. He looks forward to the short term destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in A.D. 70 and then looks farther ahead to the final days of the Great Tribulation when God will destroy all of His enemies and once again restore the Jewish Nation into fellowship with Him. Mark 13 and Luke 21 covers these same prophecies.

The events of the Crucifixion are fixed only by a study of all four Gospels. For example, only one of the seven sayings from the Cross is recorded by Matthew (27:46 – “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”)



And, of course, the great hope of Christianity is found in Chapter 28 with the Resurrection of Jesus. As Paul writes



And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

1 Corinthians 15:17

Outline of the Book

- I. The Person and Presentation of Jesus the King
 - The birth of the King (1:1-2:23)
 - The announcement of the King (3:1-12)
 - The Approval of the King (3:13-4:11)
- II The Preaching of the King
 - The Ministry of the King (4:12-25)
 - The Sermon of the King (5:1-7:29)
- III The Power of the King (8:1-11:1)
- IV The Progressive Rejection of the King
 - The Rejection of the King (11:2-12:50)
 - The Parables of the King (13:1-52)
 - The Further Rejections of the King (13:53-16:12)
- V The Preparation of the King's Disciples
 - The Preparation in View of the Rejection (16:13-20:28)
- VI The Presentation of the King
 - The Public Ministry (20:29-21:22)
 - The Conflict with the Leaders (21:23-22:46)
 - The Rejection by the Nation (23:1-39)
- VII The Prophecies of the King (24:1-25:46)

- VIII The Passion or Final Rejection of the King (26:1-27:66)
IX The Proof of Jesus the King (28:1-20)



18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: 20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matthew 28:18-20



What is Matthew's presentation of Jesus?

How does the Gospel differ from a modern day biography?



How should Matthew's presentation affect the way you live?

How might Matthew's Gospel apply to contemporary mega-churches?



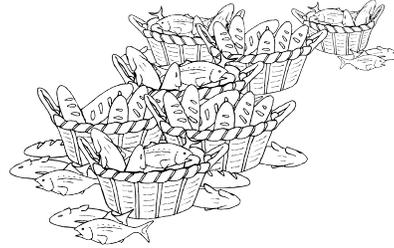
To Christians whose professions are mainly formal?
To questions of multi-culturalism in the church?

What is Christ's charge to you as a believer?

A Side Trip into the Land of . . .

Miracles

From our brief review of Matthew it is apparent that miracles play a major part in the life of Christ and the Gospels. Yet, over the past 200-300 years, this idea of miracles has been one of the stumbling areas between man and God, the Bible, and the Christian faith. Critics of the Bible, those who want to have man in control,



have concluded that miracles simply do not happen. This has resulted in major portions of Scriptures being denied as true or else being translated as allegory or spiritual events, not real events in the course of history.

Ultimately, the problem with such an approach is the denial of the greatest miracle of all -- the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ. This rips the fabric from the Gospel, for it is the Resurrection which is prominent in all of the sermons of the early Church. As we quoted in the last chapter,



And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins.

1 Corinthians 15:17

What then is a miracle? Why do they exist in Scripture?

Three words are used to describe miracles in the New Testament.

First is *dunamis*. This word carries the concept of a supernatural power or agent. Scripture shows that this power may be delegated to a human agent. Only two supernatural powers are presented in Scripture, God and Satan. Accordingly, either Jesus exercised His miracles by the hand of God or by the power of Satan.

The second word is *terasa*. This word is translated wonders, speaking to the effect of the miracle. *Terasa* is never used apart from the third word, *semion*.

Semion is the description favored by John. It is used less by the other three Gospel writers. This word means a sign. The sign focuses the purpose of the miracle.

A miracle then is a supernatural act (*dunamis*) resulting in an unusual, significant, unexplainable event (*terasa*). The miracle is performed for the purpose of convening and authenticating a message or the messenger. It is a sign of the authority of the messenger (*semion*).

A miracle, then, is nothing more than God sticking His finger into the pie of life. But, for those who do not want an active, caring Heavenly Father, this is a tremendous threat. One can easily imagine why the entire concept of miracles has been attacked. Using the above definitions, the “miracle” shows the exercise of supernatural power. The “wonder” is the effect of the miracle on men. The “sign” is the purpose of the miracle. The sign conveys some meaning as to the one who exercises the power. In the Gospels this person is Jesus, so the signs tell us something about Christ. Miracles, therefore, are usually signs, but signs do not have to be miracles.

Notice that the miracles of Christ possess certain key characteristics.

- † First, they are useful. Jesus never performed a miracle just to show off. There is always a purpose behind them.
- † Second, the miracles are always performed openly. No miracle is done in secret.
- † Third, the miracles are accomplished in a simple fashion. The most complex accomplishment might be viewed as Christ’s healing of the blind man using mud which the Lord mixed in His own hand.
- † Fourth, the miracles occur immediately, without building drama. The lame man of John 5 does not slowly unfurl his legs, then kneel gingerly, and occupy another fifteen minutes of video tape getting to his feet.



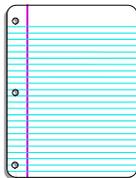
And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath.

John 5:9

- † Fifth, they are accomplished in a variety of circumstances.
- † Sixth, they were accomplished by gracious giving without thought of repayment in any form on the basis of faith. This faith may have been on the part of the Lord, on the part of the one being helped, or on the part of

others, but a careful review of each miracle will show the existence of faith.

Underlying the above descriptions is the long-term view of the miracles, their *eschatological* purpose. A new age has dawned. The King and Savior has arrived and the miracles are designed to testify to this fact. A careful reading of John's Gospel will show particular care on the Apostle's part in choosing which miracles most properly emphasize the thrust of his particular presentation of Christ. And note as well, Christ did not heal every sick person He encountered. God was gracious in handing out His miracles, but He was careful to make great use out of each one.



Eschatological is from the Greek meaning end or end times. In theology, this is the study of the end times, which may be viewed, in one sense, as all of the time from the Ascension to the final judgment of Revelation. In a second sense, this term is used to describe only the events of the Tribulation, Millennial Kingdom, and Final Judgment.

So, the miracles are to draw men to Jesus and to explain to the world through deed that Jesus possesses the credentials of God. As we read the next chapter on Mark, we will see how he places much more emphasis on the actions and miracles of Christ than he does on mere Words.



14 And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about. 15 And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all. 16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. 17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, 18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. 20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

Luke 4:14-21

The Jewish people wanted signs from the Messiah so they could recognize Him when He arrived. By using this passage from Isaiah, Christ warned the Jews of His arrival and proceeded throughout His ministry to prove by His miracles that He was God.

When one counts the miracles of Christ, there is no unanimous agreement on the number of miracles He performed. In part, this is the result of definitions. For example, does one count the Resurrection? The Ascension? Some count thirty-five. Others count thirty-three or thirty-six, or forty. The number is unimportant. What is of concern is that Christ did in fact perform miracles for the purposes outlined above.

Following is a listing of the miracles from the Gospels to give you an idea as to how each of the Gospel writers used miracles in their individual accounts. The list also helps to show where some of the ideas behind the synoptic problem arose.⁶

MIRACLE	MATTHEW	MARK	LUKE	JOHN
Virgin Birth	1:18-24		Chp 1, 2	
At Christ's Baptism	3:16	1:9-12	3:21,23	Cp 1
During Temptation	4:1-10	1:12,13	4:1-13	
Water into Wine				2:1-11
Healing the Nobleman's Son				4:46-54
Healing the Lame Man				5:1-9
First Draught of Fishes	4:18-22	1:16-20	5:1-11	
Synagogue Demonic		1:23,24	4:33-36	
Healing Peter's Mother-in-law	4:38-40	1:29-31	4:38-40	
Mass Healing	8:16,17	1:32-34	4:40,41	
Healing of Leper	8:1-4	1:40-45	5:12-15	
Healing of Paralytic	9:2-7	2:3-12	5:18-25	
Healing Withered Hand	12:9-14	3:1-6	6:6-10	
Healing Centurion's Servant	8:5-13		7:1-10	
Raising the Widow's Son			7:11-18	
Stilling the Storm	8:23-27	4:35-41	8:22-25	
Healing Two Blind Men	9:27-31			
Healing Dumb Demonic	9:32-35			
Healing Gadarene Demonic	8:28-34	5:1-20	8:26,27	
Raising Jairus' Daughter	9:18-26	5:22-43	8:41-56	
Woman w/Issue of Blood	9:20-22	5:25-34	8:43-48	

⁶Taken from Herbert Lockyer, *All the Miracles of the Bible*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1961.

Feeding 5,000	14:13-21	6:31-44	9:10-17	6:1-14
Walking on Water	14:22-36	6:45-54		6:15-21
Syro-Phoenician Daughter	15:21-28	7:24-30		
Healing Deaf & Dumb-Decapolis		7:31-37		
Feeding 4,000	15:30-38	8:1-9		
Blind Man of Bethsaida		8:22-26		
The Transfiguration	17:1-13	9:1-13	9:28-36	
Healing Demonic Boy	17:14-21	9:14-29	9:37-43	
Coin in Fish's Mouth	17:27			
Man born Blind				Cp. 9
Healing Infirm Woman			13:10-17	
Healing Man w/Dropsy			14:1-6	
Raising of Lazarus				11:1-46
Healing Ten Lepers			17:11-19	
Blind Bartimaeus	20:29-34	10:46-52	18:35-43	
Withered Fig Tree	21:17-22	11:12-14		
		11:20-24		
Healing Malchus' Ear	26:51-56	14:46,47	22:50,51	
Miracles En Masse				20:20 21:25
Second Draught of Fish, after Resurrection				21:1-13



Do miracles occur today?

What would be their purpose?



Has there been a miracle in your life?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

The Gospel of Mark

Key Verse(s):

8:34-37

10:45

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 8

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Servant

Ransom

Sacrifice

Immediately

Consider:

Who is the author?

How do you know this?

Who is the audience?

How do you know this?

Is there a particular problem?

Is there a key theme to the book?

How is Jesus presented?

What is the main emphasis of the account?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

Chapters 1

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapters 16

Mark

The second of the Gospel accounts is also the shortest. This is a Gospel of action which places a heavy demand upon its readers to accept Jesus as the Son of God (1:1, 11; 3:11; 5:7; 9:7; 13:32; 14:36, 61-62).



The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;

Mark 1:1

Theme and Purpose



Mark writes about “Christ the servant.” The concepts of service and sacrifice flow throughout this Gospel. He writes during his stay in Rome, to a Gentile audience. Mark focuses on presenting a Christ who gave Himself for mankind in an effort to encourage the new Christians in a time of persecutions. His purposes can be summed up as follows:.

- † To emphasize Jesus as a servant
- † To demonstrate in an active way how to suffer during persecution--as Jesus did!
- † To demonstrate how to be a disciple.
- † To fight the emergence of heretical, theological doctrines



For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Mark 10:45

Authorship and Date

From the earliest of traditions, John Mark has been held to be the author of this Gospel. This book, like all of the Gospels, does not name its author. The validity of the tradition is strengthened by both internal evidence and the argument that a relatively minor player such as Mark would not have been given credit for the work if he had not written it. Luke's development of Mark in the book of Acts may have been the result of Luke either using or knowing of Mark's Gospel.

Mark's history (see below) clearly shows the life of Mark as being closely related to the Apostles. Tradition holds that Mark's Gospel is Peter's recollections of Christ. Part of the uniqueness of this Gospel is the shadow of Peter which surrounds it. Mark may have had as many as twenty years to spend with Peter, so he could have gleaned much knowledge during this time used in composing the Gospel.

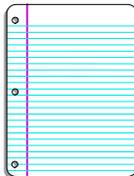
The issue of dating is partially dependent upon one's resolution of the synoptic problem. – but not totally. The need for a Jewish Gospel could have compelled Matthew to write fully apart from Mark or any other Gospel. As we have previously discussed, each of the Gospels is written to a different audience and for a different purpose. Mark was considered to be an abstract of Matthew from Augustine (4th Century) until the early part of the nineteenth century. At that time, the synoptic question arose afresh in scholarly circles, resulting in a re-visitation of the traditions of the past.

Even though the parallels of "Mark" in Matthew and Luke are striking, it is entirely possible that they are using the same source as Mark. And, why would an eyewitness, Matthew, need to rely upon some other written account so heavily, especially one by a probable non-witness? For example, the banquet of Matt 9:9-13 and Mark 2:13-17 was held in Matthew's own house! He did not need Mark's written account to record this story. All of this may suggest that Matthew is the first Gospel, since the first church was Jewish, the audience of Matthews Gospel.



The parallels are more striking than might first be imagined. Matthew includes nearly all of the Markian materials. Luke includes about half of Mark's materials. Neither of the other two synoptic writers varies from the sequence of events found in Mark. Further, Matthew and Luke frequently repeat exact wording from this short Gospel.

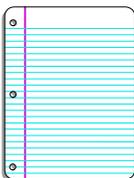
At the same time, if there is no literary dependence by Mark on the other two Gospels, there is no reason to date one based upon a date of the other. Clearly, Mark's account is written prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (Chp 13). This makes the date no later than the mid-60s. Tradition holds to an earlier date, and if one accepts Mark as being the first Gospel, it could date to the early 50s.



One argument for the priority of Mark is its short, direct approach. The Greek language which is used is "rough," unpolished. Many feel Matthew and Luke felt compelled, in part, to write a "smoother" Gospel. Or so goes modern scholarship.

Who is Mark?

John is the Hebrew name and Mark, or Marcus, is his Latin name. On three New Testament occasions, Mark is mentioned by both names (Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37). He is also mentioned as John (Acts 13:5, 13), while elsewhere he is called Mark (Acts 15:39; Col 4:10; Philemon 24; 2 Tim 4:11; 1 Pet 5:13).



The personal touch of Mark is seen by many in the incident in Mark 14:51, 52. There, the young man with Jesus is frightened by the arrest of Christ and flees into the night, naked, leaving his robe behind. Tradition and many scholars think this is Mark writing about himself.



On a personal examination of Mark, one finds his presence in the New Testament as meeting the condition of apostolic authorship. Mark himself is not an Apostle, but his ties to the pillars of the church strongly support his ability to prepare the Gospel. He was a Jewish Christian whose mother, Mary, was apparently a rich widow. She opened her home in Jerusalem for meetings of the early church (Acts 12:12). There is some tradition which holds this was the home where the Last Supper was held.



John Mark was Barnabas' cousin (Col. 4:10). Barnabas was instrumental in having Mark added to the missionary party for Paul and Barnabas' trip to Jerusalem for the famine relief (Acts 12:25). He then accompanied Barnabas and Paul on the first missionary journey. However, for unknown reasons, he turned back to Jerusalem when the party went inland to Asia at Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:5,13).

Barnabas was desirous of taking Mark along on the second missionary journey, but Paul refused to do so because of the earlier defection. As a result, Barnabas and Paul broke up. Paul went with Silas, while Barnabas took Mark to Cyprus (Acts 15:36-41). Paul and Mark later reconciled for Mark was with Paul during his imprisonment in Rome, apparently serving as his delegate in Asia Minor (Philemon 24; Col. 4:10). Paul also instructed Timothy to send Mark to Rome to be with him during his (Paul's) final imprisonment (2 Tim. 4:11).

Mark was with Peter in Rome at the time of the writing of 1 Peter. Peter regarded John Mark as his spiritual son (1 Peter 5:13).

Uniqueness of the Gospel

Mark spent most of his Christian life with the Apostles, either on missionary journeys or in Rome or Asia Minor. Almost certainly this Gospel is being written to the Christians in Rome to encourage them. Rome was much like modern day America. How frequently do we as Christians become discouraged just reading the newspaper or watching television? Mark's audience faced a similarly decadent society.

As a result, Mark presents a Jesus who was persecuted and suffered, all without denying the Will of God. Jesus is the Worker, the Servant of the Lord, who focuses on the task at hand and carries on without complaint and without wavering from the path being traveled. Christ is the faithful Servant going about His business. This is reflected in the key verses for this book.



34 And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 35 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. 36 For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? 37 Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Mark 8:34-37

Indeed, what is more important than man's soul?

Mark's Gospel is a Gospel of action. The key Greek word, *eutheos*, is introduced early in the Gospel and occurs more than 40 times. The word is generally

translated *straightway, immediately, or forthwith*. The word is found only once in Luke and but seven times in Matthew. Jesus is always in action or causing action in this book. Christ is recording as presenting some 38 parables in Scripture, but only eight of these are found in Mark. On the other hand, Mark records over half of the miracles performed by Christ. This is the highest proportion of any of the Gospels.

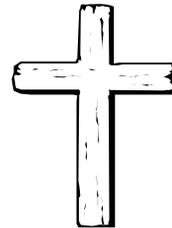
Peter's shadow is present in the Gospel. If one compares Peter's outline of Christ's life as found in Acts 10:36-43, one has the outline of Mark's Gospel. Further evidence of this reliance on Peter is found elsewhere in the Gospel. There is a vividness of detail throughout the Gospel which suggests Mark had access to the reminiscences of a close eyewitness such as Peter (1:16-20,29-31,35-38; 5:21-24,35-43; 6:39,53-54; 9:14-15; 10:32,46; 14:32-42). Along with the sermon mentioned above, there is a strong use of Peter's words and deeds in this account (8:29,32-33; 9:5-6; 14:29-31,66-72). Further, there is Mark's inclusion of the unique words "and Peter" in 16:7. This leaves the impression of the personal imprint this action had on Peter, a remembrance Peter would be happy to repeat.



*But go your way, tell his disciples **and Peter** that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you.*

Mark 16:7

Lastly, Mark's Gospel is an argument for the necessity of the Cross. There is a dominate movement of Jesus toward the cross. Chapter 8 marks the turning point of the Gospel. From that point on, Jesus and his disciples were "on the way" (9:33; 10:32) to the Cross and the Resurrection. The journey started in Caesarea Philippi in the north through Galilee to Jerusalem in the south. The rest of the narrative (36%) is devoted to events of the Passion Week (11:1--16:8). Mark's Gospel is rightly called a Passion story with an introduction. But what an introduction it is, for only if Jesus is the Christ, as Mark alleges in his opening paragraph, could the events of the Cross be beneficial.



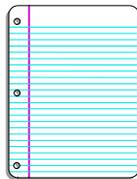
Special Consideration

There is a great deal of controversy over the proper ending of Mark's Gospel. This is truly one of those areas which properly belong to an Introduction Course rather than a survey. A review of the ancient manuscripts shows there are, at least, three different endings to the Gospel. The most abrupt ending are those

manuscripts which stop at 16:8. Next is the familiar ending of the King James which has verses from Mark 16:9-16:20. In between, there is a short ending which adds a couple of verses after 16:8.



This is a transmission problem of the manuscripts. The concern is that the oldest of the manuscripts, those dating before the time of Jerome in the 4th century are the ones which end at 16:8. Jerome notes that few manuscripts which he has seen have the “longer” ending -- but it did exist! However, all of the essential elements found in 16:9-16:20 are found in other portions of Scripture. To the extent they are not, one must be careful not to create a doctrine from this potentially suspect Scripture.



I phrase the above in this fashion as a demonstration of the efforts of some to justify their positions. Review these verses carefully. From 9-11, there is an outline of the early events of Resurrection Sunday. Verses 12 and 13 reminds us of the story found in Luke about the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13ff). The next couple of verses are Mark’s version of the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20. Notice this is, however, where the differences start. Verse 16 speaks of baptizing in the name of Jesus. This has led, at least, one denomination to insist that one is not properly baptized unless it is solely in the name of Jesus Christ – no Father and Holy Spirit for them!



Verses 17 and 18 give the “signs” of those who follows. One sign is new tongues. This verse is a cornerstone of the charismatic movement’s insistence on the necessity of tongues. But another of these signs is the handling of poisonous snakes. While Paul is bitten without adverse consequences by a poisonous snake (Act 28:35), this is the only place in the New Testament even close to this “sign.” Yet, there exists a small group of “snake handlers” in the Christian community who use poisonous snakes as part of the worship service. And, as one might expect, they frequently are bitten and die. Also, note that another sign is the drinking without effect of poisons! There is no example of this happening in the New Testament.

Interestingly enough, although Mark’s Gospel is the apology for the Cross, he only records one of Jesus’ seven statements from the Cross – and it is the same one as Matthew!



And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?

*Which is, being interpreted, My God, my
God, why hast thou forsaken me?*

Mark 15:34

Mark does, along with Matthew record the tearing of the Temple veil (Mark 15:38; Matt 27:51). With the death of Christ, the way is opened for men to find God.

Outline

- I The Preparation of the Servant for Service (1:1-13)
- II The Preaching and Manifestation of the Servant (1:14-3:6)
 - Ministry in Galilee 1:14ff
 - First Disciples 1:16-20
 - Casting out demons and healings 1:21-2:22
 - Lord of the Sabbath 2:23-3:6
- III The Persecution and Opposition to the Servant (3:7-8:13)
 - More healings 3:6-12
 - The Apostles chosen 3:13-21
 - Teachings and Parables 3:22-4:34
 - Miracles 4:35-5:43
 - In Nazareth 6:1-6:56
 - God's commandments versus those of men 7:1-8:13
- IV The Preaching and Preparation of the Disciples (8:14-10:52)
 - Peter's Confession of Christ 8:22-33
 - Cost of Discipleship, Transfiguration and healings 8:34-10:52
- V The Passion of the Servant in Jerusalem (11:1-15:47)
 - Palm Sunday 11:1-14
 - Action and Prayer 11:15-26
 - Challenge to Authority 11:27-44
 - Olivet Discourse 13:1-37
 - Preparation and Passover 14:1-31
 - Betrayal and Crucifixion 14:32-15:41
 - Burial 15:42-47
- VI The Prosperity of the Servant in Resurrection (16:1-20).



For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Mark 10:45



Who is Barabbas?



7 And there was one named Barabbas, which lay bound with them that had made insurrection with him, who had committed murder in the insurrection. 8 And the multitude crying aloud began to desire him to do as he had ever done unto them. 9 But Pilate answered them, saying, Will ye that I release unto you the King of the Jews? 10 For he knew that the chief priests had delivered him for envy. 11 But the chief priests moved the people, that he should rather release Barabbas unto them. 12 And Pilate answered and said again unto them, What will ye then that I shall do unto him whom ye call the King of the Jews? 13 And they cried out again, Crucify him. 14 Then Pilate said unto them, Why, what evil hath he done? And they cried out the more exceedingly, Crucify him. 15 And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas unto them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.

Mark 15:7-15



Would you give your life for a Barabbas?

How important is the Resurrection to you?



What contemporary audience would find Mark appealing?
Why?

Are you a servant of the Lord?

How do you show that you are?



If all of Mark's material is found in Matthew and Luke, why is this Gospel included in the Bible?

Notice the progression in the Gospels. Matthew closes with the Resurrection. Mark closes with the Ascension.



So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

Mark 16:19

A Side Trip into the Land of . . .

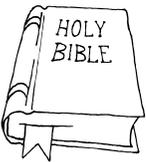
Parables



1 Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears to the words of my mouth. 2 I will open my mouth in a parable: I will utter dark sayings of old:

Psalm 78:1-2

Dark sayings or parables are the promised speech of the Messiah. The Apostles question Jesus as to why He spoke in these parables. Jesus's response is to quote the Psalm.



That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.

Matthew 13:35

But there is more to the answer than just the fulfillment of prophesy. God had a reason for using parables.



And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to others in parables; that seeing they might not see, and hearing they might not understand.

Luke 8:10

In other words, the knowledge of the kingdom is given to the *wise* while the facts of the kingdom are hidden from the *foolish*. In this case, the *wise* are those who listen to, accept, and believe in the Words of Jesus.



Parable is from the Greek *parabole* which means a placing beside, that is, a comparison or illustration. A working definition of a New Testament parable might be something like “an earthly story with a heavenly meaning.” These were easy to remember stories set in the ordinary events of daily life. For those who heard, these stories had “hidden” spiritual meanings. For those who failed to understand the Person of Jesus, God left their ears closed, just as He had promised. The above statement of Jesus taken from Luke is a quote from Isaiah (taken from the Septuagint). The King James version of **Isaiah 6:9** is:



*And he said, Go, and tell this people,
Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye
indeed, but perceive not.*

God did not allow the stubborn Israelites to understand because they were lost in sin. For the same reason, the audience of Jesus could not understand because they refused to believe Jesus was the Son of God.

Most of the parables have a single meaning. The details are important to the story, but do not usually add to the spiritual meaning of the parable. The meaning of the parables is always a moral or spiritual truth about the Kingdom of God and how people are to live in the Kingdom.



It is interesting that while John’s Gospel contains figures of speech, his Gospel contains no parables. Some versions do contain the word “parable” in John 10 but in the Greek this is a different word and actually means “proverb.” There are no sayings of Jesus in John comparable to the parables of the synoptic Gospels.



PARABLE	Matthew	Mark	Luke
New patches/old cloth	9:16	2:21	5:36
New wine /old wineskins	9:17	2:22	5:37-38
The Sower	13:3-23	4:2-20	8:4-15
Mustard Seed	13:31	4:30-32	13:18-19
Wicked tenants of vineyard	21:33-45	12:1-12	20:9-19
Budding fig tree	24:32-33	13:28-29	21:29-31
House on rock/sand	7:24-27		6:47-49
Leaven	13:33		13:20-21
Lost sheep	18:12-14		15:3-7
Wise steward	24:45-51		12:42-48
Tares	13:24-30		
Hidden Treasure	13:44		
Precious pearls	13:45-46		
Dragnet	13:47-50		
Unmerciful servant	18:23-35		
Laborers in vineyard	20:1-16		
Two sons	21:28-32		
Marriage of king's son	22:1-14		
Wise & foolish virgins	25:1-13		
Ten talents	25:14-30		
Sheep & goats	25:31-46		
Seed growing silently		4:26-29	
Porter on watch		13:34-37	
Two debtors			7:40-43
Good Samaritan			10:25-37
Friend at midnight			11:5-10
Rich fool			12:16-21
Watchful servant			12:35-38
Barren fig tree			13:6-9
Guests who made excuses			14:16-24
Lost coin			15:8-10
Prodigal son			15:11-32
Dishonest steward			16:1-9
Rich man & Lazarus ^a			16:19-31
Master & servants			17:7-10
Persistent widow			18:1-8
Pharisee & publican			18:9-14
Pounds			19:11-27

^aMany commentaries list the story of Lazarus and the rich man as a parable. It may be, however, that this is a real story about hell, designed to show us the torment one encounters. The primary reason for believing this is a real story and not a parable is the use of personal names in the story. No other parable uses personal names. The characters are always referred to by description, the "king," the "servants," the "laborers," the "son," and so on. I personally believe it is a true story.



18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: 21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, 23 And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things. 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: 25 Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen. 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. 28 And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: 32 Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.

Romans 1:18-32

This is the description of our world today. Since humankind has turned from God, God has turned man over to his own sin.



Does this mean that God has closed His ears to the world?

Does this mean we do not need to evangelize?

Most of the world lives in sin today.
Should we be speaking in parables?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

The Gospel of Luke

Key Verse(s):

2:52

4:18,19

19:10

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 1

Chapter 4

Chapter 15

Chapter 19

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Salvation

Son of man

Consider:

Who is the author?

How do you know this?

Who is the audience?

How do you know this?

Is there a particular problem?

Is there a key theme to the book?

How is Jesus presented?

Do you notice the humanity of Christ in this account?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 5

Chapter 7

Chapters 9

Luke

To the great surprise of many, if one accepts that Luke and Acts are written by the same person, this author has written about 28% of the New Testament, more than any single author. The Gospel is the longest book in the New Testament.

The first book, this Gospel, is written to a Gentile audience and demonstrates the humanity of Christ. The tone of both the Gospel and the Book of Acts is one with a worldwide outlook. They both demonstrate a lively interest in Gentiles and woman and are shaped with an apologetic tendency. Luke is written to show a universal Savior who will save not just the Jews but all of mankind. This theme carries over into Acts where the missionary journeys are shown so the audience may see the Gentiles joining the Jews in forming the Church.

Theme and Purpose



Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, 2 Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; 3 It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, 4 That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

Luke 1:1-4

As the prologue clearly states, the purpose of Luke is to write an orderly account about the life of Jesus Christ. Many take the term “orderly” to mean chronological, but the Greek could just as easily mean lucid and logical. The apologetic arguments of the work are shaped toward displaying the salvation-

history. God is at work implementing a carefully thought out plan to save the world. Since the emphasis is on salvation, the chronology may have been modified to fit the theological argument.

As is also stated in the prologue, the purpose of the work is to set forth the exact truth about the things Theophilus has been taught. Luke wants his audience to understand the reliability of the information. This may suggest that Luke is written to combat false teachers. This purpose is clearer if one views Luke-Acts as a single unit.



Theophilus means “lover of God,” or “loved by God.” Since nothing is known about the man, it is possible this is a symbolic name used by Luke, either to a more general audience or to hide the identity of a high Roman official.

The implied question being answered in Luke might be something like:

“Since Christianity seems to be primarily Gentile in nature, why did it come from the Jews?”

This reason is, of course, the rejection of Christ by the Jewish Nation. The unit of Luke-Acts shows this progressive movement away from the Jews and the subsequent development of the Church as the result of salvation history.

Authorship and Date - As well as, who is Luke?

Early church testimony is that Luke, “the beloved physician” (Col 4:14), is the author of the Luke-Acts unit. Both are addressed to Theophilus, probably the same person in both each account. Evidence that supports the author as having written both parts of the unit include not only the fact both are written to the same person, but also the following:

- † The theme of both are similar, as is the style of writing and the language used.
- † The end of Luke snuggles right into the beginning of Acts.
- † The post-Resurrection appearances recorded in both the Gospel of Luke and in Acts occur only in Jerusalem. The other Gospel writers and Paul discuss Christ meeting with disciples elsewhere, Galilee.

† Luke 23:7-12 is the only Gospel to record Christ's appearance before Herod Antipas during His trial. This appearance is also alluded to in Acts 4:27.

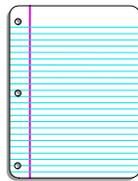
All of the above being so, the conclusion must be reached that both are written by the same person. So, who is this person?

The author was a traveling companion of Paul (2 Tim 4:11; Philemon 24). Further, there are movements from the 3rd person to the 1st person plural in the Acts suggesting and supporting this companionship ("we" in Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-21:18; 27:1-28:16).



The movement of Luke can be traced based upon the history of the Acts. Further, this first hand knowledge is mentioned in Luke 1:3.

The author is most likely a Gentile, writing to a Gentile audience, probably in Rome. Paul separates Luke as a Gentile in Col 4:10-14 by excluding him from the circumcised. Little else is known about Luke the man. He never refers to himself by name in either of the books. The Gospel's prologue make it clear that Luke undertook an investigation of the outstanding information on the life of Christ. He may or may not have known about Mark and/or Matthew's Gospels, but he certainly had Paul's experiences to use as his base for writing.



For those who like to speculate, we know Luke was a doctor. This requires the equivalent of university training. There is some historical tradition that Luke was from Antioch of Syria. If this is so, the closet university was in Tarsus. While there, Luke could have met a native son of Tarsus – Saul! Saul/Paul could have led the doctor to Christ. This would help explain the close relationship between Luke and Paul.

As to the date of the Gospel, this is dependent upon one's views of the relationship of Luke to the other two synoptic Gospels and one's belief in prophecy. Acts ends with Paul's first imprisonment of two years in Rome (Acts 28:30-31). This would have been about A.D. 60-61. There is no evidence in either book of oppression of Christians by the Romans, so it is probably written before Nero came into power (64/65). This also fits with the fall of Jerusalem still being future. Many of the points covered in Acts must take place before the fall of Jerusalem – the Gentile admission to the church, the fellowship of Jews and Gentiles in the church, food requirements of the apostolic decrees (Acts 15), and the early issues of the place of the law and Jewish ritual in the church (Acts 15).

All of this does not require that Luke relied upon Mark as is suggested by most solutions to the so-called synoptic problem. Luke 1:1-4 makes it clear Luke used a variety of sources. One of these sources could have been Mark (or Matthew if

that Gospel were written early), but there could have been other, non-inspired sources as well. If Luke was in Rome with Paul, he probably had access to Peter's recollections as well.



It should be noted that if Luke has used Mark, he has remained faithful to Mark's chronological order. Further, the Gospel contains eleven doublets—sayings which occur twice in different contexts. In ten out of eleven cases, it may be that Luke has included Mark's version in one place and then included a second version based upon his other sources. This, at least, creates arguable material that Luke knew of Mark. If so, this helps to date Mark early.

Acts must be written before the second imprisonment and death of Paul. As detailed as Acts is about Paul's evangelism, it is almost unthinkable that Luke would not have included these events in his work if it were still in the process of being written. Therefore, a date of 64/65 is required for Acts. Luke's Gospel would then be dated a year or two earlier, or around 61-63.

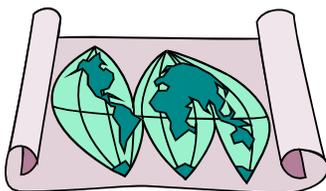
Special Considerations



For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Luke 19:10

Luke's Gospel is aimed at salvation history. The key verse is Luke 19:10, which states Christ's purpose in coming to earth. This purpose does not refer to the Jews, but includes all of mankind. This helps to explain the added emphasis on the place of women in Luke's work. In a world where women were still viewed as property and objects of pleasure, Luke portrays Jesus as liberating them to participate in the work of the Kingdom. The prominence of women is a frequent event in the ministry of Christ (1:5; 2:36-38; 7:37-50; 10:41; 13:10-17; 15:8; 23:28)



The Gospel has a worldwide view. There is a universal emphasis not just on women, but on Samaritans, Gentiles, sinners, the poor, outcasts, and children. The narratives cover the lives of individuals, as do many of

the parables, placing the story in line with Luke 19:10. God is not interested in saving a national group. God came to earth to deal with people on an individual basis. This worldwide viewpoint is further evident from other factors. Dating is based upon Roman emperors, not the Jewish calendar. Jewish localities are explained to an audience unfamiliar with them. Luke's genealogy goes back not to Abraham, but to Adam, to the father of all mankind, not just to the father of the Jewish nation.

Luke's genealogy comes after the baptism to establish Christ's perfect humanity. A careful comparison of Luke's genealogy with Matthew's will show differences. Matthew is concerned with Christ's lineage as King. The throne passes through male heirship, so Matthew traces the genealogy of Christ from Abraham through David to Joseph, the husband of Mary, the legal father of Jesus and the heir to the Davidic throne. Luke, on the other hand, gives the genealogy of Mary, the mother Jesus to show his humanity.



It is to be noted that there is a special consideration in both the genealogies of Luke and Matthew. It is important that they trace not only to David, but to Abraham through Judah, the fourth son of Jacob. Remember that God renamed Jacob to Israel (Gen 32:28; 35:10). The twelve tribes of Israel are the descendants of Jacob's twelve sons. It is from the tribe of Judah that the Messiah will arise (Gen 49:10).

There are no Hebrew or Aramaic terms used in the Gospel, as used in the other three Gospels. Luke is concerned with the concept of fulfillment, but when he quotes the Old Testament he quotes from the Septuagint, not from the Hebrew.

Prayer is of vital importance to Luke. This is especially true around times of new revelation. The Gospel records 19 instances of or about prayer, while Acts records 16.



The universal position of Luke's view of Christ is also found in the use of "the Lord" as a title for Jesus. Matthew and Mark never refer to Jesus as 'the Lord' in narrative. Luke does so fourteen times.

Luke also dwells on the birth and childhood of Jesus. While Matthew does parallel the account of the birth, only Luke discusses the early childhood of Jesus. This is another part of the road map of the beloved physician designed to prove the perfect humanity of Jesus.



The hypostatic union, or perfect combination of God and man, is not a doctrine which is easily understood. What is clear is that Scripture teaches Jesus was both perfect man and perfect God, all at the same time (Phil 2:6-11; John 1:1-14; Rom 1:2-5; 9:5; 1 Tim 3:16; Heb 2:14; 1 John 1:1-3).

Lastly, note the progression of endings brings Luke to the Holy Spirit. This is not a new theme for his Gospel. Luke's Gospel is full of references to the power and presence of the Spirit (1:35; 4:1; 14, 18; 11:13; 24:29).



Luke records three of the last sayings of Christ from the Cross.



Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. And they parted his raiment, and cast lots.

Luke 23:34

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.

Luke 23:43



And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.

Luke 23:46

Outline

- I Prologue 1:1-4
- II The Identification of the Son of Man
 - His Entrance into the World 1:5-2:52
 - His Presentation to Israel 3:1-4:13
- III The Ministry of the Son of Man
 - The Ministry Begins 4:14-30
 - Authority Demonstrated 4:31-6:11
 - Disciples Chosen 6:12-49
 - More Ministry 7:1-9:50

- IV The Rejection of the Son of Man
 - His Final Journey to Jerusalem 9:51-62
 - Instruction in View of His Rejection 10:1-19:27
- V The Suffering and Sacrifice of the Son of Man
 - His Triumphal Entry into Jerusalem 19:28-44
 - Debates with the Leaders 19:45-21:38
 - Betrayal and Arrest 22:1-53
 - Trials 22:54-23:25
 - His Death 23:26-56
- VI Authentication of the Son of Man
 - The Empty Tomb 24:1-12
 - The Emmaus Road 24:13-35
 - His Resurrection Appearances to the Disciples 24:36-49
 - His Ascension into Heaven 24:50-53



Is Luke's Gospel suitable for use with any modern groups of people?

If so, which ones?

If not, why?



Based solely on Luke's Gospel, who is Jesus?



And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high.

Luke 24:49



Who/what is the power from on high?

Is it important to you?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

The Gospel of John

Key Verse(s):

1:1-3

1:11-14

3:16

20:30-31

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 17

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Son of God

Believe

Light / Dark

Word / Truth

Abide

Love

Consider:

Who is the author?

How do you know this?

Who is the audience?

How do you know this?

How does John's presentation differ from the other Gospels?

Is there a key theme to the book?

How is Jesus presented?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

Chapters 13-16

John

This is my favorite book of the New Testament. John's language is simple and straight forward, allowing everyone to enjoy the message of this book. At the same time, John's concepts call for serious study and consideration. His is the Gospel of Jesus as God. Certainly all of the Gospels present Jesus as the God-man appearing on earth, but John's is the Gospel designed to fully prove the Divine side of this dual nature of Jesus, Deity and man. John's "Christmas" story is simple.



And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 1:14



Theme and Purpose

John states his own purpose in writing, but not until you have read almost his entire Gospel.



30 And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: 31 But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

John 20:30-31

A review of the book shows this account reflects the purpose in the same fashion. The first section of the book, say through chapter 12, is designed to give the

people the ability to believe in Jesus. These chapters are an apologetic so that people “might believe” (**How to Find God!**).

The last portion of John’s Gospel is written so that the believer may understand what it means to “have life in his name” (**How to Live!**). These chapters explain to the believer the need for close fellowship with Jesus, the need to “abide in me” (John 15:5). Eternal life as presented by John involves not only a quantity of life but also a quality of life (cf. 5:24 with 17:2-3). The last chapter of the book, which comes after the purpose statement, serves to act as an epilogue which demonstrates the restoration of the sinner into a more abundant life (John 10:10). This is the result of faith, of believing.

As indicated above, the purpose is deeply tied into John’s theme. John sets out to explicitly reveal the Person of Jesus. The synoptic Gospels approach the character of Christ’s Person in a more inductive (from the ground up) fashion. The synoptics leave it to the thought process of the readers to conclude that Jesus is God. John’s Gospel provides no room for doubt on this point. John reveals from heaven down, a more deductive approach. Jesus is the Logos, the Word of God. Jesus is also the "Messiah," the "Son of God," "God," and "Man." It is very possible that a major reason for the writing of this Gospel was John’s battle with the early Gnostic and docetic views of Cerinthus and others. The Gnostic approach was to see Jesus as two parts – Jesus and the Christ. Jesus the man denied His deity. Christ the God denied His humanity. John’s Gospel shows that Jesus is the God-man – both in one, a mystery of the New Testament.



Cerinthus was a false teacher in Ephesus while John was bishop of the church there. The story is told of John and some of his disciples being in the bath house when in walks Cerinthus. John, so the story goes, grabs the arms of his companions and runs from the bath house yelling, “Flee, here comes that heretic Cerinthus.” This is an extreme of example of the command to be separated from the evil of the world (2 Cor 6:17).

The Relation of John to the Synoptics



Please do not become confused over all of the discussion about the differences between the synoptic Gospels and John’s work. All four are about the same Jesus Christ and cover the same time period. The difference lies in the story telling, the literary approach, and the purpose and audience of each account. John’s Gospel supplements and interprets the other four. As will be seen from the discussion which follows as to the date of this

work, John may well have been benefitted from the reading of all three of the synoptic Gospels. John knew what they said, how they reported the Good News of Jesus, and to whom they were originally written. Further, John had the benefit of watching the development of the church. He can, as is the case with Cerinthus, focus on the heresies which have obtained strongholds in the church body. Read John's three letters. They, too, focus on problems within the church and warn of false teachers.

The doctrine of who Jesus is forms the foundation of all Scripture. John writes to the church body to assure that they understand the importance of Jesus being God. Both John and the synoptics follow the same pattern, from "birth" to the Crucifixion and Resurrection. In so doing, Matthew, Mark, and Luke present materials that John does not (and, of course, the three each present some materials the others do not). Likewise, John presents much material not found in the other three Gospels. Over 92% of the material in John is unique to this Gospel. These differences go to the audience and purpose, not a concept of a different gospel.



John's arguments are much more philosophical in nature. The course of his arguments follow the pattern of debate used by the rabbis. There is less narrative materials and more discourses in this account. And, especially compared to Mark, there are fewer "actions" contained in this book.



But note, John's arguments are not unique to John! Try reading Matthew 11:25-27 or Luke 10:21-22. These passages are known as the Johannine thunderbolts. Can you see why? Close your eyes. When you listen to these passages being read, don't you think John wrote them?

Author and Date - Who is John?

John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, is the traditional author of this book. There is much early testimony to support this tradition. As with all of the Gospels, this one is anonymous. There is, however, much internal evidence which may be used in support of the tradition.

The author was clearly a Jew. He understood and quoted from the Old Testament. He understood the Jews ceremonies (marriage, feasts, burial). There is clear evidence that the author was familiar



with the expectations of the Jewish nation as to the coming Messiah. And there is a clear understanding of the religious and social differences between Jew and Samaritan.

Geographical details make it clear the author was from Palestine. The frequent use of “we” and similar phrasing makes it certain the author was an eyewitness to the ministry of Jesus (1:14; 2:6; 12:5; 19:33-35; 21:8, 11, 24).

The author was an Apostle. He refers to himself as the “one whom Jesus loved” (13:23; 19:26; 20:2 21:7,20). The language of 21:7 restricts this Apostle to one of the seven persons named in 21:2. He must be one of the Apostles because only the twelve were present at the Last Supper. Peter is immediately eliminated since he is distinguished in 21:20ff (and see 13:23-24). He is closely associated with Peter. This logically makes the author one of the inner three, James the Son of Zebedee, John his brother, and Peter (20:2-10; cf. Mk. 5:37-38; 9:2-3; 14:33). Since James is killed by Herod (Acts 12:2) prior to the writing of any of the New Testament books, especially this Gospel, only John is left as the author.

The date of the Gospel is probably between A.D. 85 – 95, although it could be as late as 100. The earliest fragment of a New Testament manuscript is the Rylands Fragment which contains John 18:31-33 and 37-38 and may be dated as early as A.D. 100. This fragment was discovered in Egypt and other Egyptians copies support the contention that the Gospel was known in that region early in the second century, so the Gospel dates before A.D. 100. An early church father, Irenaeus, says that John was in Ephesus until the time of Trajan (AD 98-117). This, too, requires that the Gospel be written before A.D. 100.



While some internal evidence may be used to argue for a date before the destruction of the Temple, both Irenaeus and Eusebius affirm that John wrote from Ephesus, his city of refuge after Titus conquered Jerusalem (AD 66-70). This fits with some of the terms used by John. Ephesus was a Gentile city and explains the need for identification of the various Jewish feasts and geographical locations. John further explains other Jewish customs and usages to his readers and translates Jewish name. The introduction of “Greeks” into the narrative (Chp 12) may be a reaction to his initial audience.

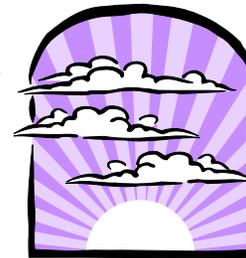
All of these factors support John being the last Gospel written. They also support a late date for its writing.



As a note of interest, there is a developing theory amongst some scholars for an earlier date for John, at least in so far as the writing of what might be called the rough draft. Since John shows little affinity for the use of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the theory is that he wrote about the same time as the other three. However, before John could finish his draft, Paul is killed. The Apostles then determine that someone must write an account to Paul's churches to assure they understand fully the entire story of Jesus. This is prompted because Paul had not been an eyewitness. Before this could be accomplished, Peter is also killed. This resulted in John adding the 21st chapter to his manuscript in Peter's memory. John had to flee to Ephesus as the result of Titus's invasion of Jerusalem. In Ephesus, John completed the manuscript where it was copied and distributed to Paul's churches. This all would have occurred early in John's stay in Ephesus resulting in a date in the late 60s or early 70s. The idea of an initial rough draft accounts for some of the internal evidence of the Gospel, which speaks to an early date.

Special Considerations

John's Gospel is the Gospel of belief. The verb "believe" is used 98 times by the Apostle, while he never uses the noun "faith." John presents the Good News as a choice – believe in God or fall into the realm of darkness. The simplicity of the choice accounts for the contrast of light and darkness which flows through not only the Gospel but John's letters, especially 1 John. Jesus came into the world, but His own people did not believe in Him (1:11-13) so He turned His promises to the Gentiles. Chapter 3 on Nicodemus and the new birth is the example and statement of this choice.



Jesus is the Word, God Incarnate (1:1, 14). This is the entire point of John's approach. If Jesus is God, then His choice of believing on His name is a valid choice. John continually promotes this theme of Deity. In John 1:18 He is called "only begotten Son" (KJV), "God the only Son" (NCV), "only begotten God" (NASB), "only Son, who is himself God" (NLT), and "God the One and Only" (NIV). In John 6:69 Jesus is called the "Holy One of God" (NIV, NASB), "Holy One from God" (NCV), and "Son of the living God" (KJV).

Jesus identifies Himself as the Messiah (4:26) and God (8:58).

God called Moses to His service at the burning bush. Before accepting the challenge, Moses asked who he should tell the Israelites had sent him on this mission. God's response is found in **Exodus 3:14**:



*And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM:
and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the
children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.*

The Jewish Nation came to well know the “name of God” as “I AM.” Jesus applies this name to Himself, particularly in John 8:58. Indeed, the Jewish people recognize this claim to Deity, for the next verse records they attempt to stone Jesus for blasphemy. But, Jesus goes farther than this in John's Gospel. In the Old Testament, compound names for God are used to display His character.

Jesus applies compound names to Himself in the form of seven “I AM” sayings, each designed to convey a piece of knowledge about the Person of Christ. These sayings tell us not only that Jesus is God but what it means to be God.



† *I am the bread of life – 6:35*
† *I am the light of the world – 8:12*
† *I am the gate – 10:7, 9*
† *I am the good shepherd – 10:11, 14*
† *I am the resurrection and the life – 11:25*
I am the way, the truth, and the life – 14:6
† *I am the true vine – 15: 1, 5*

It should be noted that in other contexts Jesus applies the “I AM” name to Himself in less dramatic fashion (4:25-26; 8:24, 28; 12:19; 18:5, 6, 8).

John carefully picks the miracles recorded to show the sovereignty of Christ. To John, miracles are signs which support Jesus' contention of Deity. The miracles each operate in a slightly different area of God's powers and are displayed to reveal different character traits.

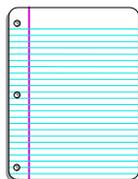
† *Water into Wine – 2:1-11*
† *Healing the nobleman's son – 4:56-54*
† *Healing the man at Bethesda – 5:1-18*
† *Feeding the 5,000 – 6:1-14*
† *Walking on the water – 6:15-21*
† *Healing the blind man – 9:1-41*
† *Raising of Lazarus – 11:1-57*

The other distinctive feature of John's Gospel is the use and concept of the five witnesses. Under the law, two or three witnesses were required to verify the truth of a matter. John uses a discourse of Jesus to record five witnesses against the Jews as to the truth of what Jesus tells them. The witnesses are:

- † His Father, God – 5:32, 37
- † John the Baptist – 5:33
- † His miracles – 5:36
- † Old Testament Scriptures – 5:39
- † Moses – 5:46

While John omits the discourses, such as the Sermon on the Mount, the discourses he does include reflect materials not found in the synoptic Gospels. Some of these are directly related to the great "I AM" names, such as discourses on the bread of life, the light of the world, and the good Shepherd. Others include:

- † New birth - Chp 3
- † Water of life - 4:10-26
- † Who is the Person and Work of Christ - 5:17-47
- † True faith - 8:32-58
- † Christ's Oneness with the Father - 10:25-39
- † The Upper Room Discourse - 13:1 - 16:33



There are two textual questions connected with John's Gospel. First, in Chapter 2, very early in Christ's ministry, John records a cleansing of the Temple. This seems to conflict with the synoptic Gospels which have this event during Passion Week. The simple answer is that there were two cleansings. There is nothing in any of the Scriptures which would prevent this. The details are slightly different, so this would also support the contention of two different events..



The second issue is the story of the woman caught in adultery, John 8:1-11. Many of the early manuscripts do not contain this story. Others have it in a different place. The issue, of course, is whether or not it should be part of the Bible. The story fits with John's presentation of Christ. There is no manner in which to actual solve this issue, so it is best here to accept tradition and include it in Scripture.

Another point of immediate interest is Christ's statements in **John 13:34-35**. In 1 John 4:16, the Apostle tells us God is LOVE. This is an important theme throughout Scripture. God is love, balanced with all of His other attributes. But

if there is a single quality that the saints of God should display to the world, it is this trait of love.



34 A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. 35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

John's Gospel is also the Gospel of the Holy Spirit. No where else in the Gospels is the role of the Spirit detailed as much. His work in the life of the believer and in the life of the world at large may be found in the discourse covered in chapters 14-17. Note especially the descriptions of the work of the Holy Spirit found in **John 16:5-11**:



5 But now I go my way to him that sent me; and none of you asketh me, Whither goest thou? 6 But because I have said these things unto you, sorrow hath filled your heart. 7 Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. 8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: 9 Of sin, because they believe not on me; 10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more; 11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.



Note one other feature of this discourse. We are all familiar with The Lord's Prayer, which is found in Matthew 6:9-13 as part of the Sermon on the Mount. This prayer is really a model prayer for believers. The true Lord's Prayer is found in John 17 where Christ, the High Priest, pours out His heart to the Father.

To complete our review of sayings from the Cross, three of these are found in John.



When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!
John 19:26



After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst.

John 19:28



When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

John 19:30

Lastly, as we have noted, take care to review the last chapter, the epilogue of this Gospel. John's promise of the Second Coming lies within the discussion between Peter and Jesus over the fate of Peter and the 'Beloved Disciple.'" This is the final step in the progression of salvation history as recorded in the Gospels – from Resurrection, to Ascension, to the indwelling and power of the Holy Spirit, to the Second Coming of Christ.

Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee?

John 21:23

Outline

- I Prologue of the Gospel
 - Who is Jesus 1:1-18
- II The Ministry and Presentation of Jesus 1:19-12:50
 - The calling of the Disciples 1:19-51
 - Miracles in Cana Chp 2
 - The New Birth Chp 3
 - The Samaritan Woman at the Well Chp 4
 - The Lame Man at the Pool Chp 5
 - Feeding of the 5,000 & Bread of Life Chp 6
 - Feast of Tabernacles and Prophecy of the Holy Spirit Chp 7
 - Woman Caught in Adultery 7:53-8:11
 - Bread of Life 8:12-59
 - Man Born Blind Chp 9
 - The Good Shepherd Chp 10
 - Raising of Lazarus Chp 11
 - At Bethany and Palm Sunday Chp 12

- III The Ministry of Instruction to the Disciples 13:1-17:26
 - The Last Supper Chp 13
 - The Final Discourse Chps 14-15-16
 - The High Priestly Prayer Chp 17
- IV The Ministry of Redemption to the World 18:1-19:42
 - Betrayal and Trials 18:1-19:15
 - Crucifixion 19:16-30
 - Burial 19:31-42
- † The Ministry of Revelation to the Believers 20:1-21:25
 - Resurrection Chp 20
 - “I Go Fishing” Chp 21



What traits do the miracles speak to?

What miracle is recorded in all four Gospels?
Why this one?



Now that we have reviewed all of the sayings from the Cross, why do you think the different authors chose the ones they did?

Why did John chose the miracles he did?



Based upon John’s Gospel, describe Jesus.

Do you have five witnesses who could testify to your Christianity?



What are the advantages of having four Gospels?

Is the book of John a good one to give to someone who is lost?
Why?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Acts

Key Verse(s):

1:8

2:42-47

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 15

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Holy Spirit

Witness

Consider:

Who is the author?

How do you know this?

Who is the audience?

How do you know this?

Is there a key theme to the book?

How is Jesus presented?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

Chapters 22

Chapter 26

Acts

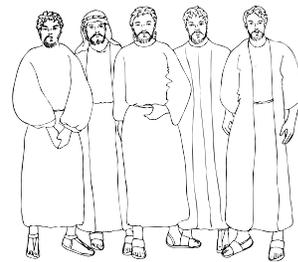
This book is the history of the early church. Luke picks up where his Gospel leaves off, adds a couple of details and moves on to show the persecution, expansion, and growth of the early church. Clearly the book is an incomplete history of the church. It is designed to show the outcome of Luke's theme of salvation history, the effects of the Gospel message moving from Jerusalem to Samaria to the Gentiles, the "uttermost parts" of the earth (Acts 1:8). In the process, Luke focuses upon the actions of Peter and Paul.



But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

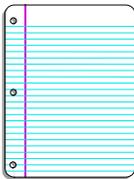
Acts 1:8

There were twelve apostles. Little is known about most of them, but tradition holds all of them preaching to some portion of the four corners of the world. All but John were reported to have been killed for their faith. Only the death of James, the son of Zebedee, is mentioned in Scripture. This event was fairly early in the life of the church and was further cause for the dispersion of the church, an event which spread the Gospel message. One set of traditions holds the following:



- † James, the brother of John is killed by Herod - Acts 12:2.
- † Paul is beheaded by Nero around A.D. 68.
- † Peter is crucified upside down in Rome around A.D. 68/69.
- † Andrew was crucified in Ephesus.
- † Philip was stoned to death in Asia Minor.

- † Thomas was killed by arrows in India.
- † Bartholomew (Nathaniel) was skinned alive and beheaded, either in Egypt or India.
- † Jude (Thaddeus), the son of James, was the youngest Apostle. He was shot full of arrows in Persia.
- † James the less, was thrown from the Temple in Egypt. When the fall did not kill him, he was stoned and beheaded.
- † Simon the Zealot was cut in half with a saw in Persia.
- † Matthias died in Germany, being first stoned, then beheaded.
- † Matthew was slain with a sword in Egypt or Ethiopia.
- † Mark expired at Alexandria, after being cruelly dragged through the streets of that city.
- † Luke was hanged upon an olive tree in the classic land of Greece.
- † John is the only Apostle to die of natural causes in Ephesus. Tradition has him being boiled in oil and stoned in Rome and when this did not work, he was banned to the island of Patmos where he wrote Revelation.



And, of course, Judas Ischariot hanged himself (Matt 27:5). Luke records in Acts 1:18 that he fell headlong, bursting open his insides, most likely because he did a poor job of tying his own execution rope!

Theme and Purpose

As was indicated in the chapter on Luke, one way to understand the theme of this work is to attempt to guess at the question Theophilus may have asked which compelled Luke to write his accounts. In some form, this question must be "How did what is primarily a Gentile religion come from Judaism?" As we indicated in the chapter on Luke, the beloved physician attempts to demonstrate that Christianity is not anti-Semitic. Rather, just as Jesus says in John 4:22, "*salvation is of the Jews.*" The promise of salvation comes from the Old Testament Scriptures, the Scriptures of the Jews. This leads Luke into a study of salvation history and the manner in which the Jews rejected the Messiah causing Him to turn to the Gentiles.

In the process, Luke shows the story of the evangelism of the Good News, defends the ministry of Peter and Paul, shows the unity of the Church community, explains the delay of Christ's Second Coming, argues against false religions, presents Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies, and commits

the entire story to writing so that future generations may have this knowledge. Along the way, he records and defends the history of the Christian movement from Jerusalem to Rome. What is interesting about this book is that none of the individual purposes are necessary for the understanding of this work. It is, in this sense, a true history of the church.

Authorship and Date

We have amply discussed in the chapter on Luke the arguments about Luke being the author of the Luke-Acts unit. We will not revisit these arguments.

A comment should be made concerning the date of Acts, for it sets the date of the Gospel as well. Some considerations were made in the chapter on the Gospel. It should be remembered that a portion of the argument on dating relates to one's views on the date and usage of Mark. We would argue that while such an event is possible, and even likely, it is not a necessity. Luke alludes to a wide variety of witnesses and sources (Luke 1:1-4) that he used to write his account. These sources could well have included Mark and/or Matthew (although this is less likely). But, again, such use is not necessary.

It should also be obvious that Luke has much more first hand knowledge about the events of Acts, for he participated in many of them. Further, Paul is a prime actor in two-thirds of the book and Luke would have used the Apostle as his primary source. With Peter in Rome during part of the time Paul was there, Luke may well have had access to Peter's recollections as well. He could also had in hand a complete or draft copy of Mark's account also.

It is clear that the earliest date for completion of this book is the two year imprisonment of Paul recorded in Acts 28:30-31. This occurred somewhere around A.D. 60/61. Since the work is quoted by the second century church fathers, these two time frames fix the bookends for this work. If one accepts that Luke wrote both accounts, then it is unlikely it was written after the end of the first century A.D. Since Paul's second and final imprisonment and death are not recorded, this would seem to place the writing closer to the time of the first imprisonment. Further, the persecution of the church which commenced under Nero is not mentioned. In the context of the work, this probably means that the persecution had not commenced. This persecution began in A.D. 64/65 and this would appear to fix the outside date for this account. Admittedly, this is an argument from silence and many will declare this is not a determinative argument, but it does fit with the balance of the evidence. The Romans may be generally

uncaring, but the benefits given to Paul in Acts 28, with what amounts to a house arrest, do not fit with the presence of any persecution.

A further argument from silence is the lack of mention of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple when the Jews revolted in A.D. 66. The Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, so, again, this would seem to help fix an outside date. Since the Temple and Jerusalem play such an important part in salvation history, it is highly unlikely these events would go unrecorded if they had occurred prior to the writing the account. The same is true of Peter's and Paul's deaths. If James' death merited a place in Acts 12:2, how much more so would Peter's and Paul's?



A unique feature of the Acts is its lack of suggestion of the existence of any of the Pauline letters. Since it appears a collection of Paul's letters existed as early as A.D. 70, it is unlikely that Luke wrote to preserve or reinstate the theology and applications contained in Paul's letter. From a dating point of view, the lack of mention of this collection could suggest that the Acts is written before the accumulation of the letters. It is interesting, however, to speculate on why there is no mention of Paul's writings. My own suggestion is that Luke knew of Paul's works and made certain, from a sense of humility, that the history did not reflect the epistles of the Apostle

These arguments, coupled with those presented in the chapter on Luke strongly suggest a date that is prior to A.D. 64/65 for the writing of Acts.

Special Considerations

The title "The Acts of the Apostles" is found on almost all manuscripts and, so, dates from early in the life of the Church. On the other hand, a careful reading of the book clearly shows that the theme of the book is the work of God, or more particularly, God the Holy Spirit, in the lives of God's early missionaries and the people they converted. Further, only Peter and Paul are prominent among the Apostles, so the title is not correct in any real fashion.



Acts reflects the building of the church in accordance with Christ's statement of **Matthew 16:18**:

And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

This is the institution of the New Covenant. To show this institution Peter quotes from **Joel 2:28-31** in his first sermon recorded in **Acts 2:16-21**:



*16 But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel;
17 And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams:*

*18 And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: 19 And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: 20 The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: 21 And it shall come to pass, that **whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.***

The highlighted portion of the last verse shows Luke's intent in recording salvation history. The Luke-Acts unit is designed to demonstrate that the **name of the Lord is Jesus Christ!** His name is the one to call upon under the New Covenant.

The book of Acts becomes the bridge between the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament. It's outline is structured around **Acts 1:8**:



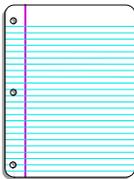
But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

From Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and onto the uttermost reaches of the world, the Gospel message was carried upon the shoulders of God's witnesses. Christ remained upon earth for 40 days after His Resurrection. His direction to His disciples was that they should wait until they had received the Power. This event occurred ten days later at Pentecost.



Pentecost means fifty in Greek. It is the second of the great Jewish feasts, recorded in Exodus 23:16 as “the feast of harvest,” and again in Exodus 34:22 as “the day of the firstfruits” (Num. 28:26). Leviticus. 23:15–19 and Numbers 28:27–29 describe the manner in which the feast is to be kept. This was the time of the free-will offering. This is the only feast where the free-will offering is prescribed.

Chapter 2 covers the events of Pentecost, the forming of the church. The outreach to Jerusalem is then recorded in Acts 2:5-8:3. The evangelizing of Judea and Samaria are covered in 8:4-12:25. From 13:1 to the end of the book, Acts is concerned with the spread of the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth. In the first portion of the book, the outreach to the Jews, Peter is the prime player. Thereafter, when the missionary work moves on primarily to the Gentiles, Paul becomes the center of focus. This shift occurs with Peter’s evangelism of Cornelius, a Gentile, in Acts 10.



Notice that some portions of the Christian faith place an overly great emphasis on the outward events of Pentecost. These denominations use the sign of tongues as proof of the indwelling power and presence of the Holy Spirit. A full study of this issue is beyond the scope of this survey. It should be noted, however, that the tongues spoken at Pentecost were different languages, not some uninterpretable noise. Further, many people are described as being saved and blessed in the New Testament without the presence of speaking in Tongues.

Acts records the first two important deaths in the church. Stephen, one of the original deacons of the church, becomes its first martyr (Acts 7:60). James, the brother of John, becomes the first Apostle to die. His death, the only death of an Apostle recorded in Scripture, is found in Acts 12:2.

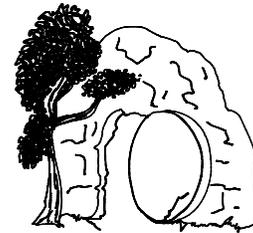
The key player in the second half of the book is Saul of Tarsus, that is, Paul the Apostle. His conversion occurs in Acts 9. His testimony is given again in Acts 22 and 26. See the chapter following this one for more on Paul.

Notice that there is embedded in Acts a sort of on-going management report on the growth of the church.

- † *And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved - 2:47*
- † *And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith - 6:7*

- † *Then had the churches rest throughout all Judaea and Galilee and Samaria, and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied - 9:31*
- † *But the word of God grew and multiplied - 12:24*
- † *And so were the churches established in the faith, and increased in number daily - 16:5*
- † *So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed - 19:20*
- † *And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him - 28:30,31*

Christ is portrayed in the Acts as the Resurrected Savior, the Redeemer of the world and the Messiah of the Jews. This is the cornerstone of all the sermons found in this book. The Holy Spirit provides the power, but it is the Resurrection which has opened the door for salvation. It is in the name of the risen Lord that people must believe to be reunited with God.



*Neither is there salvation in any other:
for there is none other name under heaven given
among men, whereby we must be saved.*

Acts 4:12

*To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name
whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins.*

Acts 10:43



*And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus
Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house.*

Acts 16:31

Miracles are used in the Acts as a means of authenticating the messenger. The miracles are used as the springboard for the sermons to verify that the messenger brings a message of truth (2:15, 33; 3:12; 4:16; 28:1-10).

Outline

- I Introduction and Instruction
 - The Prologue 1:1-5
 - The Ascension 1:6-11
 - Preparation for the Witness 1:12-2:4
- II Witness in Jerusalem
 - Pentecost 2:4-47
 - Peter and John 3:1-4:31
 - The Apostles 4:32-5:42
 - Stephen 6:1-8:3
- III Witness in Judea and Samaria
 - Philip 8:4-40
 - Saul's (Paul) Conversion 9:1-31
 - Peter 9:32-11:18
 - The Church 11:19-12:25
- IV To the Uttermost Parts
 - First Missionary Journey 13:1-14:28
 - Jerusalem Council 15:1-35
 - Second Missionary Journey 15:36-18:22
 - Third Missionary Journey 18:23-21:16
 - Paul's Journey to Rome 21:17-28:31



What does Pentecost mean? What is its significance to you?

Describe the plan of evangelism as presented in Acts.



What is the importance of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15)?

To what extent is Christian faith dependent upon a historical account of the life of Christ?



In Acts 1:15-21, the Apostles under Peter's guidance elect by lot a new Apostle, Matthias, to replace Judas Ischariot.

Was this within God's plan?

Is Matthias the twelfth Apostle or is Paul?



How like the modern church are the tensions found in the early church?

Is the church as described in Acts successful?

Why?

Reflect upon Acts and the spread of the Gospel message in the early church. Notice that evangelism came from:

- Sermons
- Miracles
- One-on-one conversations
- Martyrdom
- Group missions



Do you see any other styles?

Note that many people used many differing styles. How many differing styles do you use?

Acts 15 records the Jerusalem Council and the "decision" by the elders of the Church that the rituals of the law do not need to be imposed upon the new converts to Christianity.



How many rituals do churches impose today?



42 And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. 43 And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. 44 And all that believed were together, and had all things

common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. 46 And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, 47 Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.

Acts 2:42-47

Many churches, including Calvary Road Baptist Church, use these verses as the basis for their purpose statements.



Can you find the W I I F E?

A Side Trip into the Land of . . .

Paul

When one thinks of the New Testament, one usually thinks of Jesus Christ — and Paul. No single, ordinary human has influenced Christianity as much as this Apostle. While the Gospels explain who the Christ is and what it means to believe in Him, the early church had no manual on how to act as a Christian. Into this void walk the writers of the epistles. The most prominent of these is Paul, for he writes 13 of the 21 letters.



Epistle comes from the Greek *epistole*, a word which simply means letter.



So, who is this Paul? Why did God choose him?



5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; 6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Philippians 3:5-6

Paul is the Apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15, Gal 2:9). Philippians 3:5, 6 is the way he describes himself to the church at Philippi. Paul was a Jew through and through. His love for his people is evident in his evangelistic method. In each city, Paul would first go to the Jews and teach in their synagogues in an effort to win his people, *Israel*, to the Lord. Only after they rejected him and Jesus, did the Apostle turn to the Gentiles.

From Scripture we learn about Paul.

- † His father was a Pharisee - Acts 23:6
- † He himself was a zealous Pharisee - Phil 3:6

- † He was a student of Scripture, studying under Gamaliel - Acts 22:3; cf. 5:34
- † Paul was from Tarsus - Acts 9:11
- † He was from the tribe of Benjamin - Phil 3:5
- † Tarsus was a Greek/Roman city in Asia Minor. The Greek is reflected in Paul's arguments (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12).
- † He was a tent maker - Acts 18:3
- † He was a Roman citizen by birth - Acts 21:39
- † He describes himself as a Hebrew of Hebrews - Phil 3:5
- † His love for the Hebrews is evident in his writings - Rom 3:1; 9:1-3
- † As a zealous Hebrew, he persecuted the sect of Christians - Acts 8:3; 9:1-2; Phil 3:6
- † He was zealous for the traditions of Judaism - Gal 1:14
- † He was present at the killing of Steven, the first Christian martyr - Acts 7:58; 8:1



Saul is his Hebrew name and Paul is his Latin name. As the Apostle to the Gentiles, it is to be expected that he would become known by his Gentile name. Most likely he was around thirty years of age at the time of the Crucifixion.

Little else is known about Paul. Based upon his teachings on marriage, many believe he was a widower. He describes himself as a blasphemer and the chief sinner. Paul clearly recognizes that it is only through the grace of God that his salvation occurred.



13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. 14 And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 15 This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.

1 Timothy 1:13-15

This is the man God chose as His representative to the Gentile nations. This is the man who writes the majority of the New Testament epistles.

Paul undoubtedly received some teaching from the early church. Portions of his letters read like early hymns (Phil 2:6-11) or statements (creeds) of faith (1 Cor 15:1-7). He also drew on the Old Testament, interpreting it in light of the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. But most importantly, Paul received his instruction from Jesus and the Holy Spirit. He went off to be by himself with God

to learn and receive instruction (Gal 1:12-14; Eph 3:1-7). God guided Paul's ministry and writings.

It should be noted that the Apostles understood the letters they were writing had been received from God (2 Cor 10:8; 12:1-4). Peter calls Paul's letters Scripture in 2 Peter 3:16.

Paul's conversion is described in Acts 9. It is a dramatic story and Paul uses his salvation experience in his evangelistic outreach twice in Acts (Chps 22 and 26).



Note that while the three accounts of Paul's salvation are essentially the same, different details and differing emphasis occur in each telling. The formula of 1) life before Christ, 2) salvation, and 3) life after Christ should be a pattern for all of us. But while we need to learn to use our basic testimony in this fashion, we also, like Paul, need to be flexible in its telling. Sometimes we will have a long time and an interested audience. On other occasions, we may only have a few minutes. Learn to discern the difference and adjust. Your personal salvation message is the most powerful evangelistic tool you possess!

All of Paul's letters have certain characteristics which support the argument that what he writes are letters, but which also distinguish them from the letters of the day. These include:

- † They average around 13,000 words in length compared to the average letter of the time which had 90 words.
- † They were written on sheets of papyrus which are about the size of this page.
- † Most are dictated to a secretary, who is known as an *amanuensis*.
- † They all begin the same way, with a petition for God's blessings on the readers.
- † They are all structured the same, having a greeting, a main body, and a farewell.
- † Most of the time, it appears that Paul closes the letters in his own handwriting.
- † They were hand delivered by Paul's fellow servants in Christ.

Paul's letters break down into two main groups, those to the churches and those to individuals. Three of the ones to individuals, 1 and 1 Timothy and Titus, are generally called the Pastoral letters. They deal more with issues such as how to be a church leader and with

threats against the saints. Philemon is the more personal of the individual letters and is a unique summary of Pauline theology in action.

The letters of Paul to the churches each serve a unique function in describing the Person of Christ, the message of the Gospel, and the place of the Good News in the life of the believer. The following chart will show the patterns and themes to look for as you review the epistles of Paul.

	Presentation of Jesus	Doctrinal Theme
Romans	Power (1:16)	Salvation/ Justification
1 Corinthians	Wisdom (1:1-9)	Sanctification
2 Corinthians	Comfort (1:5)	Reconciliation
Galatians	Righteousness (3:11)	Justification/Liberty
Ephesians	Blessings (1:3)	Position in Christ
Philippians	Sufficiency (4:13)	Attitude in Christ Rejoicing
Colossians	Lord (1:15-19)	Completion
1 Thessalonians	Promise/Hope (1:3)	Rapture/Translation
2 Thessalonians	Judge 1:8-10	Compensation

1 Timothy	Pattern (1:16)	Conduct
2 Timothy	Rewarder (4:8)	Endurance
Titus	Fullness ((3:6)	Full measure of ministry
Philemon	Mediator	Forgiveness

This, then, is the outline of Paul's letters. It will help to keep their chronological sequence in mind as we study these letters. Keep in mind that they are not presented in chronological order in the Bible. They are, rather, arranged by length based upon two groupings of addressees -- churches and individuals. Paul's ministry looks something like this:

Date	Event	Acts
A.D. 33	Pentecost	Acts 2:1ff
A.D. 34/35	Stoning of Stephen	Acts 7:1ff
A.D. 34/35	Paul's Conversion	Acts 9:1ff
A.D.34-47	Paul's years of learning	Gal 1:12-21
A.D. 44	Paul to Antioch	
A.D. 45	<i>James Written</i>	

A.D. 47	With Barnabas to Jerusalem	Acts 11:22-30
A.D. 47-49	1 st Missionary Trip: Cyprus, Asia Minor	Acts 13-14
A.D. 49	Peter at Antioch	Gal 2:11-16
A.D. 49	<i>Galatians Written</i>	
A.D. 49/50	Jerusalem Council	Acts 15
A.D. 50-52	2 nd Missionary Trip Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece	Acts 15:36-18:22
A.D. 51	<i>1st & 2nd Thessalonians</i>	
A.D. 53-57	3 rd Missionary Trip (Ephesus) Asia Minor, Macedonia, Greece	Acts 18:23-21:16
A.D. 55/56	<i>1st & 2nd Corinthians</i>	
A.D. 56/57	<i>Romans</i>	
A.D. 57	Paul's arrest	Acts 21:26-33
A.D. 57	Paul before Felix	Acts 24:24-26
A.D. 58/59	Paul before Festus	Acts 25:7-12
A.D. 59	Paul before Agrippa	Acts 26
A.D. 59/60	Voyage to Rome	Acts 27-28
A.D. 61-63	Paul's first imprisonment	Acts 28:30
A.D. 61-63	<i>Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon</i>	
A.D. 61-63	<i>Philippians written</i>	
A.D. 62/63	Paul released from prison	
A.D. 62	James, the Lord's brother killed	
A.D. 62	Peter in Rome	
A.D. 63	<i>1st Timothy written</i>	
A.D. 63	Trip to Crete with Titus	

A.D. 63/64	<i>Titus written</i>	
A.D. 64/67	<i>1st Peter written</i>	
A.D. 64/65	<i>2nd Timothy written</i>	
A.D. 66/67	<i>2nd Peter written</i>	
A.D. 65/67	Paul's second imprisonment	
A.D. 65/67	Paul's death	
A.D. 67/68	Peter's death	
A.D. 68/69	<i>Hebrews written</i>	
A.D. 70	Destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Titus	



Paul writes to the Philippians:



25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants. 26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. 27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. 28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation: 30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Philippians 2:25-30



Can you describe your church leaders in these terms?

Can people describe you this way?



7 But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. 8 We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; 9 Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; 10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

2 Corinthians 4:7-10

† This is Paul's description of life in Christ doing the work of God.



Does it resemble your life?

Should your life resemble this description?

Why?

Why not?

A Comment or Two About Doctrine

What we refer to as doctrine is a concept which occurs both in the Old and New Testaments. The Hebrew word translated “doctrine” conveys the idea of “what is received” (Deut 32:2; Job 11:4; Prov 4:2; Isa 29:24). The intent of this usage is to understand that God has revealed to mankind a body of teaching. In the Old Testament this body is usually referred to as “law.”



There are two words translated as doctrine on the New Testament. One, *didaskalia*, is used to refer to the teachings of the Pharisees (Matt 15:9; Mark 7:7). It is also used in Colossians, Ephesians, and the Pastoral Epistles. The context of its use shows this word expresses both the act and content of the teaching involved. A second Greek word, *didache*, is used more often. It, too, conveys the idea of both the act and / or content of teaching. In general, this teaching in biblical terms means the *revelation of God which is to be used as the standard of one's beliefs*.

Doctrine, then, is the teaching revealed through the Bible which is to be the standards of our understanding of all the Bible teaches. It is important that we, as students of the Bible, understand what God is trying to teach us. This applies to many different topics. There are, indeed, mini-doctrines within larger doctrines. As such, while the formation and teaching of doctrine might be viewed as belonging to a systematic theology study, I have attempted to highlight in abbreviated form many of these doctrines. By viewing these in the contexts of their revelation, you may be better able to understand the intent behind the teachings.

Doctrines which are covered in mini-form and the general location where the explanations of the doctrine will be found are as follows:

Adoption - Ephesians
Anti-Christ - 2 Thessalonians
Assurance - John's Epistles
Atonement - Romans
Christology - Ephesians

Day of Christ - 2 Thessalonians
Discipleship - 1 Thessalonians
Dispensations - Revelation
Election - 1 Peter
Endurance - Galatians

Church - Matthew, Ephesians	Eschatology - Miracles
Covenants - Introduction	Faith - Hebrews
Day of the Lord - 2 Thessalonians	Foreknowledge - 1 Peter
Forgiveness - Philemon	Predestination - 1 Peter
Glorification - 1 Corinthians	Propitiation - Romans
Grace - Philemon	Rapture - 1 Thessalonians,
Holiness - 1 Corinthians	Revelation
Holy Spirit - Titus	Redemption - Romans
Hypostatic Union - Luke	Regeneration - Titus
Illumination - 2 Corinthians	Repentance - Revelation
Imminence - 2 Thessalonians	Resurrections - 1 Corinthians
Imputation - Philemon	Righteousness - Philemon, Romans
Inspiration - 2 Corinthians	Salvation - Romans
Judgments - Revelation	Sanctification - 1 Corinthians
Justification - Romans, Galatians	Satan - Ephesians
Kenosis - Philippians	Security - John's Epistles
Kingdom - Matthew	Separation - 1, 2 Corinthians
Mercy - Philemon	Sin - John's Epistles
Millennial Kingdom - Revelation	Substitution - Philemon
Oneness in Christ - 2 Corinthians	Theology - Romans
Peace - Philemon	Tribulation - Revelation
Pentecost - Acts	Trinity - Ephesians

These are not all of the doctrines of Scripture. Nor do the explanations contained in these survey materials contain much detail. But, it is important that you understand the reasons behind what it is you believe. The example to follow is that provided about the Bereans in the book of Acts.



These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Acts 17:11



Can you say the same about yourself?

Are you a student of Scripture?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Romans

Key Verse(s):

1:16-17

3:21-26

6:1-4

8:1-9

12:1,2

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 3

Chapter 8

Chapter 10

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Justification

Sin

Righteous/Righteousness

Consider:

What is Justification in Paul's view?

Who is man with the Bible? Where is he described?

Who is man without the Bible? Where is he described?

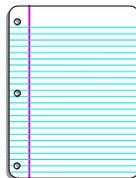
What is the great promise to all who believe?

What is the great struggle of the believer?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):
Chapters 4-7

Romans

If John is my favorite book, Romans is really the one I would pick if I were to be stranded in a remote location with access to only one book of the Bible. There is no single book of the New Testament (in my opinion) which pulls together all the theology of the Bible as well as Romans. It is Paul's crowning achievement.



Theology is nothing more than the study of God (*theos* in the Greek means God and is used in the New Testament as the designation of God the Father).

In Romans Paul covers all of the bases from who Jesus is, to why man needs a Savior, to how to get saved. Along the way the Apostle throws in how to walk the Christian life and discusses the struggle Christians have in the world of spiritual battles.

Theme and Purpose

Paul desires to undertake a missionary trip to Spain (15:24,28). He plans to stop in Rome and visit the churches there (apparently five home churches -- 16:5,10,11,14,15; cf. 1:7). The Apostle had desired to make such a trip on many occasions, but, thus far, had been

prevented from doing so (1:13; 15:22-24, 28-29; cf. Acts 19:21). These facts form the background of the letter, but in and of themselves do not clearly explain the purpose of Paul's writing.

Paul clearly desires to make a spiritual impact on the Romans. This work sets forth a full statement of doctrine for the church to encourage and instruct them. There do not seem to be any problems within this church. It appears that Phoebe was traveling to Rome (16:1-2). She probably carried this letter and it may be that Paul simply seized this opportunity to instruct the Romans long-distance in the off chance that he would never make it to Rome. Chapters 12-15 may suggest practical difficulties with the church in Rome, but at the same time, these chapters may also just be the application chapters Paul so often places in his letters.

FAITH

Never having visited this church, Paul clearly was not directly involved in its establishment. All of his contacts are "long distance." This may help to explain the nature of this letter.

Accordingly, one needs to view **Romans 1:16-17** as the purpose and theme of the book.



16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

Author - Date

There is little concern in any critical study about Paul's authorship of this letter.

Most likely the letter was written by Paul from Corinth, A.D. 56/57. This was during Paul's third missionary journey. Paul expresses his current plans as being about to set forth for Jerusalem (15:25). The Apostle feels he has completed his missionary work in the east (15:19,23). The missionary journey in question is that recorded in

Acts 20/21 which began in Corinth (cf. Acts 19:21; 20:1-3). This dates the letter with reasonable accuracy to the winter of 56/57.

Special Considerations

Chapters 1-8 of this letter cover the sinfulness of man and introduce the concept of justification by faith together with the ramifications of this doctrine. The doctrine itself relates to the purposes set forth in 1:16. Justification by faith is the “*power of God unto salvation.*” It is, in terms of our opening discussion, the answer to the question, **HOW TO FIND GOD!**



Review verses 3-5 of this first chapter. Paul frequently compacts the Gospel message into a few short verses to present to his audience. We often have three minutes to give someone our personal testimony, but not a half-hour where we can draw it out. It is good practice to do what Paul has accomplished. Wouldn't you like to be able to give a “full” sermon in three verses?



3 Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; 4 And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead: 5 By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name:

In reviewing this first section, these opening chapters break down as follows:

- † Introduction and theme - 1:1-17
- † Man's need for God - 1:18-32. This is a discussion of man without the Bible.
- † Moral man and his needs - 2:1-16, as well as . . .
- † Religious man - 2:17-3:8. This is man with the Bible.
- † All are lost - 3:9-20
- † Justification comes by faith - 3:21-31
- † Abraham is the example - Chp 4
- † Results of justification by faith and the struggle - Chps 5, 6, 7
- † Life in the Spirit - Chp 8

JUSTIFICATION



Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God;

Romans 3:25



Justification is nothing more than a determination that one is “just” or “right” before God. Since God views the believer who has accepted Christ through the shed blood of Jesus, justification is a legal determination on the part of God. The believer is seen as being not guilty!

Redemption is a deliverance brought about by the payment of a ransom. This is the price tag associated with Justification. Christ bought our redemption.



For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Mark 10:45



Propitiation means to appease or satisfy. Christ’s willing sacrifice on the Cross met the demands of and fully satisfied a righteous God. God is now able to accept the price paid for the redemption of mankind. This term is found but 3 times in Scripture (Rom 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10), although the Greek word is also found in Hebrews 9:5 where it is translated mercy seat, the Old Testament concept which approaches the idea of the propitiation.



A related Old Testament concept is *Atonement* – At One-Ment with God. The Greek word translated as “atonement” in the Old Testament (in the Septuagint) is not used in the New Testament except in Hebrews 2:17 where it is translated as reconciliation. In the Old Testament it is the concept of appeasing God by making satisfaction for offenses. On the Day of Atonement (Ex. 32:30; Lev. 4:26; 5:16; Num. 6:11) the Nation of Israel would be represented by the High Priest before God Who sat on the mercy seat above the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle or Temple. This occurred once a year, so there was no permanent forgiveness.



Salvation, from a Greek word meaning to save, is the umbrella under which all of the doctrines about the process are sheltered. Salvation is a term which defines the entire process of God bringing man back into fellowship with Him. It is the process which answers the question **HOW TO FIND GOD!**

In chapters 9 through 11, Paul returns to his roots and looks to the dealing of God with the Jewish nation, as well as to the relationship of the Jews and Gentiles. For Paul, the great personal desire is that the Jews would be saved and the Apostle looks forward to the day that the Jewish remnant as seen by the Prophets would be brought to glory by God. These chapters break down as follows:

- † Chp 9 is Israel's election as the people of God
- † Chp 10 is the nations rejection of Jesus
- † Chp 11 is the future restoration of the Jewish nation



As is frequently the case, Paul closes this letter with admonitions for personal application and the ramifications of the Gospel message in daily life. These chapters (12-15:13) answer the question, **HOW TO LIVE** once you have found God. And, as with many of the letters, the closing verses (15:14-16:27) contain personal messages and a benediction from the Apostle.

For Paul, Christ is the Second Adam whose substitute death (His “propitiation”) provides the basis whereby all may be justified by faith.

Outline

- I. Introduction and Greeting - 1:1-7
- II. Thanksgiving, prayers, and purpose - 1:8-17
- III. Gentiles guilty before God - 1:18-32
- IV. Principles of Judgement - 2:1-16
- V. Jews guilty before God - 2:17-3:8
- VI. World guilty before God - 3:9-20
- VII. Justification by faith - 3:21-31
- VIII. Abraham saved by faith is the example - Chp 4
- IX. Results of justification by faith - 5:1-11

- X. Christ is the basis for salvation - 5:12-21
- XI. Believers are dead to sin - 6:1-14
- XII. Believers are slaves to righteousness - 6:15-23
- XIII. Believers are married to Christ - 7:1-6
- XIV. The Christian struggle - 7:7-25
- XV. Life in the Spirit - 8:1-17
- XVI. Future Glory for the believer 8:18-39
- XVII. God's righteousness and mercy - 9:1-29
- XVIII. God's dealing with the Jews - 9:30-10:21
- XIX. Jewish remnant will be saved - Chp 11
- XX. Christian conduct - Chp 12, 13
- XXI. Discussion on the weak and strong - 14:1-15:21
- XXII. Paul's future plans - 15:22-33
- XXIII. Commendations and greetings - Chp 16



Using just Romans, how can you present the Gospel?



The Romans Road

One of the great evangelistic tools is the use of specific verses of God's Word to explain the salvation message. One such set is referred to as the Romans Road, for it is designed to present the Gospel message solely from the book of Romans. The Road goes like this:



1:16-17

16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.

2:4

Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?

3:23

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

5:8

But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

6:23

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

10:9, 10

9 That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. 10 For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.

10:13

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved.

And, of course, the beauty of this approach is that one does not really need to even use all of the above verses to get to the "bottom line."

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

First Corinthians

Key Verse(s):

1:18-25

1:30-31

2:14

6:19-20

10:12-13

10:31-33

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 13

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Correction

Wisdom

Love

Sanctification

Consider:

What is the spiritual condition of the audience?

How is this important to you?

What is the proper place of spiritual gifts in the church?

What is the most important element of all you do for Christ?

Without Christ present, how do we act?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

Chapters 1

Chapter 6

Chapter 10

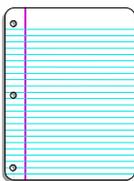
First Corinthians



This letter of Paul's is the first in Scripture which addresses a serious problem within a church previously established by the Apostle. A good analogy might be that of the typical teenager. As long as the child is under the influence of his parents, he behaves properly. Once the child goes off to college, the direct influence of the parents is removed and the child tends to wander into new "adventures." This is the situation with many of Paul's churches.

Theme and Purpose

First Corinthians is a challenge to the church in their Spiritual walk, in their sanctification. The Corinthians were abusing their liberty in Christ and Paul sets out to correct these abuses. Note that Paul does not question the salvation of the church but rather deals with their methods and walk in Christ (1:1-9; 3:1-4). This is the overriding theme of the book, the progressive walk of the believer.



To *sanctify* is to set apart. When the setting apart is for God, it is a setting apart to *holiness*. *Sanctification* is the condition or process of being made *holy*. For the Christian, this is a three stage process. We were set apart at the time we accept Christ. But this letter to the Corinthians is not about salvation but about one's faith walk. This progressive process of moving closer to God is called sanctification (Rom. 6:13; 2 Cor. 4:6; Col. 3:10; 1 John 4:7; 1 Cor. 6:19). In fact, in several places the Greek word is translated as holy or holiness rather than sanctify or sanctification. The last stage of sanctification is really *glorification*, the final translation of the believer into the true image of Christ (Rom 8:17, 30). This will occur when we go to be with the Lord at His Second Return.

More so than the other letters, this letter appears to be written, at least in part, to respond to specific questions raised by the church at Corinth (cf. 7:1,25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1; 16:12). Further, it is clear from the opening chapters, Paul desires to address specific problems in the church (which may or may not have related to the specific questions), to combat the worldly wisdom which had invaded the church with Spiritual wisdom, and to correct the contentions of Cloe's servants (1:1-6, 11). The intent behind the letter might be summarized as the need to have unity in Christ.

This progressive walk which comes from unity in Christ is possible because Christ is the source and essence of our walk and unity in Christ.



But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

1 Corinthians 1:30

Corinth was one of the large metropolitan areas of the times. It had a population similar to that of Fairfax County. In general, life there was very immoral and pagan. These practices frequently “rubbed off” on the church, since friends, acquaintances, and fellow workers of the new Christians still held to these life styles. This added to the stress and pressure faced by these young Christians. In the ancient writings, a description of “to act as a Corinthian” meant to live a life of luxury and to practice sexual immorality. Most converts were Gentiles.



Does all this sound familiar?

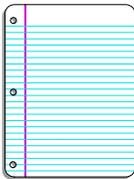
Author - Date

Both in terms of external and internal evidence, the Apostle Paul is accepted as the author of this letter.

The letter was probably written to the church at Corinth from Ephesus (16:8,9,19) in AD 55/56. This correlates to the third missionary journey (Acts 18:23-21:16).

Special Considerations

There are both an unrecorded visit and a lost letter dealing with the church at Corinth (cf. 1 Cor. 5:9, "*I wrote you in my letter*"). Some of the contents of this lost letter are found in 1 Cor 5:9-11 (not to associate with immoral believers and not to respect unbelievers). These points could have been explained in person if the unrecorded/sorrowful visit had occurred before the missing letter. Paul would not have needed to repeat them again in this letter.



It is clear that Paul made this unrecorded visit from Ephesus. This visit is unrecorded in the sense that Luke does not mention it in Acts. The second visit to Corinth recorded in the Acts (20:1-3) is really the third visit of Paul to the city, a visit promised in 2 Corinthians 12:14 and 13:1. Therefore, this second, unrecorded, visit is the sorrowful visit of 2 Corinthians 2:1; 12:21; 13:2. Obviously, Luke and the Holy Spirit did not consider the second visit of historical importance and the Holy Spirit did not inspire the missing letter.

Paul planted the church at Corinth on his second missionary journey in AD 50/51 (Acts 15:36; 18:1-18). Acts records that Paul spent eighteen months preaching the word in Corinth while he stayed with two Roman Jews, Aquila and Priscilla. The Apostle was joined by Silas and Timothy (18:5). Later, Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew became the preacher to this church (18:27-19:1; cf. 1 Cor 1:12; 3:5-6). Apollos had been trained in Ephesus by Aquila and Priscilla (18:24-26).



It must be remembered that the congregation at Corinth was a young congregation. As mentioned, the moral and social conditions of the city worked against the Gospel life style and added pressure to the converts. This accounts for the issues raised by their questions. Chapters 1-6 are most likely Paul's response to the conflict created by the servants of Chloe, while the balance of the book is written in response to the questions raised by the church. This accounts for the lengthy teachings on separation and Spiritual gifts.

Three reasons are given for the factions within the church.

- † Misunderstanding of the Christian message - 1:18-3:4
- † A false concept of the ministry - 3:5-4:3
- † Human pride - 4:6-13

These all combine to lead to the moral problems of the church (5:1-6:20).

Paul's overriding thought throughout this book, in both words and style, is set forth in detail in Chapter 13 and is summed up in 12:31 and 13:13.



*31 But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet shew I unto you a more excellent way.
13 And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity.*

1 Corinthians 12:31; 13:13

For Paul *love* is the key to all things. Christ showed love to us in His sacrifice on the Cross and this type of caring love is to be the guide we should use in dealing with other people and in all of our actions as a Christian.

In turn, this love in action is reflected in what Paul views as the true end of all Christian activity – bringing God the glory!



31 Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. 32 Give none offence, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God: 33 Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.

1 Corinthians 10:31-33

A review of the outline of 1 Corinthians and the problems faced by the Apostle show why the emphasis lies on this duty of the believer. It appears that the Corinthians were following men more than God (1:12). They followed Paul, Apollos, Peter (*Cephas*), and Christ. Such a pattern created dissension and division in the Corinthian church. This approach is implied again in 3:4, 5. Paul's statement of 3:6 is designed to counteract this tendency to treat the teacher as more important than the subject. This verse reflects the true approach we should all have of Christian evangelism.



I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

1 Corinthians 3:6

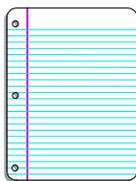
In the process Paul gives one of the clearest statements in Scripture to support the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in the believer while showing that this indwelling was created by the death of Christ.



19 What? Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20 For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

- † Chps 8, 9, 10 are about the believers conduct in relation to the believer's liberty in Christ. In particular, Paul addresses the question of a believer not acting in any fashion which would cause another person to stumble.
- † Chp 11 address women and the Lord's Table - note that the entire section from here through chapter 14 deals with public worship.
- † Chps 12, 13, and 14 are on spiritual gifts. Notice the key to these passages is the existence of the "love" chapter in the middle of those on spiritual gifts. This gives the real key to the use of spiritual gifts.
- † Chp 15 is on the Resurrection.
- † This is a key chapter on the place of believers in the Resurrection scheme.
- † Verses 5-19 represent the "Proof" of Christ's Resurrection
- † Verses 20-28 give the order of Resurrection
- † Verses 42-58 give the pattern of the Resurrection and the constitute the great hope for us all.
- † Chp 16 discusses the collection for the poor, as well as some personal notes and Paul's closing.



Most churches use Paul's verses on the Lord's Supper (11:23-32) as the basis for Communion Services. It is to be noted that each of the synoptic Gospels has a version of these passages. The Lord's Supper is found in Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-25, and Luke 22:17-20.



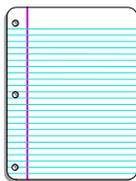
The teachings of Chapter 15 on the *resurrections* cannot be over emphasized. This chapter plays an important role in one's understanding of Revelation and the place of the Rapture in the Church's future. There is not a single resurrection. There are two resurrection events, one of which take place in a series of occurrences. While it is true that Jesus raised people from the dead,

these are not resurrections in a biblical sense. Resurrection is used to describe a person going to the place where he will spend eternity.

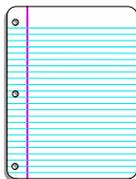


23 But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. 24 Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. 25 For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

1 Corinthians 15:23-26



The order of the Resurrections is stated here. Christ is the first, the firstfruits. Next comes those who are His. This is the Rapture described in 1 Thessalonians. After the Tribulation, the saints who die during this terrible seven-year period will be resurrected (Rev 20:3-5), together with the Old Testament saints (Dan 12:2; Isa 26:19). This is the "first resurrection," the resurrection unto life (Rev 20:5, 6). So, the first resurrection is a series of events, not a single resurrection.



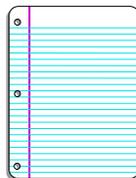
Then the end comes. This end is described in Revelation, the resurrection and judgment of the dead, known as the Great White Throne judgment (Rev 20:5, 11-14). This is the second resurrection and is a resurrection unto death. In this case, death means eternal separation from God.

The benediction of 16:22-24 contains two Aramaic words which sum up the letter.



*If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be **Anathema** Maranatha.*

1 Corinthians 16:22



Anathema means to be cursed.

Maranatha means the Lord comes.

Outline

- I. Paul's thankfulness for the Corinthians - 1:1-9
- II. Appeal for unity - 1:10-2:5
- III. Wisdom is a gift from God - 2:6-16
- IV. God does the work, we are his laborers - Chp 3
- V. Apostles of Christ - Chp 4
- VI. The immoral are judged - Chp 5
- VII. Don't be like the world with law suits between believers- 6:1- 8
- VIII. Temple of God - 6:9-20
- IX. Marriage - Chp 7
- X. Food offered to idols - Chp 8
- XI. Christian rights - Chp 9
- XII. The wilderness example - 10:1-13
- XIII. Prohibition of idol feasts - 10:14-22
- XIV. Do all to the glory of God - 10:23-11:1
- XV. Public worship, the covering of the woman's head - 11:2-16
- XVI. The Lord's Supper - 11:17-34
- XVII. Spiritual Gifts - Chp 12
- XVIII. Way of love - Chp 13
- XIX. Prophecy and tongues - Chp 14
- XX. The Resurrection - Chp 15
- XXI. Collection for the poor - 16:1-4
- XXII. Paul's plans and concluding messages - 16:5-24



Are today's churches faced with the same challenge's as the one at Corinth?



Without the presence of an Apostle, how do our churches act?

Are spiritual gifts for today?

Consider Paul's great challenge to the Corinthians:



Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:58



Can you meet this challenge?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Second Corinthians

Key Verse(s):

1:3-4

4:5-6

4:16-18

5:17-19

6:17

12:9

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 6

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Defense

Comfort

Separate / Separation

Giving

Consider:

How is Paul's earlier letter reflected in this letter?

Did the Corinthians change?

What does it mean to be a cheerful giver?

What does it mean to be unequally yoked?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 1

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Second Corinthians

This is the second letter preserved in Scripture written to the Church in Corinth by Paul. There is little or no dispute over his authorship of this epistle. Interestingly enough, the voice of the early church fathers gives stronger support to Paul's authorship of 2 Corinthians than it does to 1 Corinthians.

Theme and Purpose

The correspondence and visits to the Corinthian church must be viewed as a series of on-going discussions over continuing issues and their resolution. To better focus about the intent of these letters to the Corinthians, think of these letters from Paul as correspondence between you and your parents or you and your children or you and a very good friend. The history of the Corinthian church is generally a similar type of correspondence.



Paul sent Titus to Corinth to act as his ambassador (2 Cor. 8:6; 12:18). He anxiously awaited Titus' report on the success of Paul's early letters, including the severe, lost letter. Titus' report was, obviously, not all aglow with success. Paul returns to many of the same themes covered in his early letter. These include:

- † Continued immorality between a brother and his step mother (1 Cor. 5:1-6; 2 Cor. 2:5-11)
- † Paul's plans for a future visit (2 Cor. 1:15--2:4)
- † Divisions in the church created by Judaizers who attacked Paul's authority (2 Cor. 10:10-12).
- † Positively, Paul found the Corinthians had well received his "severe" letter. The Apostle encourages them for this in an expression of Paul's genuine love (2 Cor. 7:3-16).

A couple of other purposes are apparent in the letter as well. First, Paul is concerned about the Corinthians' contribution to the church at Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8, 9). These two chapters show us two differing characteristics of doctrine and the early church. First, Paul strove with all of the churches to maintain the "oneness" experienced by the early church immediately following Pentecost. Review Acts 2:42-47 and note how the church acted "with one accord." It was the strong desire of God, as expressed by Paul, that this unity continues throughout the life of the church on planet earth.



This concept of being *in or with one accord* is not a ritualistic, robotic approach but rather is the idea of dealing with each other in brotherly love at all times. The Greek word translated as "with one accord" is found in eleven times in Acts (1:14; 2:1; 2:46; 4:24; 5:12; 7:57; 8:6; 12:20; 15:25; 18:12; 19:29) but the actual word is not found elsewhere in the New Testament except in Romans 15:6 where a variation of the word is translated as "with one mind." The idea is prominent, though, as an out-working of Christ's love (Eph 5:2) which should be natural among Christians (1 Thess 9). All of this is, of course, an out-growth of following Christ's teaching as to the second greatest commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

Matthew 22:39

In this letter, Paul's use of oneness involves the concept of common thinking (2 Cor 13:11) as well as common sharing (2 Cor 8, 9).

Secondly, these two chapters (8, 9) provide the clearest single expression of giving in the New Testament church to be found in Scripture. "*The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof*" (Ps 24:1). The concept is that we are to give back to God by supporting His work in a cheerful, loving manner. We should be giving to God's work out of a deep love for this work. This is the attitude Paul attempts to convey to the Corinthians with regard to the offering which is going to Jerusalem. Notice that this offering is not for evangelism or missionary work. There is a deep need in Jerusalem amongst the people. They need food and clothing and housing. This offering is designed to help that effort.

A "new" purpose of this letter is Paul's on-going encouragement to the Church to continue in obedience to God. This obedience is expressed in terms of an obedience to Paul's teachings since they are the Words of God being spoken

through him (10:8; 12:1-4; chp 10). Here Paul sounds much like the prophets of old. Paul does not add the phrase “thus saith the Lord,” but this is the emphasis of his admonitions.

Inspiration is the concept of God having breathed out into man the exact words and thoughts which went into the original manuscripts of the Bible. This statement is most clearly found in Paul’s writings in 2 Timothy 3:16 and in Peter’s writings in 2 Peter 1:20, 21. At the same time, Peter recognizes Paul’s writings as Scripture (2 Pet 3:15, 16). In 2 Corinthians 10:8, Paul himself speaks of the words “*which the Lord hath given.*” Nothing could be a clearer statement that the Apostle knew and understood he was writing and speaking new Scripture.

A related concept is that of *illumination*. Illumination is the process whereby the Holy Spirit makes the Scriptures come alive in our own hearts. This is the process whereby we grow in knowledge of God’s Word. When we read the Bible and feel God speaking to us, this is illumination at work! Today there is no more inspiration (Heb 1:1-4), but there is plenty of illumination

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

2 Timothy 3:16

Date of Writing

Paul writes in 2 Cor 12:14 and 13:1 of an intended visit to the city. Paul was in Ephesus and would depart for Corinth after these three winter months (Acts 20:3). He left from Philippi in the spring, after the feast of Unleavened Bread, a spring event (Acts 20:6). This would make the writing of an intended visit in the fall of the prior year.

The two Corinthian letters seem to be written in the spring (1 Cor) and fall (2 Cor). There is nothing in Scripture which makes these fall in the same calendar year. Although 2 Corinthians 8:10 and 9:2 speak of “last year,” there is no indication as to whether Paul is using a Roman or Jewish calendar, nor whether he might be using a civil or religious calendar in his reckoning of time. Thus, “last year” on the Jewish civil calendar would fall in the same calendar year of the

Roman calendar. On the other hand, “last year” on the Roman calendar would mean an eighteen month gap between the two letters. Given all of the events which seem to have occurred in-between the two letters, this seems more likely.

Accordingly, 2 Corinthians is written in the fall of A.D. 55/56.

Special Considerations

Comfort is a key theme in this letter. It is, first of all, a *comfort* which comes from God to the believer in the time of trouble. Then, it is the comfort which a believer is able to give to others, because he has experience the grace of God.

*Who comforteth us in all our tribulation,
that we may be able to comfort them which are
in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we
ourselves are comforted of God.*

2 Corinthians 1:4

This comfort is apparent in Paul’s tone with the Corinthians, demonstrating it as an outpouring of the love of Christ which enables us to comfort others. The presence of this comfort flows through this letter.

Another concept is that of *separation*. The Christian is to be the unique person of God. This explains the dilemma created by the activities of the church at Corinth. The idea of separation first appears in the giving of the Old Testament law and then is transferred to the church body by the New Covenant. The people of God are to be like God. This means they are not to participate in the pagan, immoral activities of the world. In the terms of this letter, the believer should not place himself in a position of needing to compromise his Christian ethics. This is why Paul admonishes the church at Corinth not to be “*unequally yoked*” (2 Cor 6:14). Rather, it is to be separated unto God.

*14 Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers:
for what fellowship hath righteousness with
unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with
darkness? 15 And what concord hath Christ with Belial?
or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? 16 And
what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye
are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will
dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God,*

and they shall be my people. 17 Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, 18 And will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty. 7:1 Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1

It is true that we need to deal with the world in order to evangelize. If we understand the world and the times, we may apply the Word with great skill. However, as Warren W. Wiersbe writes, “but we must not imitate the world in order to try to witness to the world. Years ago, Oswald Chambers wrote, ‘Today the world has taken so many things out of the church, and the church has taken so many things out of the world, that it is difficult to know where you are’ (The Servant As His Lord, p. 17). ‘Today the world has so infiltrated the church,’ said Vance Havner, ‘that we are more beset by traitors within than by foes without. Satan is not fighting churches - he is joining them.’”⁸

Remember *sanctification*? Well, when we are sanctified, there are really two concurrent steps to take. First, we are separated **to God**. But, secondly, we must be separated **from the world and sin**. This is the separation Paul speaks of in this letter.

Jesus is presented in this book as the Christian’s comfort (1:5), triumph (2:4), and Lord (2:4). What a wonderful combination! This frees the believer in a new found liberty for a new life in Christ (3:17). This is because Christ is not only Lord, He is

- † Our Light (4:6)
- † Our Judge (5:10)
- † Our Reconciler (5:19)
- † Our Gift (9:15)
- † Our Owner (10:7)
- † Our Power (12:9)

⁸Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Determined*, Colorado Springs:Chariot Victor Publishing, 1992, 141.

This book, then, is about Paul's ministry and how we should use this ministry as an example in our own lives. We should walk as Paul walked.

Outline

- XXIII. God is a God of comfort - 1:1-11
- XXIV. Paul discusses his change of plans - 1:12-2:4
- XXV. Forgiveness - 2:5-11
- XXVI. Ministers of the New Testament - 2:12-3:6
- XXVII. Ministry of glory - 3:7-18
- XXVIII. Ministry which is honest and tested - Chp 4
- XXIX. Ministry which is confident - 5:1-10
- XXX. Ministry which is reconciling - 5:11-21
- XXXI. Ministry which suffers - 6:1-13
- XXXII. Separation because believers are the Temple of God - 6:14-7:4
- XXXIII. Good news brings joy - 7:5-16
- XXXIV. On giving - Chps 8, 9
- XXXV. A defense of Paul's ministry - Chp 10
- XXXVI. False teachers - 11:1-15
- XXXVII. Paul boasts in Christ 11:16-33
- XXXVIII. Paul's visions of the Lord - 12:1-10
- XXXIX. Signs of a true Apostle - 12:11-18
- XL. An appeal for repentance - 12:19-13:10
- XLI. Benediction - 13:11-14

Paul writes in **2 Corinthians 4:7-10** as follows:

But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. ⁸We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; ⁹Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not

destroyed; ¹⁰ Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.

Is this a description of your life?

Is this the attitude you display towards your trials and troubles of life?

Should it be?

*And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.** Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.*

2 Corinthians 12:9

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Galatians

Key Verse(s):

2:20-21

3:24

5:1

5:13-16

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 3

Chapter 5

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Justification

Faith

Sons

Love

Consider:

How do you get saved?

Are there rituals you need to follow once you are saved?

How was Abraham saved?

For that matter, how was any one in the Old Testament saved?

Who is attacking the Galatian church?

What does it mean to walk in the Spirit?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

All six chapters

Galatians

In scholarly circles, this is the letter by which all of Paul's other epistles are judged. It is the standard for determining Pauline authorship. Galatians is also the first letter written by the Apostle. How appropriate this is for the modern day church. Just as the church in America faces attacks from cults on all sides, so, too, does Paul face such attacks against the church of Galatia.

This letter is one of Paul's attack's against the cults. Just as a multitude of cults and false religions exist today, so, too, did the early church face attacks. The earliest attackers were like those in Galatians. They were legalists or Judaizers, people who wanted to add the rituals of Jewish law, such as circumcision, to the saving faith of Christ. These invaders preached an "*other Gospel unto you than that ye have received*" (Gal 1:9). Paul sets forth to defend both his apostleship and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Theme

Since we have already studied the letter to the Romans, you should be able to find in this letter the roots of the expanded teaching of Romans. Paul's letter to the Galatians is a defense of the concept of justification by faith. In simple terms, this means that **FAITH + NOTHING = SALVATION**. Paul's opponents want to argue otherwise.

When we looked at the book of Romans, we learned that *justification* is nothing more than a determination that one is "just" or "right" before God. Remember that this book is written several years before Romans. If this is the first letter of the Apostle, this is the first doctrine truly taught by Paul. This suggests he may view justification by faith as the most important of the doctrines.

Paul's message is designed to show the full and complete sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross. The Cross, for Paul and for us, is the only path to God.

*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth,
and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but
by me.*

John 14:6

The test of the Gospel is grace. If the message excludes grace, or mingles law with grace as the means of either of justification or sanctifications (2:21; 3:1-3), or denies the fact or guilt of sin which alone gives grace its occasion and opportunity, it is "another" Gospel, and the preacher of it is under the *anathema* [curse] of God (vv. 8-9).

Note the difference between a cult and apostasy. A cult plays upon the Gospel message, bending it, adding to it, or subtracting elements from it to arrive at a new teaching. Apostasy denies the Person and authority of both Christ and Scripture. Both, of course, lead man away from God. Using this definition, the Unitarian movement is apostasy while the "Moonies" (Unification Church) are a cult.

Satan is a master of deceit and crafts his message to "fit" the audience in question. Accordingly, it is not unusual to find yesterday's sects and cults decorated in new garb blossoming forth in today's culture as "new" religions. While clearly cultural differences exist between Galatia of 50 A.D. and America of the 1990s, the tools in Satan's arsenal remain the same. Keep this in mind as we travel through this epistle.

Date - or, Who were the Galatians?

There is some debate among scholars over the location of the churches in Galatia. This debate affects one's view of the date of Paul's letter. The North Galatia theory holds that the term is used in an ethnic sense, thus, applying to the original region settled by the Gauls. This "places" the *churches of Galatia* (1:2) in the northern portion of the region. If Paul founded these churches, he must have done so on either his second, or more likely, his third missionary journey. This places a late date on the letter.

The South Galatia theory uses the term in the sense of Roman governmental allocations. This would include the more southern area. The churches are those outlined in Acts 13 and 14. Paul founded these churches during his first missionary journey. One of the factors heavily in favor of this theory is a lack of indications in Acts that Paul ever visited the more northern area. Further, the lack of any mention of the results of the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) can more easily be explained by the South Galatia theory. This council addressed the same major issues that Paul is faced within Galatians.

A tentative outline of the events leading to the Jerusalem Council read something like this:

- † Paul and Barnabas go on their first missionary journey as recorded in Acts 13. During this trip they travel through Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe (South Galatia).
- † Paul and Barnabas return to Syrian Antioch (Acts 14:28).
- † Peter comes to Antioch. He stumbles into disobedience and hypocrisy when some other Jews from Jerusalem arrive, resulting in Paul's rebuke (Gal. 2:11-21).
- † Paul apparently receives word about the Judaizers and writes this epistle some time before the Jerusalem Council.
- † There is, thus, a time gap between Acts 14:28 and Acts 15:1, that is, between Paul and Barnabas' return to Antioch and the Jerusalem Council.

Accordingly, the letter is written around 49 A.D. and is Paul's first as recorded in Scripture.

Special Considerations

Paul's customary introduction of grace and peace is NOT followed by any thanksgiving section (see Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; Phil. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:3; 2 Thess. 1:2). This makes the letter unique as being the only one without some form of thanksgiving. Instead, Paul moves right into the heart of his concerns. 1:6 "*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another Gospel.*" Norley translates this verse as "*I am dumbfounded.*" This certainly conveys the force of Paul's amazement and disapproval and sets the tone for the entire.

In Paul's mind, the Galatians lacked two main essentials that all Christians should strive to possess. First, they lack spiritual discernment in their inability to distinguish between the true Gospel as preached by Paul and the false Gospel as

preached by the Judaizers. Secondly, they lacked steadfast determination, that stick-to-it-iveness necessary for all Christians. The Scripture speaks of this staying power as *endurance*.

The epistle should be read as being written in three sections, one building upon the other.

- † Chapters 1 & 2 present Paul's defense of his apostleship.
- † Chapters 3 & 4 are the doctrinal section setting forth the contrast of law and grace.
- † Chapters 5 & 6 are the practical application of the doctrine.

Paul took his commission to heart. After his salvation (Acts 9), he went off for a period of preparation before truly becoming a missionary to the Gentiles. Paul spent a considerable number of years away from Jerusalem and the Apostles. Paul let Scripture, the direct revelation from Christ, and the influence of the Holy Spirit prepare him for the ministry.

The Greek at the end of verse 11 is literally translated as “is not after man.” Man is not the measure or standard or pattern of the good news Paul preached, **God is!**

The tension of the epistle is the struggle between “the law” and “grace.” Grace is accepting Jesus Christ *by faith and placing your trust in Him*. To Paul, the law is anything which adds to this pure grace. Certainly, the main focus of the letter is the law given to Moses, but any ritual or addition to being saved by grace or to living by grace is sufficient to qualify as “the law.” “New and Improved” -- as if there could be such a thing -- is the constant theme of Madison Avenue advertising. But newer is not necessarily better. The Judaizers “marketed” the Mosaic Covenant as a new and improved version of the Abrahamic Covenant.

In **3:10** Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26 and in 3:11 the Apostle quotes from Habakkuk 2:4:

*Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but **the just shall live by his faith.***

- † Paul explains “*the just*” in Romans, especially the first three chapters.

- † Paul explains “*shall live*” here in Galatians.
- † “*By faith*” is explained in Hebrews, especially chapter 11.

This goes to show how God has always viewed grace by faith as the measure and path for salvation. Moses records in **Leviticus 18:5**:

Ye shall therefore keep my statutes, and my judgments: which if a man do, he shall live in them: I am the LORD.

The law is like a mirror which we can use to see our faces soiled with sin.

The “law” has, then, ceased to exist. It is but a schoolmaster (3:24) in the path of education for the entire of humankind. The Greek word translated schoolmaster more properly means “a leader of children.” He was not the instructor of the child in a school teacher sense, but rather exercised general supervision over the child. He was responsible for the moral and physical well-being of the child until the child reached maturity.

Now that Christianity has “matured” with the coming of Christ, the schoolmaster is no longer needed. Scripture makes it clear the law is dead insofar as the Christian is concerned. By “law,” the verses mean all of the Old Testament rules God designed to teach His people. The moral and ethical implications of these rules still apply, but the law itself does not.

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Galatians 5:1

The goal of the Judaizers was to enslave, dominate, and control the Galatians. They attempted to impose a bondage of a law which had been overruled. Since the Christian is free from the Law, he should practice the godly virtues God expects of him. He should act like Christ rather than acting like the world. He should exercise and demonstrate real Christian love. Paul teaches that true Christian love is our goal.

What is this love?

Where does it come from?

The results of the spiritual life are often more evident than the reasons for it. There are no formulas for the spiritual life characteristics exhibited in the lives of spiritual believers. It is the result that counts:

- † A heart for God
- † An intimacy with God
- † A hunger and a thirst after righteousness.
- † A grasp of the Gospel.
- † A consciousness of conflict.
- † A recognition of imperfection.
- † A realization that the spiritual life is humanly impossible.
- † A desire for selflessness and service
- † A sense of a broader community
- † A sense of anticipation and urgency
- † A passion for the Word of God.

When Paul talks of the believer walking in the Spirit and producing fruit, Paul means that the believer earnestly desires to follow Jesus and is at work in the world showing the true love envisioned by the above list, a vision based upon the two great commandments of Jesus Christ.

*22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace,
longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, 23
Meekness, temperance: against such there is no
law.*

Galatians 5:22, 23

Outline

- I. There is no other Gospel - 1:1-10
- II. Paul's authority is from God - 1:11-24
- III. Paul preached the same Gospel as the others - 2:1-10
- IV. Paul confronts Peter - 2:11-21
- V. Foolishness in turning back - 3:1-18
- VI. The function of the law - 3:19-29
- VII. Do not return to bondage - 4:1-11
- VIII. Paul's love and concern for the Galatians - 4:12-20

- IX. The allegory of Sarah and Hagar - 4:21-31
- X. Liberty and freedom in Christ - 5:1-12
- XI. Liberty defined - 5:13-24
- XII. Fulfilling the law - 5:25-6:10
- XIII. Benediction - 6:11-18

In Galatians 6:6, the verb form of the term “*koinonia*,” “fellowship” is translated “communicate.” A better translation might be “to share” or “to have in common.” “Sharing” involves a mutual participation in ministry with and to other members of the body of Christ. This is Paul’s emphasis, the sharing of love to build up the body of Christ and to draw others into Christian fellowship through a ministry of loving deeds and works. Note, effectively, that Paul preaches here the same “faith by works” that James covers in his second chapter.

Doesn’t this sound a lot like being “*with one accord*?”

What is the condition of your spiritual life?

Are you walking after the flesh – or after the Spirit?

How many rituals do you add to the Gospel message?

Have you created your own personal cult?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Ephesians

Key Verse(s):

1:3

2:8-10

4:11-12

5:17-18

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 6

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Wealth / blessings

Walk

Warfare

Consider:

What blessings have you received from Christ?

What armor do you put on each day to fight with Satan?

How do you put it on?

Are you one with the body of Christ?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

All six chapters

Ephesians

If Romans is Paul's crowning achievement of theological statement, the epistle to the Ephesians may be the jewels on the crown. This letter is a close second in importance with its rich mix of theology. In this epistle the Church receives a new emphasis. God's glory, power, mercy, and Spirit all play a prominent role in this letter. The position of the believer in Christ is likewise highlighted, along with other issues.

Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon are collectively referred to as the Prison Epistles. Paul writes these four letters during his first imprisonment in Rome, A.D. 61/62. This is the imprisonment which ends the book of Acts. This epistle is included with this group because of the close association to Colossians-Philemon and the probability both Ephesians and Colossians were delivered by Tychicus (Eph. 6:21-22; Col. 4:7-9). It should be further noted that this letter does not mention or hint at Paul's release. Philippians (1:19-26) and Philemon (22) provide such a hint. This suggests that Ephesians is written early in the imprisonment. Each of the letters refers to the imprisonment strengthening the relationship of Paul to Christ (Eph 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Phil 1:7, 13; Col 4:10, 18; Philemon 1, 9, 10).

Theme and Purpose

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord
Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all
spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:*

Ephesians 1:3

Unlike most of Paul's other letters, this one express no critical problem in the church. It is, rather, a letter of encouragement and theological presentation. Many believe that Paul's imprisonment gave him the opportunity to reflect upon God's message and to develop in written form his Christology. This includes a discussion of the privileges enjoyed by the believers in Christ. This encouragement takes the form of an emphasis on the application of the "love" the church needs to have for each other in view of God's love for the church. The first half of the book is a statement of God's love for the church, with the second half of the epistle being the application for the church to abide by because of God's outpouring of love.

Christology is the study and formulation of the doctrine of Christ. It is, by its nature, also a study of the Godhead. The Trinitarian discussion is clearly also a Christological discourse as well. Such a study involves not only the true Deity and genuine humanity of Christ, but also the relationship of His two natures and the relationship of Christ to the Godhead.

There is also an emphasis on unity here, the "*one accord*" of Acts. The church should abide in unity because the individual members of the church should all be living and abiding in Christ. This unity shines through in obedience to God, in love to God and to each other, and through the battles of spiritual warfare each believer faces.

Notwithstanding the difficulty one may have in understanding how Jesus can be fully God and fully man, both at the same time, the doctrine of the *Trinity* is harder on the mind. It is a doctrine which is acceptable but not explainable. The word *Trinity* is not found in Scripture. It is used, however, to express the doctrine of the unity of a God who is One but subsists as three distinct Persons. The best example I can provide is that of water – the same chemical substance may be ice, liquid, or vapor. It is all the same essences, but it exists as three separate "persons." The statements of this doctrine are:

- † God is one, and that there is but one God (Deut. 6:4; 1 Kings 8:60; Isa. 44:6; Mark 12:29, 32; John 10:30)
- † The Father is a distinct divine Person, distinct from the Son and the Holy Spirit.
- † Jesus Christ was truly God, and yet was a Person distinct from the Father and the Holy Spirit.
- † The Holy Spirit is also a distinct divine Person.
- † All three share the same essences and traits, but exist in three distinct Persons.

† Each of the three Persons IS GOD.

The Trinity is inferred in the Old Testament, but not as clearly as in the New. Matthew 28:19 is the clearest statement of this doctrine, but there are plenty of examples of the Trinity in Scripture if one wants to take the time to study this concept in more detail. To the believer, the Trinity is important because it means God may be revealed to us in a form we can understand. This revelation can be communicated to us so we can share with God. And, the Trinity forms the basis of true fellowship with God.

Ephesus

Ephesus was a leading center in the Roman Empire, a merchant capital full of paganism. Acts records two visits by Paul to the city, once on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:19-22) and the other an extended stay as part of his third missionary journey (Acts 20:31). Luke's history records several amazing occurrences in the city during this extended stay:

- † A substantial number of disciples of John the Baptist were baptized (Acts 19:1-7)
- † Paul was privileged to debate in the hall of Tyrannus (Acts 19:8-10)
- † Unusual miracles were performed by Paul (Acts 19:11-12) . . .
- † As well as exorcisms (Acts 19:13-16)
- † Sorcerers were converted (Acts 19:17-20)
- † There was a riot in the city (Acts 19:23-41)
- † Paul's farewell address took place not in Ephesus but in the town of Miletus (Acts 20:13-34)

Audience

Modern criticism of the letter focuses on the audience. Most likely, this letter, like Galatians (Gal 1:2), was designed to be a circular letter. A circular letter is nothing more than a letter intended to be shared by a number of churches. Some older manuscripts omit the words "in Ephesus" suggesting a more general audience was involved. Further, the letter does not possess the personal tone of many of the other Pauline church letters. This may be the result of Paul writing to a church which had no particular problems. Paul's love for the church is there,

but the letter develops into more of a sermon than into a personal plea for the correction of problems. This would naturally change the tone of the letter.

Criticism is the term used to describe the study of Scripture. Lower criticism is what we have been doing, learning about the setting, date, and authorship of the books of the New Testament. Our approach is based upon the understanding that Scripture is the Word of God and is given by His inspiration. This means the original manuscripts were 100% accurate. Higher criticism, on the other hand, is the description given to the study of Scripture which ultimately denies events such as miracles, inspiration, and the supremacy of God and Christ. While lower criticism may properly question things like dates and authorship, it does not contradict God's Word. Higher criticism will frequently contradict the Word.

While modern criticism questions Paul's authorship, the epistle clearly reflects Paul's view of theology. If it were written as a statement of doctrine rather than as a letter addressing a given problem, Paul most likely wrote it with the thought of circulation in mind. This is further emphasized by the fact it is written from prison. If this letter was written early in Paul's imprisonment, the Apostle probably intended the letter to be circulated for he did not know if he would ever visit the churches again. The letter was written to the Ephesians, with the intent that all of the churches share in its teachings.

Special Considerations

The letter, as indicated above, breaks down into two convenient parts. Chapters 1-3 cover the believer's heavenly calling while chapters 4-6 cover the believer's earthly conduct. In particular, the issue of the real battle the believer faces in his daily walk is covered in the last chapter.

Jesus Christ is viewed as the Head of the body of believers (1:22, 23). Since the believers are His body, they share in His spiritual blessings (1:3; 2:11-22). As such, the eternal purpose of God is summed up in Christ (1:3-12). Because of this, the believer is to know, absorb, and live Christ (1:18-23; 3:14-21; 4:1). The phrases "in Christ" or "with Christ" occur some 35 times in this single book demonstrating the key importance of this doctrine. It is this concept which should guide the earthly conduct of the believer.

*Having predestinated us unto the **adoption of children** by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,*

Ephesians 1:5

Adoption is a practice taken from Roman law and means placing a person into a family with the same status as a natural born child. Paul says that we become members of God's family by adoption (here and Gal 4:5). This adoption is possible because of the redeeming work of Christ (Gal 4:4, 5). The adopted son of God possesses all the rights of the family -- access to the Father (Rom. 8:15), sharing with Christ in the divine inheritance (Rom. 8:17), and the future complete release from the entire presence of bondage (Rom 8:21ff). The Spirit of God is the instrument (Rom. 8:14) of this adoption and His indwelling is the consequence of this adoption (Gal. 4:6). Although Paul is the only New Testament writer to use this term, the idea of adoption is implicit in John's concept of 'becoming a son' (Jn. 1:12; 1 Jn. 3:1-2), in parable of the prodigal son (Lk. 15:19ff.), and in Christ's use of "Father" in His referring to God (Mt. 5:16; 6:9; Lk. 12:32).

The *church* is a body (1:22, 23; 2:16). This theme is also presented in more detail by Paul in 1 Corinthians 12. As a body, it is subject to the Headship of Christ, but it is also the household of God (2:19). The church is the Bride of Christ, a divine mystery from times past (3:3, 6; 5:21-33). In these teachings, Paul mixes the concepts of marriage and the church to demonstrate the sacred unity of each and the need for structure to operate within each.

The real mystery of the church is the integration of Jews and Gentiles into one unified body (2:14-18; 3:3, 6). While it is clear from the Abrahamic covenant (Gen 12:3) and the words of the prophets (Isa 11:10; 42:6; 60:3) that the Gentiles would receive salvation from God, the idea of this mixed body is never considered in Scripture until the New Testament.

At the same time, the stage for this unity is set by the concept of "oneness." There is unity in the Spirit as all are united.

4 There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

Ephesians 4:4-6

This unity sets the stage for the presentation of the picture of the church and marriage by commanding the overriding duty of all which is governed by love.

*Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear
of God.*

Ephesians 5:21

Such submission is possible because Paul views the true walk of a believer as being one led by God.

*And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess;
but **be filled with the Spirit;***

Ephesians 5:18

Lastly, Paul warns of the true battle of life, that of spirits. Satan versus God. Paul's advice is not to tackle the Devil on our own, for this is a lost cause. Rather we are to rely upon Christ by putting on the full armor of God (6:10-18). Just as God fought the earthly battles of Israel as recorded in the Old Testament, so, too, will He fight our spiritual battles, if only we will allow Him to do so. It is only with God's battle gear that we may be warriors of the world!

Many people today want to treat *Satan* and hell as allegories or myths, but Scripture attests their reality. The name Satan occurs 55 times in the Bible. This does not include any of his other titles. The Hebrew word translated "Satan" means adversary or accuser. He is the constant enemy of God being described as a "*roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour*" (1 Peter 5:8). His fall from Grace is described in Isaiah 14:12-17 and Ezekiel 28:12-15, 17. He is also called "*the dragon,*" "*the old serpent*" (Rev. 12:9; 20:2); "*the prince of this world*" (John 12:31; 14:30); "*the prince of the power of the air*" (Eph. 2:2); "*the god of this world*" (2 Cor. 4:4); "*the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience*" (Eph. 2:2), and is a "*murder from the beginning . . . a liar, and the father of it*" (John 8:44). He is frequently referred to as the devil in God's Word. He has the power of death, but not as lord of death, but rather as executioner (Job 1, 2; Heb 2:14). Scripture assures us we may know our enemy (2 Cor 2:11) and we can defeat him with the Word of God (Matt 4:4) by daily putting on the armor of God.

Outline

- XIV. Greeting - 1:1-2
- XV. Spiritual blessings in Christ - 1:3-14
- XVI. Wisdom and knowledge prayed for - 1:15-23
- XVII. A new life with Christ - 2:1-10
- XVIII. Household of God - 2:11-22
- XIX. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles - 3:1-13
- XX. The Spirit gives strength - 3:14-21
- XXI. The Spirit gives unity - 4:1-16
- XXII. Old life and new life contrasted - 4:17-32
- XXIII. Life in and out of the Spirit - 5:1-20
- XXIV. Family and church - 5:21-6:9
- XXV. Armor of God - 6:10-20
- XXVI. Benediction - 6:21-24

Paul's command is to put on God's armor daily.

*10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord,
and in the power of his might. 11 Put on the
whole armour of God, that ye may be able to
stand against the wiles of the devil.*

Ephesians 6:10-11

How do you accomplish putting on this armor?

Can you identify five possessions we have in Christ?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Philippians

Key Verse(s):

1:21

3:8-10

4:11-13

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 2

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Joy / Rejoice

Unity / Oneness

Sufficiency

Pattern

Humility

Consider:

Who is Jesus

What is the mind of Christ?

Where do you find your joy?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

All four chapters

Philippians

This, the second of the Prison Epistles, is another of those where there has never been any contest over Paul's authorship. Both the internal evidence and the early church fathers support the Apostle's writing of this wonderful letter, the letter of JOY IN CHRIST.

*Always in every prayer of mine for you all
making request with joy,*

Philippians 1:4

Philippi was a Roman city located in Macedonia. It was occupied by a mixture of Romans, Greeks, and some Jews. Most of this church would have been Gentiles. The citizens are recorded as being proud of their relationship to the Roman Empire and their ability to be Roman (cf. Acts 16:21). The founding of the church in Philippi by Paul and Silas is recorded in (Acts 16:1-40). The conversion of Lydia opened the door for the missionaries (Acts 16:11-15). Paul and Silas were thrust into jail for healing a demon-possessed girl (16:19-24). The conversion of the Philippian jailer is one of the better known stories from Acts (16:25-34).

Paul visited the church at Philippi on one other recorded occasion (20:1-6) and was able to stay in touch with them through Timothy (Acts 19:21-23; Phil. 2:19,20). He appears to have received frequent gifts from the church (Phil. 4:15,16). This letter is written, then, about ten years after the founding of the church.

Theme and Purpose

For such a short letter, one may produce a fairly long list of reasons for Paul writing to the church. Clearly, false teachers and other opponents of Paul's play a role (1:15-17; 1:27-28; 3:2; and 3:1-4:1) Further, Paul wanted to thank the

church, both for their gifts (4:10-20) and for the lending of Epaphroditus (2:25-30; 4:18). Epaphroditus carried the letter to the church. Paul also uses the letter to keep the church current on both his plans and those of Timothy (1:12-26; 2:19,24).

The false teachers seem to be our old friends the Judaizers (3:1-4:1).

Many see the overriding purpose of this letter as an expression of joy. The church suffered from infighting over matters of personal difference (1:27; 2:2-4,16; 4:1-2). Paul uses his own circumstances to express the joy he finds in Christ as the pattern which the church at Philippi should adopt. Jesus humbled Himself so that God could be exalted (2:6ff). If Christ could give up His outward glory by taking on the form of man and dying on the Cross, the church should be able to use this as a basis for rejoicing in all circumstances (2:16-18; 3:1; 4, 20; 4).

This, then, is the real theme of the book. The joy and unity of life come from a unity in Christ, Who is Lord of all creation. He is our pattern and we should strive to be like Him.

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:21

Date

Considering the internal factors of the letter, matched to Paul's own personal situation as it is known to us, this letter was written from Rome about A.D. 61. Paul was in prison when he wrote (Phil. 1:7,13,17), uncertain as to the outcome of his trial (Phil. 1:19-20; 2:17). The existence of the Praetorium guard (1:13) and of those of Caesar's household place Paul's location in Rome (4:22).

Special Considerations

When a man is born again, there is not the same robustness in his thinking or reasoning for a time as formerly. We have to make an expression of the new life, to form the mind of Christ. “Acquire your soul with patience.” Many of us prefer to stay at the threshold of the Christian life instead of going on to construct a soul in accordance with the new life God has put within.⁹

These words were written by Oswald Chambers and reflect the full theme of this book. Interestingly enough, the phrase “mind of Christ” comes not from Philippians but rather from **1 Corinthians 2:16**:

*For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the **mind of Christ**.*

In this letter, Paul expresses the same idea using almost the same language.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

Philippians 2:5

Paul’s idea with these statements is really very simple. The arguments of these verses from chapter 2 set forth Christ as the example for all to follow. Jesus Himself directed His disciples to follow Him.

For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.

John 13:15

⁹Chambers, Oswald, *My Utmost for His Highest*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers) 1989.

Later in the letter Paul writes to the Philippians that they have Paul and the other disciples as their example to walk by (3:17). In fact, Paul writes the same advice to the Thessalonians (2 Thess 3:9). How can Paul make such a bold statement? Because he believes with all of his heart that he has followed the example of Christ. Therefore, he is a fit, living example for others. If we accept Paul's example, will we not become a living example to others demonstrating a life lived in Christ? Is this not the express purpose of walking in the Spirit? The example of this is the salvation of the Philippian jailer and his family found in Acts 16:27-34). In jail, Paul and Silas did not sit around moping but rather sang songs to the Lord. Then, when the earthquake opened the doors of their imprisonment, the evangelists stayed so as to set a proper example of walking in the Spirit. As a result of this action, the jailer was saved (Acts 16:33, 34). It is actions such as these that show we possess the mind of Christ.

Paul sees the Christian life as an endurance race, one running toward the “*mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (3:14). This is a race the Apostle would have us all run. The race can be endured because of the sufficiency of Jesus. The following three verses summarize this position.

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

Philippians 4:11

I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

Philippians 4:13

But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:19

The Kenosis

For a letter clearly accepted as being written by the Apostle Paul, one “simple” word in the epistle has raised a great deal of interpretive controversy. In 2:7 Paul

uses the word *ekenosen*, a verb which simply means “to empty,” as in Rebekah’s emptying of her water pitcher (Gen 24:20 in the Septuagint). But, this simple verb has created much debate over “the kenosis.” The King James translates this verb as “*made himself of no reputation.*” In other words, He “emptied” Himself.

But what was this emptying?

The controversy arises from those on the liberal side of life who desire, in one form or another, to see Christ as having emptied Himself of some or all of His Deity when He took on human form. While this is not an acceptable position, it raises the question as to how the Second Person of the Trinity could take on human form so as to genuinely experience the human life described by the Gospels. This is called the “*hypostatic union.*” While this passage does not fully explain the hypostasis, it does define for us what the *kenosis* involved.

Most importantly, you must note that the letter makes no mention of the surrender of any divine attributes. Some have suggested that the emptying involved the surrender of the divine glory, or the surrender of the right to exercise certain “independent” attributes. But, the Gospels demonstrate the exercise of all of the Godly attributes and the Transfiguration clearly shows the glory of Christ.

It is easier to think of the kenosis, not as an actual emptying, but as the addition of one more element to the divine nature. Christ emptied Himself in the sense of agreeing to take on human form. He became not “merely” God, but the God-man. He surrender His rights to remain the pre-incarnate Being which existed from before the formation of the worlds. Christ agreed to take on the “*form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men*” (2:7). Christ gave up His position in heaven to take on the human form and all of its attendant limitations, including the ability to suffer and die on the Cross. Without the kenosis, there would be no salvation for mankind!

Outline

- I. Christ, our Purpose of life - Chp 1
- II. Christ, our Pattern for life - Chp 2
- III. Christ, our Goal in life - Chp 3
- IV. Christ, our strength for life - Chp 4

Where do you find your joy?

Where do you find your strength?

Humility has been described as seeing yourself as God sees you.

Is this a good definition?

Are you meek and humble?

Are you enduring towards the final prize?

*But what things were gain to me, those I counted
loss for Christ.*

Philippians 3:7

What does this verse mean to you?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Colossians

Key Verse(s):

1:15-20

2:8-10

3:1-3

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Supremacy

Sufficiency

Creator

Redeemer

Consider:

Did the work of God end with creation?

How do you know this?

What is the primary theme of this letter?

Colossians

The third of the Prison Epistles is another argument against false teachers and false doctrine. Modern criticism has debated Paul's authorship of this letter, mostly on the basis that the letter appears to be fighting cults found historically in the second century A.D. The early voice of the church fathers is solely in favor of Pauline authorship.

Nature of the Heresy

It is important to understand the nature of what Paul fought against. This helps to place the epistle in the Apostle's portfolio of writing and to demonstrate that the attacks against the Gospel are as old as the Gospel itself.

The heresy demoted the Deity of Jesus. This leads Paul early in the letter to expound on the glory and Person of Christ. Coupled with this demotion are several ritualistic concepts designed to help practice the "true religion." These include:

- † salvation by wisdom - 1:28
- † abstinence from certain foods and some types of drink - 2:16,22
- † observance of Jewish feasts and Sabbaths - 2:16
- † a stress on "self-abasement" and visions - 2:18,23
- † angelic worship in some form - 2:18
- † a stress on worship which was human in origin, a "self-made" religion-worship - 2:23
- † praising the value of treating the body severely - 2:23
- † "Philosophy and empty deceit" espousing the "elementary principles of the world" - 2:8
- † licentiousness - 3:5-9

This new religion which offered advanced knowledge and a better way appears to be a combination of paganism, Judaism, mysticism, and Christianity, what is called a Syncretistic Religion. It probably contains the elements of Gnosticism, but it is not the Gnostic religion which developed later. This is where the modern critical scholars have erred.

There exist a variety of empty religions at the time of Christ and following His death. We previously discussed the elements of Gnosticism when we looked at the Gospel of John and 1 John. The beginnings of these elements show up in various letters. In most of the cases, the early battles were with Judaizers, those who wanted to impose the burdens of the Jewish religion upon the Christians. This group borrowed from other existing religions to form the rudiments of a new religion. This has always been the pattern. When Jeroboam pulled the ten northern tribes of the Jewish nation away from the two southern tribes, one of his first actions was to institute a religion in the north which resembled that practiced by the Jews before the split in the Nation (1 Kings 12:25-33). So it has continued ever since.

There were three main “left overs” which formed the basis of most of the early cults.

- † The Nicolaitans by tradition were formed by Nicolaus of Antioch (Acts 6:5). Their goal was to create a compromise whereby the Christians could take part in the various pagan ceremonies and religious activities. This group is attacked by Peter (2 Pet 2:15), Jude (11), and John (Rev 2:6, 15). The main thrust of this mixing was sexual in nature. This group may have been one of the major wings of the Gnostic sects by the end of the second century.

- † The Stoics are a school of philosophy apparently first formed in the era of 325-260 B.C. in Athens. This group evolved over time, adding many of the teachings of Plato to their beliefs by the time Paul encounters them (Acts 17:8). Their goal to find meaning to life was to align the will with the “inherent reason” of the universe. This they referred to as the *logos*. *Logos* simply means word and is the same term used by John to describe Christ in John 1:1-3. This led many critics to believe John was pushing this mix of religion. However, it is clear that John’s use of the term is considerably different than that intended by the Stoics. The Stoics find Reason to equal God. John clearly does not.

† The other group mentioned in Acts 17:8 is the Epicureans. This group was founded by Epicurus and arose a little later than the Stoics. The uncertainty of life drove this group to attempt to find satisfaction and happiness through serene detachment with the world. The group found its happiness in limiting desire and taking joy and solace in friendship. This combination eventually led to a perversion of the original teachings of the group where the joys of friendship developed into the pursuit of extravagant pleasures – wine, women, and song! As such, this group did not incorporate itself into Christianity as readily as did the Stoics. But, on the other hand, think of relatively modern day cults such as the group in Waco, Texas, which found its pleasures in a limited group sharing in a communal sense more than just food, yet, trying to apply the Bible to its situation.

While these are not the only religions of ancient Palestine, the combinations of these create the foundation for most of the early cults fought by the church. As Solomon wrote, “*there is no new thing under the sun*” (Ecc 1:9). The New Age cults of today are nothing more than old cults recast in new clothes. When we study carefully the problems faced by the early church, we find the solutions to the problems faced by the modern church!

Theme and Purpose

*For in him dwelleth all the
fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

Colossians 2:9

Clearly, the purpose of this letter is to combat the heresies which were present in the church. It appears Paul never made a personal visit to this church or city (2:1). The city is about 90 miles from Ephesus and the church at Colosse was probably founded during Paul's time in Ephesus (Acts 19:10). As a city, Colosse is the least significant of those written by the Apostle. Ephraim may have been the missionary who actually instructed those in Colosse (Col. 1:7). Note that Philemon and Onesimus were leaders in Colosse (4:9). The false teachings invading the church now threatened its existence and

Paul sought to stop this cancerous spread. He does this by directing asserting the Deity and supremacy of Christ (1:15-3:4).

And, as with all of his letters, the Apostle strives to encourage his readers and develop some personal application from the doctrinal portions (3:5-4:6)

This letter is also Christological in nature, emphasizing the Personal Work of Christ (2:10). The argument of the letter, both for our personal life and in dealing with the cults, is that Jesus is all we need.

A review of the **outline** of the letter shows its key elements.

Chapter 1 emphasizes the Person and Work of Christ, especially - 1:15-20.

Chapter 2 argues for the proposition that *Christ plus nothing* is all we need because of His pre-eminence. This is the argument Paul uses to fight the various heresies he sees present in Colosse:

- † enticing words 2:4
- † philosophy 2:8
- † legalism 2:14-17
- † mysticism 2:18, 19
- † asceticism 2:20-23

Chapters 3 and 4 reflect the cause and effect of a transformed life in Christ. This new life created by salvation should be transformed in our relations to:

- † Jesus 3:1-4
- † our personal life 3:5-12
- † the Saints 3:13, 14
- † the Bible 3:16
- † God 3:17
- † our home 3:18-21
- † our Christian service 3:22-25
- † our work relationships 4:1
- † our prayer life 4:2-4
- † toward the unsaved 4:5, 6
- † church leaders 4:7-18

A Comparison of the Christology of Ephesians and Colossians

EPHESIANS

Emphasizes the Body (Church)
The spirit is pastoral
The emphasis is on oneness in
Christ

COLOSSIANS

Emphasizes the Head (Christ)
The spirit is polemical
The emphasis is on
completeness in Christ

Polemical is an argument or controversial discussion. Polemics is the art or practice of disputation or controversy. In this sense, most of the letters of the New Testament are polemical in nature, since they argue for the Gospel. Apologetics, by comparison, is the presentation of the defense and proofs of your position. Arguing in a court room is apologetics, while being on the debate team is polemics.

What traits can you identify in the cults of today that match those Paul describes in Colossians?

Are the solutions suggested by Paul be useful in fighting today's cults?

Why? Why not?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

First Thessalonians

Key Verse(s):

1:9-10

2:13

4:1-3

4:13-18

5:16-18

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Sanctification

Coming of the Lord

Consider:

Is this book about judgment or comfort?

Is there an overriding theme to this book?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

Entire Book

First Thessalonians

The Thessalonian church was founded by Paul and Silas on the second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-9). The church apparently misunderstood Paul's teachings on the end times and were in fear that Christ had returned and they had been "left behind." Paul writes to correct these views. It should be noted that Paul's stay in Thessalonica was short, but probably not as short as the three weeks as might be inferred from Acts 17:2. This time is probably the period Paul ministered to the Jews. Paul was in the city long enough to take up a trade (1 Thess. 2:9) and to receive gifts from Philippi (Phil 4:16).

First Thessalonians was probably written earlier in Paul's time at Corinth when he received word at the return of Timothy and Silas about the church (Acts 18:5; 1 Thess. 3:6). Therefore, 1 Thessalonians was written about A.D. 51. The salutation shows the letter as being from Paul, Silas, and Timothy. Corinth is the last place where Acts places Paul, Timothy, and Silas together; therefore, Corinth is a natural candidate for the origin of the letter.

Theme and Purpose

*For this cause also thank we God
without ceasing, because, when ye received the
word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it
not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the
word of God, which effectually worketh also in
you that believe.*

1 Thessalonians 2:13

As is indicated, the church at Thessalonica is a young, immature church. In all such situations, Satan jumps into the smallest of cracks in an effort to cause the new believer to question his faith. This is why studying doctrine is so very important to a Christian. The more one knows and understands the Bible, the

better equipped he is to combat and fight Satan. The spiritual weapons of Ephesians 6:10-18 work only in the realm of faith. Faith comes only from **Romans 10:17:**

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

Paul's purposes were, then, to express his satisfaction and thanks to God for the healthy spiritual condition of the church (1:2-10) even in the face of doubts and troubles. False accusations had been made against the Apostle (2:1-3:13) which Paul combats. Further, this leads the Apostle to explain why he had been unable to visit the church again (2:17-18). Since he was unable to visit, Paul uses this letter to express his love for this particular church (3:10). And, as is often the course of events in the Apostle's letters, Paul moved to correct errors in the church's life style (4:1-12; 5:12-18). These corrections lead into a discussion on the Second Coming of Christ (4:13-18) and the Day of the Lord (5:1-11).

Special Considerations

The return of the Lord is a prominent theme of this letter being mentioned no less than five times (1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:15; 5:23). In some of the other letters of the Apostle, this Second Coming of Christ is called the *Day of Christ* (Phil 1:10; 2:16; 2 Thess 2:2) to distinguish it from the *Day of the Lord*, the day of judgment (5:1-11). The day of judgment is an Old Testament concept which will find its ultimate fulfillment in Christ. For example, the phrase "Day of the Lord" occurs 25 times in the King James version of the Bible (24 times in the NIV). Eighteen of these occurrences are in the Old Testament, all in the writings of the prophets.

Paul helped to form the church at Thessalonica, but was forced to flee the city (Acts 17:1-9). He went to Berea only to have the Thessalonians show up there to continue the persecution (Acts 17:10-14). The contrast of the right and wrong way to approach God is found in this story, for the approach to God is one of attitude and obedience. Luke writes,

These [the Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and

searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

Acts 17:11

With this degree of hostility, the church at Thessalonica is to be commended as well for staying in the faith in the absence of the Apostle!

A *disciple* is a pupil or learner, thus, the pupil of a teacher. While Jesus was not truly a teacher in the eyes of the Pharisees (John 7:14ff), His followers saw Him as a teacher and was popularly referred to as Teacher or Rabbi (Mark 9:5; 11:21; John 3:2). His followers are properly called disciples. While the term may describe all who followed Him, it is more properly restricted to those who accompanied Him on his travels (Mark. 6:45; Luke. 8:2; 10:1). *Discipleship* is based on a call by Jesus (Mark 1:16-20). It involves a personal allegiance to Jesus which is marked by devoting full allegiance to Him (Mark 8:34-38; Luke. 14:26-33). In many of the examples of the New Testament, this meant the literal abandonment of home, business, and property (Mark 10:21, 28). The loyalty to Jesus must come first. This loyalty is based upon faith and is the task of taking up one's cross daily (Mark 8:34-38). This demand was well beyond the normal Jewish concept of pupil-teacher relationship, giving the word 'disciple' a new meaning.

Chapters 1-3 are a look back to where the Thessalonians received their salvation. Paul looks at their past where they turned from idols, at their present where the church is to serve, and at the future, where the church is to wait until the Second Coming. The first part of chapter 4 and the second half of chapter five present the applications to the church on how to live while the Day of Christ and the Day of the Lord are intermingled in between (4:13-18; 5:11-26).

The *Rapture* is an important doctrine in the life of the church. The word "rapture" will not be found in the Bible. The term comes from the Latin word used to translate the Greek word *ἁρπάζω* which is translated as "caught up" in 4:17. The word properly means to be seized, snatched, or carried off by force. It is the action of God which will take the church home! While this letter sets forth the most complete description of the Rapture, we will wait until our review of Revelation to discuss it in detail.

Note the rich doctrine Paul squeezes into just a few verses:

- † Election 1:4
- † Holy Spirit 1:5, 6
- † Assurance of salvation 1:5
- † The Trinity 1:1, 5, 6
- † Conversion (turning from idols) 1:9

† The Second Coming 1:10
*Remembering without ceasing your work
of **faith**, and labour of **love**, and patience of
hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of
God and our Father*

1 Thessalonians 1:3

FAITH

HOPE

LOVE

The trio of faith, hope, and love is the cornerstone of the Christian religion. In the King James Version of the Bible, these three appear together again in 1 Thessalonians 5:8, and, of course, in the concluding verse of Paul's love chapter (1 Cor 13:13). The modern translations also include the trio in **Colossians 1:5**

*The faith and love that spring from the
hope that is stored up for you in heaven and that
you have already heard about in the word of
truth, the gospel*

NIV

Note, if you include Colossians 1:4 and 5 together, these verses fit the pattern in the King James as well!

Outline

- I. Greeting and Thanksgiving - Chp 1
- II. Paul's work and reception in Thessalonica - Chp 2
- III. Timothy's report - Chp 3
- IV. How to live to please God - 4:1-12
- V. The unexpected Coming of the Lord - the Rapture - 4:12-18
- VI. The Day of the Lord - 5:1-11
- VII. Live with this Coming always in mind - 5:12-22
- VIII. Benediction - 5:23-28

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

1 Thessalonians 4:18

This is a book of great comfort. Do the words of this particular book give you the comfort Paul attempted to convey to the Thessalonians?

How do you receive the Word of God?

How do you stay close to God?

16 Rejoice evermore. 17 Pray without ceasing. 18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

This book is rich in the concept of the return of Christ. Look at the closing verses of each chapter – 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; 4:17; 5:23. The coming of Christ is foremost in the Apostle's mind as he penned this letter.

How important is the Return of Christ to you?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Second Thessalonians

Key Verse(s):

2:1-5

3:1-5

3:16

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 2

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Judgment

Destruction

Retribution

Consider:

What is the relationship between this letter and the first one to the Thessalonians?

Can you find the key concepts?

How does Paul use them?

Is this a letter of comfort like 1 Thessalonians?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

All 3 chapters

Second Thessalonians

Silas and Timothy carried Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians and have now returned with news of the developments in response to the first letter. Paul is still most likely in Corinth during the first missionary trip. In response to the conditions existing in Thessalonica, Paul pens this second letter of exhortation. The letter would have been written in A.D. 51/52.

Theme

Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, 2 That ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand.

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2

Paul's first letter to this church dealt with the concept of Jesus Christ coming to claim His Church Body. In this letter, we see the church returning with Christ in judgment (1:5-10; 2:15). Jesus is Lord of all and this gives Him the right to Judge all.

The church at Thessalonica is already facing increased persecution (1:4-5). Much of this pressure comes from the existing false teachings on the rapture (2:1-3). This second chapter sets forth to correct these false beliefs. The letter, then, is one which stresses endurance (2:15) in the face of these attacks and teaches the church how to live in the face of the imminent return of the Lord.

Scripture teaches that we should always be ready for the return of Christ. This concept of *imminence* does not mean that we know with certainty the event will occur today or tomorrow. Rather the concept is that the Second Coming of Jesus is “on the point of occurring.” It could happen at any moment, but it does not have to occur immediately. Apparently, the Thessalonians had misunderstood Paul’s first letter, believing they had missed the return of Christ, viewing it as being immediately rather than imminently.

Outline and Considerations

*Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold
the traditions which ye have been taught,
whether by word, or our epistle.*

2 Thessalonians 2:15

Chapter 1 contains Paul’s assurances to a church undergoing continued persecution (1:1-6). The Apostle sets forth the assurance of God’s continued care for His people (1:7-12). The return of Jesus will bring glory to both God and the Church (1:10-12).

Chapter 2 is the great teaching on the man of sin. There will be great apostasy in the church (2:2) and the man of sin, the son of perdition will be revealed (2:3-4).

We saw earlier in our Introduction that apostasy is a turning away from and a denial of God. The best discussion of apostasy in Scripture is in 2 Timothy 3.

The man of sin, the son of perdition, is the *Anti-Christ*, as opposed to the many anti-Christes which have been with us through the centuries (1 John 2:18). This man is the little horn of Daniel (Dan 7:8; 8:9). He is also the willful king described by Daniel 11:36. The cited verse from 1 John shows the anticipated arrival of the true Anti-Christ. John gives a fuller description of this man and his assistants in Revelation (13:1-10 for the Anti-Christ, the “beast from the sea” and 13:11-18 for the false prophet, “the beast from the earth”).

The Person restraining the Anti-Christ even today is the Holy Spirit who works through the Church (2:5-8). Only the power of God prevents evil from truly running rampant throughout the world today. The time of Noah is an example of a world without the restraint of the Holy Spirit. God's Spirit did not indwell people during the time of the Old Testament. All but the eight souls on the Ark perished at the time of that judgment. How much worse will it be during the Tribulation? The Anti-Christ is further described in 2:9-12. I believe these verses are especially important to us, for they put forth great emphasis on our need to evangelize whenever possible. Paul writes:

*11 And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they **should believe a lie**: 12 **That they all might be damned who believed not the truth**, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*

2 Thessalonians 2:11-12

I believe this passage is one which helps to teach that those who go into the tribulation having already heard the Gospel stand condemned for their hardness of heart, just as Pharaoh stood condemned. While it is not possible to know at what level a person must hear the Gospel message to so stand condemned, I believe that this Scripture teaches those who have believed the lie are turned over to the Devil for eternity.

These first two chapters, then, set the stage for Christ the Judge. Read **2 Thessalonians 1:7-9**:

*7 And to you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, 8 In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our **Lord Jesus Christ**: 9 **Who shall be punished** with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;*

Here is Jesus Christ the Judge!

Unfortunately, in 2:2 the King James has “mistranslated” the word “Christ” creating a mix of doctrine. A composite view of Scriptures shows that the “*Day of the Lord*” is that extended time period beginning with the Rapture and ending with the millennium and the final judgment of Satan. This is the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies dealing with God’s judgment on the Gentile nations and wicked mankind (Isa. 2:12f.; Ezek. 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Zach. 14:1). Peter’s two letters use this approach. Passages such as 2 Thessalonians 2:2 help to relate this Day of the Lord to the Second Coming of Christ. It should be noted, however, that this Second Coming of Christ in judgment as set forth in this epistle is the Coming of Jesus with His Saints to end the tribulation and commence the millennium.

Compare this to other references to the *Day of Christ* which provide a definition for this Day as a day of rejoicing and not a day of judgment. It is on the Day of Christ that the Lord comes for His saints (see the chapter on 1 Thessalonians). The Day of Christ is the positive description of the end time events, while the Day of the Lord is the negative description. The manuscripts used by the King James have the word *Christos* in 2:2. However, the critical manuscripts have determined that the proper word in this verse is *kurios*, “Lord.” This better fits the context of this letter of judgment.

Remember the pronouncement of Jesus before the synagogue at Nazareth (Luke 4:17-21)?

18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, 19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

Luke 4:18-19

This statement of Christ is a reading from Isaiah 61:1 ,2. However, when He read the passage, Jesus does not conclude all of verse 2. He stops in the middle. The acceptable year of the Lord is the First Coming of Christ which will run until the Rapture, the Day of Christ. The Day of the Lord is the balance of Isaiah 61:2, the day of judgment, the Tribulation.

*To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and
the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;*
Isaiah 61:2

Chapter 3 contains the instructions to the saints on how to live during this time before the Lord's return. The church is to remain in prayer and to labor for the Lord. Notice that Paul presents these teachings in the form of "commands," using this verb four times in eight verses (3:4, 6, 10, 12).

Is Jesus ever coming back?
How can you know?

How are you going to live until then?

If you knew Jesus was returning tomorrow at 9:00 A.M.,
what steps would you take to be ready to meet Him face-to-
face?

Is the man of sin a person or a system?
Or both?
Is it important to you which he is?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

*1 & 2 Timothy
Titus*

Key Verse(s):

1 Tim 1:5; 3:14-16, 6;11-12

2 Tim 1:7; 2:1-4; 3:14-17

Titus 1:5; 2:11-14; 3:3-7

Key Chapter(s):

1 Tim Chapter 3, 4

2 Tim Chapter 2

Titus Chapter 2

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Sound doctrine

Endurance

Conduct

Consider:

What is the main theme of each letter?

Do your church leaders resemble those described in these letters?

Can you recognize unsound doctrine?

What would you do if your church started preaching unsound doctrine?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

1 Tim 6

2 Tim 3

The Pastoral Epistles - 1 & 2 Timothy Titus

These three epistles are referred to as the Pastoral epistles, that is, as the letters written to pastors of local churches. The letters set forth church structure and offer encouragement to their recipients in the face of adversity and problems. Along with Philemon, these are the only letters of the New Testament written to individuals. Philemon, as we will see, does not deal with pastoral issues. While written to an individual, it does not fit into this grouping.

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

1 Timothy 3:15

Who are Timothy and Titus?

Born of a Gentile father and a Jewish mother (Acts 16:1), Timothy represents the walking picture of the church, the mystery of the union of Jew and Gentile in one body. From Lystra, Timothy most likely received the Gospel during Paul's first missionary trip (Acts 14:6). Paul views Timothy as his spiritual son (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; Phil. 2:22). Timothy is described as a faithful disciple (Acts 19:22; 1 Cor. 4:17; 2 Cor. 1:19; Phil. 2:19; 1 Thess. 3:2,6) and a fellow laborer of the Good News ((Rom. 16:21; 1 Cor. 16:10; Phil. 2:19-22; 1 Thess. 3:2).

Titus is also one of Paul's converts (Titus 1:4). He was probably younger than Timothy, possibly still a fairly young man at the time Paul writes to him (Titus 2:6-7; but note also 1 Tim 4:12 which suggests Timothy was comparably young as well). Other than the fact that Titus was a Gentile, nothing is known about his conversion. He was the subject of the debate over circumcision (Gal 2:3), so his conversion must have occurred on during the first missionary journey as well. Titus originally served in Corinth, but between Paul's two stays in the Roman jails, the Apostle visited Crete with Titus. When Paul moved on, Titus stayed behind (Titus 1:5). Titus appears to have moved onto Dalmatia at some point during Paul's second imprisonment (2 Tim 4:10).

Timothy and Titus are not equivalent to modern day Pastors. They acted as the second installment of leadership in the local churches, Paul being the first. It is to be inferred from these letters that their task was to establish the local leaders and provide them with guidance in the operation of the local churches. Paul's letters serve as the instruction from the "company vice-president" to the "regional managers" for the "local managers."

Dates

The dating of these three epistles has been anticipated by the discussion on Timothy and Titus. All three were written in the period between Paul's two imprisonments, or at some point into the second jailing. Second Timothy, in particular, appears to have been written by a Paul facing imminent death, so this is the last of the three. First Timothy dates to 63 and Titus to 63/64, with 2 Timothy being dated slightly later, probably around 64/65, but perhaps as late as 66/67.

Theme and Purpose

Written near the end of his life, these letters reflect Paul's continuing concern for the welfare of the church. These letters provide ecclesiastical and pastoral instructions to his two protégée on the procedures and qualifications to be employed in the local churches. At the same time, trouble is brewing on the horizons for both men and Paul writes to help encourage them to "*fight the good fight.*" This good fight includes, foremost, the need to preach and maintain sound doctrine and discipline in the churches.

Outlines and Comments

1 Timothy

The letter would outline as follows:

- † Introduction and greeting - 1:1, 2
- † Problems of unsound doctrine - 1:3-11
- † Paul's testimony - 1:12-20
- † On prayer and sobriety - 2:1-15
- † Qualifications of Bishops and Deacons - 3:1-16
- † Instructions for a godly life - 4:1-5:2
- † Pastoral duties - 5:3-6:2
- † On the use of wealth - 6:3-10
- † Fight the Good Fight of Faith - 6:11-19
- † Benediction - 6:20, 21

First, and foremost perhaps in the Apostle's mind, Paul writes to warn Timothy against false teachers (1 Tim 1:3). This is an on-going theme of almost all of the Apostle's epistles. It is so important to maintain sound doctrine within the church that Paul touches upon this point frequently (as do the other writers of the New Testament). This entire letter, even the description of the qualifications of bishops and deacons, stems from Paul's demand to limit the spread of false doctrine and to prohibit false teachers from entering the church.

At the same time, this letter is full of encouragement to Timothy. Time and again Paul slips words of comfort and encouragement into this letter. The benediction sums it all up.

*20 O Timothy, keep that which is
committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and
vain babblings, and oppositions of science
falsely so called: 21 Which some professing
have erred concerning the faith. Grace be with
thee. Amen.*

1 Timothy 6:20, 21

Chapter 3 sets forth the qualifications of bishops and deacons. Paul sets forth these qualifications to keep the church leaders holy – morally and spiritually

upright. As one reads these qualifications, note, however, that they should apply not just to the church leaders, but to all of us, for they are the keys to leading a godly life.

Remember my comments when we started investigating Romans as to Paul's trait of presenting the Gospel message in one or two verses? Here is my favorite.

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory.

1 Timothy 3:16

2 Timothy

12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day. 13 Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 14 That good thing which was committed unto thee keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.

2 Timothy 1:12-14

The letter outlines as follows:

- I. Introduction and greeting - 1:1, 2
- II. A long discourse appealing to faithfulness - 1:3-2:13
- III. A workman appointed to God who does not need to be ashamed - 2:14-26
- IV. The coming Apostasy - 3:1-9
- V. Fight apostasy by defending the faith - 3:10-4:8
- VI. A long section of personal greetings and benediction - 4:9-22

Another way to outline the letter is topical:

- A. Paul the Preacher - Chp 1

- B. Paul the Example - Chp 2
- C. Paul the Prophet - Chp 3
- D. Paul the Prisoner - Chp 4

This is the last letter of the great Apostle. Paul longs for his spiritual son (1:4). The pain and suffering of the man of God may be felt as he gives his instructions to Timothy to come before the winter and to bring warm clothing (4:9, 11, 13, 21). But, most importantly “*when thou comest, bring with thee, . . . **the books, but especially the parchments***” (4:13). Even as Paul sees the end of life in the very near future and after a life filled with preaching and evangelism, the Apostle still desires to study God’s Word!

As with all of these Pastoral letters, the overriding theme is the need to spread the Gospel message and to live a life which does not conflict with what you are preaching and teaching. The basis for this is that the Bible is God’s sacred Word. This is the Word we are to bury in our hearts (Ps 119:11).

Paul again conveys concerns and exhortations about false preachers, but the tone is different. The letter conveys this important information in a more urgent, personal manner (2:14-3:9). Paul recognizes that his time on earth is nearing its end. The aged Apostle feels the urgency of the moment. In the opening verses of chapter 3, he gives a description of the apostasy to be faced by the church. People will have “*itching ears*” (4:3), turning to their own lusts and desires. Remember apostasy is a falling away from God. On one side the church is attacked by cults. On the other side, by those who claim not to believe in any form of religion. This condition has always been with the church. It will get worse as we near the end of this current age.

Notice that Paul’s defense against apostasy is the same defense he used against the cults. Rely upon Christ and His Word. As he tells Timothy, “*preach the word; be instant in season, out of season*” (4:2). Why? Simply because it is the Word of God!

*16 All scripture is given by inspiration
of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for
reproof, for correction, for instruction in
righteousness: 17 That the man of God may be
perfect, throughly furnished unto all good
works.*

2 Timothy 3:16, 17

Finally, Paul recognizes the need to “pass the mantle” of leadership. The letter is as close to Paul’s “last will and testament” as we possess. It is time to turn the ministry over to almost Timothy (3:10-11; cf. 1:3-5; 1:6-14; 2:1-13; 3:10-4:5). In so performing this transfer of leadership, Paul entrusts to Timothy the ongoing task of teaching others to become faithful ministers and teachers (2:2). The Gospel ministry must be continued (1:6-8, 13, 14, 16; 2:3; 3:12; 4:5; 4:2) despite all of the opposition, hardships, apostasy, defections, and criticism which Timothy will encounter (1:5, 8-10, 14; 2:3-7, 9, 11-13 19; 3:14; 4:5, 8). God’s Word and ministry must continue at all costs!

*17 Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me; that by me the preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear: and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion. 18 And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever.
Amen.*

2 Timothy 4:17, 18

Titus

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

Titus 1:5

The letter would outline as follows:

- I. Introduction and greeting - 1:1-4
- II. Qualifications for elders - 1:5-9
- III. How to deal with false teachers - 1:10-16
- IV. Doctrine and conduct for preaching - 2:1-15
- V. Faith and works - 3:1-11
- VI. Final words and benediction - 3:12-15

Titus's task was to appoint elders in the towns where churches had previously been started. Paul writes this letter to provide guidance for this task and to warn his young spiritual son of the problems of false teachers. It appears that the false teachers were already present in these churches, so the task of appointing morally and doctrinally qualified elders would be both extremely important and difficult (1:6-16, 11; 2:15; 3:9-11).

These letters talk about the pastors of today. In these verses, Paul uses the Greek word *presbuteros*; a word which means elder, or old or older men (although it is also translated as older women). Our English word presbyter or Presbyterian comes from this Greek word. In 1 Timothy 3:1, 2, Paul used the word *episkopos*. The King James translates this as bishop while the NASB and NIV translate it as overseer. Overseer is the more literal translation of the word. In the Septuagint, *episkopos* is used in place of a Hebrew word translated in the Old Testament as overseer and carrying the meaning of one to whom something is entrusted, a superintendent (Gen 39:4, 5; 2 Kings 25:19; Neh 11:9, 14, 22; Dan 1:11). As you might have guessed, from this word comes our word episcopal or Episcopalian.

In 1 Timothy 3:8 Paul uses the word *diakonos*. We have moved this word into English as deacon. It carries the meaning of a servant. Such a definition fits the description of the first deacons appointed by the Apostles in Acts 6.

Chapter 2 and the first verses of chapter 3 may be used as a guideline for all preaching and teaching of God's Word. God's Word is not simply the mechanism to lead one to salvation, but it is the guide for a moral life both in the church, in business, and in social contacts. Paul lists the guidance that a preacher should bestow upon his congregation so that they might understand the real point of the Christian.

*11 For the grace of God that bringeth
salvation hath appeared to all men, 12
Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and
worldly lusts, we should live soberly,
righteously, and godly, in this present world; 13
Looking for that blessed hope, and the
glorious appearing of the great God and
our Saviour Jesus Christ, 14 Who gave
himself for us, that he might redeem us
from all iniquity, and purify unto himself*

a peculiar people, zealous of good works. 15 These things speak, and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee.

Titus 2:11-15

As we have been reviewing the New Testament I have tried to point out different doctrines presented in Scripture so that you might better understand the teachings being presented. The Bible is not a textbook of systematic theology. Rather, the writers of Scripture use small pieces of doctrine with the belief that we should be as the Bereans and study God's Word in order to make sense of it. So, statements of doctrine are frequently mixed and if one does not understand the overall sense of the doctrine, the meaning of passages is lost. Consider the following verse from Titus.

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost;

Titus 3:5

Here, Paul talks of works, righteousness, mercy, salvation, regeneration and renewal. We have already discussed many of these, but this passage does present the opportunity to discuss a couple of more.

Regeneration (renewal) is the process of creating a new spirit within us. The word translated "regeneration" is found only twice in the New Testament (Matt 91:28; Titus 3:5). It has been used in ancient classical Greek to refer to the changes produced by the coming of spring. The above passage speaks of a change and renewal involved with the individual at the time of salvation. This is the equivalent of the "new birth" (John 3:5), the turning of all things new making the saved person a new creature (2 Cor 5:17), passing from death to life (1 John 3:14), a renewal of the mind (Rom 12:2); a resurrection from the dead (Eph 2:6); and being quickened (2:1, 5). Scriptures make it clear that regeneration involves the depositing of a new principle in the soul involving a new disposition. This new disposition in a renewal of the spirit in those who were previous dead in their sin. This renewal is the work of God (John 1:12, 13; 1 John 2:29; 5:1, 4). More specifically, it is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Just as the concept of the Trinity is difficult to understand, so, too, concept of *God the Holy Spirit*. Faith demands that we accept this third Person of the Trinity as an integral part of God. Interestingly enough, the Hebrew word *ruah* occurs 379 times in Old Testament, while the Greek word *pneuma* occurs 378 times in the New Testament. Both words are translated as wind, breath, and spirit. These are the words used to name the Holy Spirit. This is the invisible power of God which indwells a person when he accepts Christ as Lord and Savior. It is fitting that one of the uses of the Greek word *pneuma* is to describe the inner spirit of man.

The gift of the Holy Spirit marks the adoption of one into the family of God and occurs at the salvation experience (Acts 8:14-17; 9:17; 10:44ff; 11:15-17; 18:25; 19:2, 6). A review of Scripture will demonstrate that the Holy Spirit possesses the characteristics of a person. At the same time, the Holy Spirit has the powers and essence of God. His work involves the regeneration of man at the time of salvation and then the Spirit becomes the guide of a person's walk in Christ. The use of the term "washing" above brings to mind the thought of water, one of the symbols used for the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures (7:38, 39). Other symbols include fire (Acts 2:3), oil (John 3:34), wind (John 3:8; Acts 2:2), a dove (Matt 3:16), a seal or mark (Eph 1:13; 4:30), and an earnest or deposit (Eph 1:14).

In Old Testaments, the Holy Spirit came upon those persons whom He chose to empower them for a particular service (Exod 28:3; 31:3; Judges 14:6, 19; Sam 23:2). In this wonderful New Testament time, the Spirit indwells each person at the time of salvation as part of the act of regeneration (Rom 8:9-15, 1 Cor 6:19; Gal 4:6; 1 John 2:27).

Are you ready to pay the price to spread God's Word?

Do you feel the presence of the Lord next to you providing you with strength?

When was the last time the Lord delivered you from evil?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Philemon

Key Verse(s):

5-18

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Oneness
Forgiveness
Love
Imputation
Substitution
Reconciliation

Consider:

What is the picture of Christ in this letter?

Why is such a short letter included in the Holy Scriptures?

Does this letter argue against slavery?

Philemon

This is the last of the Prison Epistles and is unique in its nature. It is also full of practical application of all that Paul teaches and clearly deserves to sit in the position it occupies as the last of the clearly Pauline epistles in the Bible. Paul's authorship is not questioned. The people in this letter bear a close resemblance to the people of Colossians (1,10,22-24 with those in Colossians 4:7-17) and seems to fall into the same time period as that letter, being written from Rome in A.D. 61.

This is one of the shortest books in the New Testament. There are five books in the Bible which are only one chapter long. Can you name them?

Theme, Purpose and Outline

Death was the normal punishment for a runaway slave. Onesimus stole from his master, Philemon, then ran for his life – right into the waiting arms of Paul who immediately led him to Christ (v10). Paul writes this letter of intercession for Onesimus to Philemon so that each of them may learn what it means to “*live in Christ.*” The letter becomes a picture of the conversion process and how this dramatic change should be reflected in our lives. If we were living in the unsaved, pagan world, we would view the theme of this letter as “put that on my tab.” Paul's point to Philemon is exactly that, put Onesimus on my account.

This letter is about the results of *forgiveness*. In simple terms, forgiveness means forgetting something bad that has occurred. In the New Testament, two Greek words are translated as forgiveness. One bears the thought of dealing graciously with someone. The other bears the thought of letting loose of something, of sending the “thing” away. It is a remission or release of a wrong. In theological terms, forgiveness is the act of a gracious and loving God releasing our sins. It is a concept deeply tied to the price Christ paid on the Cross (Mark 1:4, Luke :24:47; Acts 2:38; 10:43; James 5:15; 1 John 1:9).

*I Paul have written it with mine own hand,
I will repay it: albeit I do not say to thee how
thou owest unto me even thine own self besides.*

Philemon 19

Salutation

In verses 1-3 Paul sends his greetings to Philemon and his family, who live in Colosse. Paul’s description of Philemon as “*our dearly beloved, and fellowlabourer*” (v1) makes it clear that Philemon is part of the household of God.

All of Paul’s letters start with “*grace and peace.*” Have you noticed that as we have reviewed the epistles?

Grace – God’s free and undeserved kindness toward sinners.

Peace - A state of well being or wholeness as in a restored relationship, potentially with God and with fellow humans.

Some of the other epistles (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2; and Titus 1:4) add *mercy* to the equation. *Mercy* is compassion for the miserable. It is God viewing sinful man as being miserable and allowing Christ to offer Himself as our atoning sacrifice.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

Our attitude for prayer is reflected in Paul’s attitude toward his fellow brother in Christ.

*I thank my God, making mention of thee
always in my prayers,*

Philemon 4

Is this the way you pray?

Verses 4-7 set forth Paul's praise for the letters recipient.

Paul commends Philemon's efforts.

Appeal for Onesimus

Paul now turns to the reason for this particular letter. He remains ever the diplomat (v8), appealing to "love," his eldership ("*Paul the aged*"), and to his being a "*prisoner of Jesus Christ*" (v9). Paul then issues his intercession for Onesimus. Paul calls him "*my son . . . begotten in my bonds*" (v10). Onesimus has been redeemed. Onesimus has become a brother in Christ just like Philemon. This conversion now makes Onesimus profitable to both Paul and Philemon, so Paul is sending the slave back to his master (v11-12). While Paul would have preferred having Onesimus stay and help the Apostle in Rome, since Philemon is the master, Onesimus' fate is in the hands of Philemon (v13-14).

The last two verses of this section emphasize the fact that Onesimus returns to Philemon a new creation, a brother in Christ. This changes the relationship between the two. Paul teaches in Ephesians that we all should be submissive one to the other.

*Submitting yourselves one to another in
the fear of God.*

Ephesians 5:21

This is the new relationship to which Paul speaks.

The Apostle's Assurance and Pledge

It is not enough in Paul's mind to recommend to Philemon the changed relationship between master and servant. Paul now describes the concepts of imputation and substitution in terms of the personal relationship of Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus.

The idea behind *imputation* is simple. Someone has done something and the result, good or bad, is counted to your account. Romans 5:12-21 is the great discourse on this doctrine. Adam sinned and the whole world became sinful. Christ gave Himself on the Cross so that all who would accept Him are counted as righteous. Thus, Christ became our *substitute* for the punishment for our sins so that we could be counted as *righteous* (having a right standing with God) because Christ is righteous.

This is the argument of Paul in the concluding verses. Only, instead of relying upon Christ and the less earthly concepts of forgiveness and imputation, Paul demands that Philemon use Paul as Onesimus' substitution for the debt owed by slave to master (v17-19). Paul's argument is the argument of universal forgiveness of one Christian brother to another. In fact, Paul anticipates the joy of celebrating with them both, because the Apostle expects Philemon to be more generous than this (v20-21).

*Having confidence in thy obedience I
wrote unto thee, knowing that thou wilt also do
more than I say.*

Philemon 21

The letter closes with an assumption on the part of Paul that Philemon will receive Onesimus and the letter in the same spirit with which Paul has written. Paul sends his greetings and expects Philemon to lodge him when the Apostle is freed from his bonds and returns to Colosse (v22-25).

Notice that Paul calls on Philemon to make a choice. God has provided man with a *free will*, the ability to make choices between good and evil. God does not force choices upon us, but every choice we make is a choice **for or against God**.

Special Considerations

Please note that Paul's assumption is that the love of Christ will correct and cure social issues. Paul does not legislate a result nor does he ever address the issue of

slavery. What Paul teaches is the value of a person and the value we should hold one-to-another as brothers and sisters in Christ. This letter provides an example of the transformation of society into Christ's image. The example deals with masters and slaves. There is a firm example of what sacrificial love and forgiveness look like in real life. If Christ can forgive each of us after we caused Him to die on the Cross, why can we not be loving and forgiving as Paul has asked Philemon to be?

Using portions of the epistles of Paul, we all need to be mindful of the fact that:

- † We all, including masters, have a "master in heaven"
- † We are slaves in "serving Christ"
- † God is not a respecter of persons and God deals impartially with all, including master and slave
- † We are all bond-servants of Christ
- † The earthly relationships may not disappear, but brothers in Christ must act based upon this newer relationship of unity

Review these Scriptures and see if you can identify the above points:

- † Colossians 3:18-4:1
- † Ephesians 6:5-9
- † 1 Corinthians 7:21-23
- † 1 Timothy 6:1-2
- † Titus 2:9-10
- † 1 Peter 2:18-21

Would this letter and its argument have been effective if Philemon were not saved?

Why?

Onesimus's name means "useful" or "profitable" in the Greek. Was he useful?

Could your name be Onesimus?

Ignatius, one of the early church fathers, refers to Onesimus as the bishop of Ephesus. If this is true, what a fitting tribute to Paul, Philemon, Onesimus, and the **power of God, which can change anyone into a new creature in Christ!**

The five one chapter books of the Bible are:

- † From the Old Testament, Obadiah
- † From the New Testament, Philemon, 2 & 3 John, and Jude

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Hebrews

Key Verse(s):

1:1-4

2:1-4

4:12-16

10:14

11:1, 6

12:1-2

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 1

Chapter 11

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Warnings

Faith

Maturity

Better

Perfect

Consider:

Whom do you think the author is?

What makes you think this?

What is the key ingredient to be included in chapter 11?

How is Jesus presented?

There are five warnings in this book. There is also one implied warning.

Can you identify them?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

Chapters 5, 9, 10, 12

Hebrews

If one dreams on the heroes of the Bible, one usually ends up thinking of the Faith Hall of Fame in Hebrews Chapter 11. Here, the author of this book lists the acts of faith which establish entrance to God's Hall of Fame.

Yet, this is the mystery letter of the New Testament. Written more in the form of a sermon, its authorship has remained uncertain through the years. One early church father, Origen (3rd Century), has been quoted as saying "that only God knows who wrote Hebrews." Not much has changed. There is a church tradition that Paul is the author, but as is discussed below, this is far from clear.

*Now faith is the substance of things
hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

Hebrews 11:1

Authorship

This letter does not contain any of the normal salutations and greetings of the other epistles. The first several chapters are written as a thesis or argumentative sermon in favor of the superiority of Christ over the "Old" or Mosaic Covenant of the Law. Its author clearly was Jewish and was writing to a predominately Jewish audience, but beyond this little is known.

More specifically, the following may be deduced from the book:

- † There is no direct reference in the letter to its author
- † There is a great familiarity with the Old Testament Scriptures
- † The book displays a knowledge of the practices of the First Century Jews, including the then popular forms of hermeneutics (methods of interpretation).

But, knowing all of this, where are we left? The historical tradition of Paul as the author has several factors against it when this letter is compared to the remainder of the Pauline epistles. These include:

- † No mention of Paul's authorship. If Paul wrote this letter, it would be the only one in which he did not mention his name, his apostolic authority, or his own spiritual experience.
- † The Greek language and style are much different in this letter than in any of the Pauline epistles. Paul's writing is abrupt while this letter resembles classical Greek.
- † While Paul always places his emphasis on the Resurrection, this letter deals with the exaltation of Christ and His High Priesthood. The Priesthood of Christ is not a factor emphasized by Paul in his other letters.
- † The author seems to have received his information from others while Paul received his directly from Christ (Gal 1, 2). Thus, the author of Hebrews appears to be outside the apostolic circle.

What are the options? Barnabas, Luke, Clement of Rome, Silas (Silvanus), Apollos, Phillip, and Jude have all been mentioned as possible authors by the church fathers.

The most intriguing suggestion is that of Priscilla. In the ancient world, anonymity for a female writer would have been required. She was a friend of Paul's, helped to instruct Apollos, was Jewish, and women are included in the Faith Hall of Fame in Chapter 11. She would have been acquainted with those addressed at the end of the letter. Such a result would certainly fit with my view of God's sense of humor. But, none of these factors, nor any of the factors for the other suggested authors is determinative.

In the end we are left with Origen's comments. The author is unknown.

Date

Hebrews is known and cited by Clement of Rome in about A.D. 95, so this is easily the outside date for the epistle. Other facts which suggest an even earlier date include the lack of mention of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (A.D. 70). Since this letter is about the superiority of Christ over the Law and its rituals, it would be remarkable if the Temple had already been destroyed and the author did not make use of this factor in his arguments.

In addition, the inference can be drawn that the author writes at a time when the sacrificial system is still in operation (8:4, 13; 9:6-9; 10:1-3). This, too, must be before the destruction of the Temple (13:23). In addition, Hebrews 13:23 implies that Timothy is still alive.

This all suggests a date of no later than A.D. 68/69.

The Audience

As indicated above, the recipients of this letter were certainly Jewish. The epistle quotes frequently from the Old Testament and its discourse presumes a good knowledge of Old Testament law and history. What is unclear is the location and make-up of this audience.

Several suggestions exist. They may have been Hellenistic Jews, for all of the quotes of the Old Testament come from the Septuagint. However, the Septuagint was widely used at this time, so this factor is not determinative. Other possible locations include North Africa, Cyprus, Rome, or Palestine.

One of the main interpretive issues of the book is the language found in Hebrews 6:4-6. One's view on how to interpret this passage goes a long way toward defining whether the audience addressed is that of believers or is a mixed group of both believers and non-believers. Hebrews is noted for a series of five warning sections (2:1-4; 3:7-4;3; 5:11-6:20; 10:26-39; 12:15-29), all of which are directed at the need not to stray from Christ. If the group being addressed is a mixed audience, then the warnings are designed to show that backsliding into the law proves they were never saved (2:3; 3:12-14; 4:1; 10:25, 26, 29). If the audience is one of believers, the purpose of the warnings is similar to that in such books as Galatians and is a call to refrain from putting on the bondage of Judaism (3:1; 4:6; 5:12; 6:4; 10:19, 32; 12:7; 13:1, 20-22). It is, then, a call to repentance for one's sin (1 John 1:9).

While all of this may help to determine the makeup of the audience, it does little to tell us where they are or who is writing to them.

Theme and Purpose

For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

Hebrews 10:14

Hebrews is one of the most positive and uplifting books of the New Testament. It is an exhortation of encouragement for the recipients of the letter to endure and advance in their maturity in Christ – to grow in faith (13:22).

But, as indicated above, it is also a warning to them of the dangers of falling back into the rituals of the law. In this sense, the argument is the same as Galatians and Colossians. The recipients should be aware that the power of Christ, which is governed by faith, is much more powerful than the rituals of the old priesthood. Christ is superior in all ways and the author wants the people to know and understand this. The concept of Christ as the “better” is repeated again and again in the epistle (1:4;6:9;7:7, 19, 22; 8:6; 0:23; 10:34; 11:16, 35, 40; 12:24).

LAW

The implied warning is seen in this concept of Jesus being superior to everything that came before Him. The implied warning might be stated as: *This is God’s Son – Listen to Him!*

While the book is about faith, several other issues related to Christ are dealt with and touched upon. These include the Incarnation, Christ’s substitutionary death, the relationship between the Old and New Covenants, and the interpretation of the Old Testament in light of the New Testament.

A review of this book shows that Jesus is viewed as being superior:

- † In His Person
- † In His New Covenant
- † In our life in Him
- † As compared to the prophets
- † As compared to the angels

- † As compared to the Moses
- † As compared to the Joshua
- † As compared to the Moses
- † As compared to the Levitical priesthood (Aaron)

But, mostly, Hebrews is a book about *faith*. This is the faith called for in all of Scripture. It is the faith to first TRUST IN GOD and then to ACT ON THIS TRUST. The King James uses the word faith 32 times in this book, while the NIV uses it 35 times.

FAITH

But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

Hebrews 11:6

Outline

- VII. Jesus Christ the Son is God's revelation - Chp 1
- VIII. The role of Christ in Salvation - 2:1-9
- IX. Christ the High Priest - 2:10-18
- X. Christ is superior to Moses - 3:1-6
- XI. The discussion of the disobedient Jewish generation - 3:7-19
- XII. Rest as the promise - 4:1-13
- XIII. Christ is the way to God - 4:14-5:14
- XIV. Warning against apostasy - 6:1-12
- XV. God's oath is unchanging - 6:13-20
- XVI. Priesthood of Melchizedek - 7:1-14
- XVII. Priesthood of Christ is superior - 7:15-28
- XVIII. The New Covenant is superior - Chp 8
- XIX. A discussion of the temporary Levitical sacrifices - 9:1-22
- XX. Christ's sacrifice is superior - 9:23-10:39
- XXI. Faith and its examples - Chp 11
- XXII. Christ is our better example - 12:1-11

XXIII. Endurance is the demand - 12:12-29

XXIV. Warnings and requests - Chp 13

We find Melchizedek (also spelled Melchizedec) in Genesis 14, in the story of Abraham's victory over several kings who attacked Sodom and Gomorrah and carried Lot into captivity. Abraham successfully rescued Lot. As the patriarch was returning home, Melchizedek comes out to greet Abraham with bread and wine. He is described as the "*priest of the most high God*" (Gen 14:18). Melchizedek blesses Abraham and Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek. Melchizedek means "king of righteousness" in Hebrew. He is described as the king of Salem. Salem means "peace" in Hebrew. So, he is peace and righteousness. In Scripture his parents are not given, so the author of Hebrews can use Melchizedek as a picture or type of Christ.

How do you show your faith?

Could you be included in the listings of Chapter 11?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

James

Key Verse(s):

1:2-5

1:19-27

2:14-17

4:7

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 1

Chapter 4

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Faith

Obedience

Wisdom

Testing

Consider:

Who is the author?

Who is the audience?

Does James conflict with Paul?

How is Jesus presented?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

All five chapters

James

True religion is both a moral religion and a social religion. This letter is a compact guide on practical religion – the Proverbs of the New Testament – a study on how to live in the kingdom. Its primary theme is *spiritual maturity*, growth in God’s Word, not in age. It is a book about the process of sanctification.

*And you will find you have become men
of mature character with the right sort of
independence.*

James 1:4b, Phillips¹⁰

This is a book characterized by its hard-hitting, practical religion. The epistle reads like a sermon and, except for a brief introduction, has none of the traits of an ancient letter. Each of the five chapters is packed with pointed illustrations and reminders designed to motivate the wills and hearts of believers to grasp a truth once taught by Jesus: “*A tree is known by its fruit*” (Matt. 12:33).

Date

The Epistle of James gives few hints by which it might be dated. Estimates range from A.D. 45 to 150, depending on how one regards its authorship. If James, the Lord’s brother, is its author, then it must have been written before A.D. 62 (the approximate time of his death). The epistle may have been written after Paul’s letters were in circulation, because James’ emphasis on works may be intended to offset Paul’s emphasis on faith. This would date the epistle around A.D. 60. But

¹⁰J.B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English*, New York, The MacMillan Company, 1958, 1959, 1960.

because of the strong reliance upon the “theology” of Christ, particularly the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7), it is more likely that the letter dates to around A.D. 45 making it the first of the epistles to be written. James lives in a period when the sayings of Christ are “in the air” so they do not need to be quoted.

The Author

James is the Greek form of the Hebrew Jacob meaning *supplanter*. The epistle is “Jewish” in its arguments and approach. It is a letter from an early Christian Jew.

The letter is written by one who is an able master of *Koine* Greek. There is an abundance of unusual New Testament words in the letter. Of the 63 word which make their first appearance in the New Testament, 13 are in James.

Who is James?

There are some “scholars” who see the letter written much later in time, thus, doubting it is written by any of the “James” of the Bible. The choices are:

- † **James, the son of Zebedee, John’s brother** -- James is never mentioned apart from his brother John in the New Testament, even at his death (Acts 12:2). This occurred relatively soon after the death of Stephen so it is impossible for him to be the writer.
- † **James the Less** – son of Alphaeus, his mother was Mary wife of Cleopas. This James is a little known Apostle without any recorded leadership roles. Tradition is that he is the brother of Matthew and Salome who was the wife of Zebedee. One tradition says that he looked like Jesus and was a Nazarite.
- † **James the father of Judas the apostle** Luke 6:16 is otherwise unknown
- † **James the brother of Christ** – known as **James the Just**

Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not his mother called Mary? And his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas [Jude]?

Matthew 13:55

In the third and fourth centuries A.D., when the idea of the perpetual virginity of Mary gained ground, a number of church fathers argued that James was either a stepbrother to Jesus (by a former marriage of Joseph) or a cousin. But both options are forced. The New Testament records that Mary and Joseph bore children after Jesus (Matt. 1:25; 12:47; Luke 2:7; John 2:12; Acts 1:14) and that the second oldest was James (Matt. 13:55–56; Mark 6:3). The Gospels reveal that Jesus' family adopted a skeptical attitude toward His ministry (Matt. 12:46–50; Mark 3:31–35; Luke 8:19–21; John 7:5). James apparently held the same attitude, because his name appears in none of the lists of the apostles, nor is he mentioned elsewhere in the Gospels.

An unbeliever during the days of Christ's earthly ministry (John 7:5), James saw the risen Lord (1 Cor 15:7). James emerged as a leader of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:13; Gal 1:19). This James is probably the author of the Epistle of James in the New Testament.

The most important argument against authorship by the Lord's brother is that the Epistle of James was virtually unknown in the ancient church until the third century. It remains an unsolved mystery why it was neglected and then accepted into the New Testament Canon at a relatively late date if James, the Lord's brother, were its author. Although this consideration cannot be overlooked, it does not overrule the Lord's brother as the most probable author of the epistle.

Early tradition says James was a man of great prayer. The nickname for him which is preserved by history is "Old Camel Knees."

The Audience

- † Christians who had converted since Christ's death
- † Believers who converted on the Day of Pentecost
- † Believers of Jerusalem scattered abroad

"Brethren" is used 19 times clearly showing that James wrote to Christians. This is an important conclusion when one attempts to interpret some of the teachings of this book. It is a letter written to those who have already found salvation!

Theme

*But be ye doers of the word, and not
hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*

James 1:22

Many do not see James as having a unified theme. But, there is an pattern to James with themes covered and then returned to –

- † A testing
- † B wisdom
- † C wealth
- † Then the reverse, C, B, A

The author sees the church standing at the end of history with the return of Christ occurring before the end of the apostolic age. While this did not occur, it does not detract from the wonderful teachings of the book. His teachings are rich in the ethical application of one's faith.

FAITH

The word *faith* occurs 16 times in this short letter and is the overriding theme. This faith is manifest in a variety of ways as James outlines in this epistle.

A simplified outline of the book plays on this theme of one's walk in the Spirit.

- † The believer will have trials - 1:1-18
- † This should produce a genuineness of faith - 1:19-27
- † But there will be obstacles - 2:1-5:6
- † As well as challenges - 5:7-20

Special Considerations.

Interestingly, this letter has had a disputed history. Luther denied the place of James in the Canon, calling it a "right strawy epistle." Calvin, too, felt James conflicted with Paul and, thus, denied its usefulness. The resolution to the "conflict" between James and Paul is to understand the audiences and the purposes of writing. The issue is on the application of justification. Paul's emphasis is on the cause of justification while James speaks to its affects.

Some Bible scholars suggest that James and Paul differ in their views on the saving significance of faith and works. Paul states, “*A man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law*” (Rom. 3:28), and James says, “*A man is justified by works, and not by faith only*” (James 2:19). A closer reading of the two, however, reveals that they differ more in their definition of faith than in its essence. James writes to readers who are inclined to interpret faith as mere intellectual acknowledgment (James 2:19). As a consequence he stresses that a faith that does not affect life is not saving faith; hence, his emphasis on works. Actually, this is quite close to Paul’s understanding. For Paul, faith is the entrusting of one’s whole life to God through Christ, with the result that one’s life becomes renewed with the “*fruit of the Spirit*” (Gal. 5:22).

Paul’s justification is one before God. James’ justification is one before men. Paul, then, stresses the root of justification while James stresses the fruit. For James, faith should produce spiritual growth and maturity. Such growth is what the Bible calls *sanctification*. Such growth produces the fruits of good works. Such growth comes from a submission to God.

*7 Submit yourselves therefore to God.
Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8
Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to
you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify
your hearts, ye double minded.*

James 4:7, 8

Outline

- I. Introduction - 1:1
- II. Patience in Temptation - 1:2-18
- III. The test and conduct of true religion - 1:19-27
- IV. True faith is impartial - 2:1-13
- V. True faith is evidenced by works - 2:14-26
- VI. True faith is evidence by words - 3:1-12
- VII. The difference between true and false wisdom - 3:13-18
- VIII. Friendship and humility - 4:1-10
- IX. Slander and false confidence - 4:11-17
- X. Miseries of the rich - 5:1-6
- XI. Patience of the saints - 5:7-12
- XII. Prayer and confession - 5:13-20

There is a definite similarity between James and the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

James and Jesus A Comparison of the Epistle and the Sermon on the Mount

1:2,12;5:10	Adversity	
1:5;4:3;5:13-18	Prayer	
1:8;4:8	The single eye	5:10-12
1:10,11;2:6,7	Wealth	6:6-13;7:7-12
1:19,20;4:1	Wrath	6:22,23
1:25;2:1,12,13	The Law	6:19-21,24-34
1:26,27	Mere profession	5:22
2:8	The Royal Law	5:17-44
2:13	Mercy	6:1-18
2:14-26	Faith & works	7:12
3:13	True wisdom	5:7
3:11,12	Root & fruit	7:15-27
3:17,18	Peacemakers	7:24
4:11,12	Judging others	7:16-20
5:2	Rusted treasures	5:9
5:12	Oaths	7:1-5
		6:19
		5:33-37

There are other, more general parallels which have been identified between James and both the gospels of Matthew and Luke. Can you find them?

Do people know you are a Christian?
How do they know this?

Are you a doer of the Word?

Can a local church have dead faith?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

First Peter

Key Verse(s):

1:3-7

1:14-21

2:9

3:15-17

4:12, 13

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 1

Chapter 4

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Suffering

Persecution

Hope

Endurance

Consider:

Is there a key theme to the book?

How is Jesus presented?

Why do you suppose there is so much emphasis on suffering?

First Peter

For people under persecution, this is the letter of the Bible which speaks to hope and endurance. Although written in the form of a letter, Peter's epistle takes on the tone of a sermon, setting forth an exhortation backed by Scripture to encourage those under attack. As with Paul's letters, 1 Peter links the closeness of doctrine, ethical practice, and practical application (5:12).

Theme and Purpose

*For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should **follow his steps**:*

1 Peter 2:21

Jesus Christ is the example for us all, so Peter exhorts his readers to follow in Christ's footsteps (2:21ff). Christ suffered patiently through His trials. So, too, does Peter call upon the Christian to suffer persecution and trials in the same manner. Believers should live in the world by keeping in mind their high calling in Christ. This high calling is displayed by staying in touch with and maintaining a good reputation amongst the Gentiles (2:12) while retaining the unity or one accord expected of the Christian community (2:18). This community must stick together and help each other through times of trial and persecution (4:7-18; 5:1-2).

Just as James has a heavy emphasis on faith, some form of the word "suffer" is found 16 times in this letter. Notice also that each chapter has some reference to suffering (1:6, 7; 2:21-25; 3:13-17; 4:12-19; 5:10).

At the same time, Peter, in step with all of the New Testament, sets his exhortation in the context of the *eschatological* hope of deliverance and blessings promised to those who walk in faith (1:3-12).

Remember *eschatology* is the study of end times -- eternity. Those who endure are promised eternity with Christ!

This epistle was mostly likely written as a “circular” letter intended to be circulated and read in all the churches in the areas of northern Asia minor (modern Turkey) (1:1). In eschatological terms, the *chosen* are clearly all people, whether Jew or Gentile, who have come to Christ by faith. These are the people of God. In this letter, the details of the “former life” (1:14, 18; 2:9, 11; 4:3, 4) tend to suggest the audience is much more Gentile than Jewish in origin. Still, in Peter’s mind the mixed congregation are all children of God, and are to live their lives accordingly. The church is God’s elect and chosen people.

*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal
priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;
that ye should shew forth the praises of him who
hath called you out of darkness into his
marvellous light:*

1 Peter 2:9

The concept of being “*chosen*” or being the “*elect*” is a difficult one for all Christians, not just the theologians. It is one of the doctrines which separate many of the denominations in Christianity. Back in 1:20 we also find Peter using the word “*foreordained*” which is also “*foreknowledge*” in 1:2. “*Predestination*” is the third part of this trio. The proper order of understanding is foreknowledge, election, and predestination. The foreknowledge of God determines the election. That is, the foreknown are the elect. The elect are those who by their own free will have chosen Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. The elect are predestined to spend eternity with God. This election is certain and positive for every person who believes in Christ by the mere fact and action of this belief (Rom 8:28, 29).

Notice, too, that the letter is written to those who had not physically seen Jesus (1:8). This may suggest they were new converts (1:22; 2:2). Peter is very concerned that they not fail in their faith before it has taken root and grown.

Author and Date

There is no dispute over the fact that Peter, the great Apostle, is the author of this letter. He is, perhaps, the best known of the Apostles. His name appears in the New Testament more than 150 times. He is the prominent figure in the first half of Acts, being the Apostle to the Jewish nation (Gal 2:8). Peter was married (Mark 1:29-31) and apparently took his wife with him on his evangelistic travels (1 Cor 9:8).

The letter was written from "Babylon" (5:13), Peter's cryptic name for Rome (Rev. 14:8; 17:5, 18). Taking this as true, with all of the discussion about persecution, this epistle must have been written during Nero's reign at the time he placed the blame on the Christians for the burning of Rome.

Note, however, that even in the midst of persecution, Peter still has a strong emphasis on the Christian's duty to support the state (2:13-17). A community under persecution would have great difficulty with this concept and such an emotional position may account for Peter's inclusion of this vital point in his exhortation. Nero's persecution began around A.D. 64. Peter's death occurred in A.D. 67, this sets the time frame for the writing of this letter.

Why honor the corrupt leaders? One of the themes of this letter is the need for believers to display their Christianity, not just in the home (Chp 3) but also in society (Chp 2). This display, at its height, may be display by honoring the king, regardless of what one may actually think of him. Is this not "*loving your enemy*" (Matt 5:44)?

Special Considerations

Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous:

1 Peter 3:8

Peter's exhortations and desires for the church are that it remains steadfast in the faith and practice what Christ preached. Around the turn of the century (1900!), Charles Sheldon wrote, *In His Steps*. This novel is about a pastor who challenged his congregation to always ask a single question before undertaking any new venture or making any decisions. The story is about several of the church members and how this challenge changed their lives. The question? "*What would Jesus do?*"

This is the point of Peter's discussion, yet, there is more to this epistle than just the challenge to ask this question. Peter envisions a church which walks in unison to this question all the time. This is being "*of one mind.*" Doesn't this sound familiar? The theme of unity of the body runs throughout Acts, then is frequently found in Paul's letters. Now, here Peter discusses the same concept. Why is this?

As we said at the beginning of our study, the Bible is a book of progressive revelation showing a unity of structure and content. The goal of the entire study is to bring man to God and then teach man how to live with God. We are God's unique people, a people called out to live according to the love of God. A people called to be holy!

*But ye are a chosen generation, a royal
priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people;
that ye should shew forth the praises of him who
hath called you out of darkness into his
marvellous light:*

1 Peter 2:9

A comment should be made about **1 Peter 3:18-22**.

*18 For Christ also hath once suffered for
sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring
us to God, being **put to death** in the flesh, but
quickenened by the Spirit: 19 **By which also he
went and preached unto the spirits in prison;**
20 Which sometime were disobedient,
when once the longsuffering of God
waited in the days of Noah, while the ark
was a preparing, wherein few, that is,
eight souls were saved by water. 21 The
like figure whereunto even baptism doth
also now save us (not the putting away of
the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a
good conscience toward God,) by the*

resurrection of Jesus Christ: 22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

This is, perhaps, one of the most difficult passages of Scripture which exists in the entire Bible. What exactly does it mean that after His death, Jesus went and preached to those spirits in prison? Some feel that this verse indicates that Christ went to Hell, for that is where the spirits exist in prison. But, did Jesus go to Hell? The answer actually depends upon the perspective of the question. Notice the order of the verse:

- † Put to death in the flesh
- † Quickened or made a live in the Spirit
- † Preached to those spirits in prison

That the spirits in prison are in Hell is deduced from the first part of v20, where the disobedient souls in the time of Noah are discussed. Since all but Noah and his family perished as unbelievers, these are clearly spirits in the prison of Hell. Since Christ went to these spirits in the Spirit, His work on the Cross was accomplished. Jesus went to proclaim the completion of redemption. He went to proclaim the Good News of the forth coming Resurrection! This trip to Hell set forth the doom in torment of the unbelievers and the glory of the believers in Paradise.

Outline

- I. Introduction and greeting - 1:1, 2
- II. The Risen Christ - 1:3-12
- III. Live a Holy Life - 1:13-2:12
- IV. Christian Submission - 2:13-20
- V. Christ is our great example - 2:21-25
- VI. Husbands and wives - 3:1-7
- VII. Christian conduct - 3:8-4:11
- VIII. Suffering for your faith - 4:12-19
- IX. Life in God's care - 5:1-11
- X. Benediction - 5:12-14

*The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: 2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a **crown of glory** that fadeth not away.*

1 Peter 5:2-4

Amidst this letter of hope through suffering, Peter provides the promise of a grand prize, the crown of glory. This crown is promised to the elders, the faithful teachers and preachers of the church. But there are other crowns listed in Scripture.

- † There is an incorruptible crown received for conquering the old nature (1 Cor 9:25-27).
- † There is a crown of rejoicing, which some view as a soul winners crown, although that term is not specifically mentioned in connection with this crown (1 Thess 2:19).
- † There is the crown of life (James 1:12; Rev 2:10) which all receive who come to Christ, for all who have believed on Him.
- † There is a crown of righteousness (2 Tim 4:8), a crown given to all who love the appearance of the Lord.

Notice that these crowns will all be cast at the feet of Christ when the Rapture comes (Rev 4:10).

How do you live your life in the face of persecution and suffering?

Where do you turn when you suffer?

Have you been persecuted for your faith?
How did you respond?

How does Peter's concern for the "kings" affect your view of politics?

There is another of those examples of the progression of God's revelation found in **1 Peter 5:2-4**:

*2 Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; 3 Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. 4 And when the **chief Shepherd** shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.*

- † Jesus calls Himself the *good Shepherd* (John 10:11, 14)
- † Hebrews calls Jesus the *great Shepherd* (Heb 13:20)
- † Peter calls Christ the *Shepherd and Bishop of your souls* (2:25) and the *chief Shepherd* (5:4).

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Second Peter

Key Verse(s):

1:3

1:20, 21

3:8-11

Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 1

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

False Teachers

End Times

Endurance

Hope

Consider:

Who is the audience?

How do 1st and 2nd Peter “fit” together?

Is there a key theme to the book?

How is Jesus presented?

Second Peter

While 1 Peter is universally accepted as the work of the Apostle, this second epistle has caused great controversy through the centuries. Although the very early church fathers accepted and quoted from this epistle, later church fathers questioned it belonging to Scripture. Second Peter was disputed by the early compilers of Canon and the early church councils.

Internal evidence is used to argue that the style of writing is so much different from 1 Peter that the two letters could not possibly have shared the same author. Further, many feel 2 Peter is borrowed from Jude. However, there is little practical evidence that Jude was written before 2 Peter, so this point is of no value. Many of the second century church fathers rejected the epistle as genuine because of the heavy emphasis on the Second Coming, an event which obviously had not taken part.

Critics also argue about the literary style difference between the two letters. Notice, however, that Silvanus apparently acted as secretary for 1 Peter (1 Peter 5:12), but the Apostle seems to have written this second letter himself. This could certainly account for the difference.

Still, the letter states it is from Peter, the church fathers in general have accepted it, and the Councils of the church brought the letter into the Canon. One must remember that many of the letters received less circulation than others. Although a true split would not occur for several centuries, there were many differences of opinion between the church in the West (Rome) and the church in the East (Turkey) over the status of many letters. This helps to create the confusion which seems to exist in the history of the Canon.

The church in the East is what is now known as the Greek Orthodox Church.

Date

It would appear that 2 Peter 3:1 refers to 1 Peter. If Peter is martyred by Nero in A.D. 67/68, this letter must be dated close to that time (2 Peter 1:12-15).

Theme and Purpose

Second Peter is really a continuation of 1 Peter. The Apostle desires to exhort the believers to remain true to their faith and to endure persecution and hardship. There is a further warning against false teachers. Peter realizes that his death is near (1:12-15). The Christian community still faces grave danger, both from without and within (1:13-14; 2:1-22). Peter uses the basis of one's faith as the cornerstone on which to build this endurance (1:12-13,16-21). The apostolic tradition is important in this context for it sets forth the basis of this faith (1:15).

Much has been made by the cults of the concept of the *apostolic tradition*. The cults argue that Paul has created Christianity, a religion very different from that preached by Jesus. The Apostles are created with being the fathers of today's church. What must be understood is that the teachings of the Apostles are all directly tied into the teachings of Christ. Jesus set forth the rules. The Apostles wrote the handbook for life based upon these principles. There may be expansion in many places, but the Apostles understood that theirs was the appointed task of spreading the Gospel message. Indeed, Peter calls Paul's writings Scripture (2 Pet 3:15, 16). Peter's statements in this letter (1:19-21) explain the process of *inspiration* in the preparation of the Bible. The Apostles understood their position in the Kingdom.

We all know that parts of Scripture are hard to understand. Peter acknowledged this in speaking of Paul's writings when the Apostle writes in **3:16**:

As also in all his [Paul's] epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.

Many passages require spiritual growth and maturity before they may be clearly understood (2 Cor 12ff).

Notice Peter's description of false teachers:

- † Posing as Christian leaders - 2:1
- † Teaching falsehoods - 2:2
- † Living immoral lives - 2:10
- † Greedy - 2:3
- † Attracting a crowd - 2:2

These descriptions resemble many of the false teachers of today, don't it?!

Also notice that another of the descriptions of a false teacher is that he is one who despises government. If a Christian is not to live like the world, then he must support government. This helps to explain the emphasis both Peter and Paul place on upholding and honoring government (1 Peter 2:13-17; Rom 13:1-7).

Jude and 2 Peter

Critical scholars have made much over the apparent similarities of Jude and 2 Peter. They have strived hard to find a literary relationship which would allow them to discard part, or all, of, at least, one of the two books. Of course, it must be remembered that the goal of critical scholars is usually to disagree with God.

Are they similar? 2 Peter 2 and Jude closely parallel each other. Fifteen of Jude's 25 verses appear in 2 Peter. The ideas, words, and phrases seem to be the very similar. At the same time, there are definite distinctions between the two letters. Second Peter is much longer. The false teachers are not identical (although similar, as is the case with all false teachers). In fact, the common material is virtually all focused on the issue of false teachers. Here, too, there is a difference. Jude, as we will see, is a letter of denunciation.

As indicated at the beginning of this chapter, those who questioned 2 Peter place Jude as the earlier letter. There is insufficient evidence to reach such a determination. This involves assumptions such as the fact that the shorter letter or passage is usually first in time. The critics also use Jude's spontaneity and tone as

evidence that he wrote first. The arguments in favor of 2 Peter usually follow along the lines that it is more likely that a non-Apostle would borrow from an Apostle than vice versa. And, although the concept of a similar source is possible, this seems not to be an option that has any support.

Obviously, there is no solution to this issue, but one must wonder why it is important. Peter, himself, resolves the issue in his first letter.

19 We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: 20 Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. 21 For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

2 Peter 1:19-21

Outline

- XIII. Christian Graces - 1:1-14
- XIV. Authority of Scripture - 1:15-21
- XV. False Teachers - Chp 2
- XVI. Return of Christ - Chp 3

Do you believe the Bible is the word of God?

If Christ would return tomorrow, are you ready?

What else do you need to do?

Consider Peter's list of Christian Graces:

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue

*knowledge; 6 And to knowledge
temperance; and to temperance
patience; and to patience godliness; 7
And to godliness brotherly kindness; and
to brotherly kindness charity. 8 For if
these things be in you, and abound, they
make you that ye shall neither be barren
nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our
Lord Jesus Christ.*

2 Peter 1:5-8

Doesn't this sound a lot like the fruit of the Spirit?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Jude

Key Verse(s):

vv3-4

v21

vv24-25

Key Chapter(s):

All 25 verses

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Endurance

Love

False Teachers

Contend for the Faith

Consider:

Can you determine the nature of the false teachings?

Is it important that Jude appears to refer to non-biblical material?

Is it important to learn doctrine to be able to contend for the faith?

Jude

This is the only book of the New Testament we will consider out of order. We have already looked at the issue of Jude versus 2 Peter. Let us now look at Jude's epistle while 2 Peter is fresh in our mind, so we might form our own opinion as to the comparison

Jude was the half-brother of our Lord and the brother of James. This is the James who wrote the book bearing his name and was the leader of the Christian church in Jerusalem. There is little question as to the authorship of this book. What criticism did arise came because of an apparent use of the non-canonical book of Enoch and the apparent quoting of Jude in many of the apocryphal books.

It is entirely possible that Jude is one of the itinerant preachers mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:5.

If Jude is the brother of James and our Lord, then the date must fall into what would have been the limits of his life. Jude was the younger brother of Jesus and James (Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55). This does not help much. The discussion of false teachers, when compared to Paul's discussions of false teachers, suggests that the date should fall between A.D. 65 and 85.

It is most likely that Jude is written after 2 Peter. The apostasy Peter sees in the future (2 Peter 2:1), Jude sees in the present (v3, 4). We know from our own lives, it does not take apostasy long to spread, so a date in the mid-70s is probable.

Special Considerations

Does Jude use the apocryphal writings? And if he does, so what?

The following books from the *apocrypha* appear to be used by Jude

- † The Assumption of Moses (v. 9)
- † The Book of Enoch (vv. 6,13,14,15)
- † The Testament of Naphtali (v. 6)
- † The Testament of Asher (v. 8)

It is important to keep in mind that regardless of Jude's sources or usage, he was guided by the Holy Spirit in his selections. Jude does not take these books to be Scripture. He may have relied upon oral tradition or some other source common to both he and the apocryphal writers.

It must be kept in mind, that many works contain some truth. Karl Marx's works on communism contain great truths on the state of society, even if wrong conclusions are drawn from these truths. The Qu'ran, the holy book of Islam, contains many great moral truths, even if its view of God is incorrect. Or, for that matter, what about the books by your favorite Christian author? Don't you read them because they contain some good truths?

As a result, one may certainly quote from a variety of sources so long as one carefully edits the material. Paul did this in Acts 17:28 as well as in Titus 1:12. So if Jude did make use of some of the apocrypha, we must remember that only those portions which actually appear in Scripture are what has been inspired by God.

Theme

Jude starts out to write a letter of encouragement but quickly skips to a warning on false teachers. These men are part of the Christian community (4), but their identity is unclear. What may be gained from the letter is that they misunderstand grace (4a), denied Christ (4b), followed their own dreams (8), misunderstood the doctrine of the Holy Spirit (8,19), criticized doctrine (8), acted outside of God's Will (4,7,16,18), allowed themselves to be ruled by their own passions (8,23), and were focused on personal gain (11, 16).

Thus, Jude writes to warn the community of believers. In so doing, he defends the faith against the false doctrines being imparted by these “anti-christs.” Not only is the warning not to be led astray, but Jude expresses hope for the rescue of those already derailed from their Christian path (23). There is an assurance in this letter that God is in control and Jesus will judge the false teachers.

As with all of the letters, the exhortation is to remain true to the faith. The message is one focusing on **HOW TO LIVE**.

Jude’s closing benediction is one of the finest in all of Scripture.

*24 Now unto him that is able to keep you
from falling, and to present you faultless before
the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, 25
To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and
majesty, dominion and power, both now and
ever. Amen.*

Jude 24,25

This is the key to Jude’s epistle and to all of our Christian walk.

Do you fall into false teachings?

Could it be because you take your eyes off of Christ?

In verse 9, Jude records Michael’s fight with Satan for the body of Moses. Why would Satan want Moses’ body?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

1, 2, & 3 John

Key Verse(s):

1 John 1:5-2:2

1 John 5:11-13

2 John 6-11

3 John 6-8, 11

Key Chapter(s):

1 John Chapter 1

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Fellowship

Abiding

Light / Dark

Sin / lawlessness

Love

Truth

Assurance of Salvation

Commandment

Consider:

How much are these epistles like John's Gospel?

How are they different?

Why three separate letters?

How is Jesus presented?

1, 2, & 3 John

These epistles are grouped together because of their common authorship and general overall theme. The last two letters are very short and much more direct in their purpose than is 1 John.

1 John

From earliest times, the authorship and authority of 1 John have been recognized by the church. The Apostle John is recognized as the author. He writes to an unidentified audience with instructions on how to live the Christian life. His underlying theme is the risk associated with false teachings. These false doctrines are mostly likely those associated with what would become in the second century known as Gnosticism.

John, therefore, writes to urge the recipients to obedience and not to fall into the disobedience which arises from the false teachers. John leads the believers to a true understanding of their relationship with God. This understanding should then lead the believer to a correct application of doctrine, including the ability to distinguish false teachings and ignore them. The Apostle understands the Person and Work of Christ to be the basis for the confidence the believer needs to walk the true path of Christianity.

While it is not possible to identify with any degree of certainty the false doctrines with which John's audience was involved, certain characteristics may be gleaned from the letter. These all lead to the conclusion that early Gnosticism, a mixture of Greek and Jewish thought, were involved. This mixture resulted in a dualism where material things were seen as bad and spiritual things were seen as good. As Gnosticism developed, there were two different paths. The Docetic Gnosticism viewed Christ as a phantom. Christ did not

really take on human form, it only appeared that way. The other, Cerinthian Gnosticism, viewed Jesus as an ordinary person upon whom God “came,” like a piece of clothing, between the time of Christ’s baptism until a short while before the Cross. Under this approach, only the human was Crucified.

The letter should, then, be dated in line with these developments, somewhere around A.D. 85-95.

Theme

All of John’s writings express the same purpose:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

John 20:31

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.

1 John 5:13

Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter;

Revelation 1:19

Special Considerations of 1 John

As with the Gospel, the Apostle makes great use of contrasts in this letter, especially of light and darkness. For John there are only two choices of life. One is the choice for Satan and darkness. The other is a choice for God and light. To John’s mind the proper choice is based upon the concept that “*God is love*” (4:8, 16). This helps the believer to overcome the Devil by the power of the indwelling of God in the believer,

Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.

1 John 4:4

To walk in the light is to understand sin for what it is and God for Who He is. In this manner, one can then understand the desperate need man has to be found by his Savior. John sees sin as being:

- † A principle - 1:8
- † Personal - 1:9
- † A practice - 1:10

In Scripture, *sin* is any separation from God (1 John 3:4). Adam's sin was the sin of disbelief and disobedience. Just as Christ's righteousness has been imputed to the person who believes on Him, Adam's sin is imputed by God to the entire human race. But, Scripture makes it abundantly clear that man is sinful even without the imputation (Rom. 3:1-18; 5:12-21). In both the Greek and Hebrew, a variety of words are used to describe this separation. These include transgression (Ps 51:1; Rom 2:23), iniquity (Rom 1:21-23), error (Rom 1:18; 1 John 3:4), missing the mark (Rom 3:23), trespass (Eph 2:1), lawlessness (1 Tim 1:9), and unbelief (John 16:9). These are not all of the verses where these various terms are used, but the list will give you an idea of the breadth of sin.

For the Christian, 1 John becomes the manual of **HOW TO LIVE**, the Gospel application in a single book based upon love. Not only is it the manual of how to live, it is a treatise on our assurance in Christ. The phrase "*we know*" is used over thirty times in this short book.

Many people accept the concept of *eternal security*, but lose their Christian joy through a failure to understand the *assurance* of their salvation. Scripture teaches that he who has truly accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior has eternal life, an everlasting life that the believer will not lose (John 3:36; 10:28; Rom 5:8, 9; 8:38, 39; Phil 1:6; 1 John 2:17; 4:12; 5:11-13, 20). On the other hand, the assurance of salvation is the stated fact of Scripture that all of these things are true. It is, if you will, a one word statement of John's purpose in writing. Other verses on this assurance would include Psalm 4:3; John 5:24; 17:3; Rom 5:1; 8:16; 8:38, 39; 2 Cor 5:17; 1 John 2:3-6; 4:7, 8; 5:13.

And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

1 John 5:20

Many of the verses, of course, support both principles, since in the end, both eternal security and one's assurance of salvation rest upon the truth of God's Word. But, the two concepts may be separated by thinking of one's security as a fact and one's assurance as a deep feeling or emotion based upon the fact of security.

Outline of 1 John

- † That which we have seen - 1:1-4
- † The test of righteousness - 1:5-2:29
- † Obedience and love - 3:1-10
- † Love in action - 3:11-3:17
- † Test of Belief - 3:18-4:6
- † God is the source of love - 4:7-4:21
- † Faith is through the Son - 5:1-5:12
- † Certainty of Faith - 5:13-21

There is a textual issue with the last chapter of 1 John that demands to be mentioned. **John 5:7, 8** reads as follows, first in the King James, then in the NASB as an example of the modern texts.

*7 For there are three that bear record in heaven, **the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.** 8 **And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.** (KJV)*

7 For there are three that testify: 8 the Spirit and the water and the blood; and the three are in agreement. (NASB)

Notice the bolded words do not appear in the modern text. Many critics use this passage as one of the keystones of arguing the more modern texts water down the Trinity and the Deity of Christ. Two comments must be remembered. First, DO NOT reach any conclusions based upon a single verse. Second, the difference arises from a serious scholarly consideration and effort to reconstruct the original manuscript. Opinions will differ as to whether or not a scribe added these words to strengthen the argument for the Trinity, or if they were the original words of John. We will all know the answers when we get to heaven. And, then, it will not matter much! The key is not verses 6 and 7, but rather the passages in 5:11-15. This is the security and assurance of salvation, and it exists in all of the texts in essentially the same language!

11 And the testimony is this, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. 12 He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life. 13 These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.

1 John 5:11-15, NASB

In the end, John has set forth several tests of the believer's walk with God. The tests all begin comparisons based upon "If we say" or "He that saith." Stated as negatives, these tests are:

- † False fellowship - 1:6
- † False sanctity - 1:8
- † False righteousness - 1:10
- † False allegiance - 2:4
- † False behavior - 2:6
- † False spirituality - 2:9
- † False speech - 4:20

Where do you stack up on this list?

2 John

There is less support for this short letter as coming from the pen of John the Apostle, but in practical terms there are no other alternatives. Like the rest of John's writings, this letter is to be dated in the A.D. 85-95 time frame.

The salutation to "the chosen lady and her children" has raised much speculation over whether the letter is written to an individual or if this is a "code name" for a local church. Either approach may be acceptable. In fact, it may be to a local church which met in the home of the chosen lady.

As with 1 John, the Apostle writes to combat the perils involved in dealing with false teachers. 2 John 7 suggests the false doctrine was a form of Docetic Gnosticism dealing with the dualism of Christ rather than the Christ of Scripture (compare 1 John 2:18-27; 4:1-6). This letter, thus, defends the truth of the Gospel (1-4), clarifies the concept of obedience to Christ and not being indiscriminate in the acceptance of the enemy (5-11). The epistle also carries a message of encouragement to the recipients of the letter (8, 9, 12). This encouragement comes in the form of a plea to doctrinal purity which will lead to the fulfilling of joy in Christ.

8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son.

2 John 8, 9

3 John

This letter, as well, has a disputed past as to authorship, but the similarities to 2 John make it reasonably certain that both have the same author, John the Apostle.

Most, but not all, of the early church fathers agree with this authorship. Again, it would have been written in the A.D. 85-95 time frame.

The letter is written to Gaius, an individual, who appears to be a convert of John's (4). If this is so, there is nothing known about him.

There is a Gaius who accompanies Paul on a portion of the last missionary journey (Acts 19:29). This Gaius may or may not be the same as a Corinthian whom Paul baptized (1 Cor 1:14).

There is some theoretical correlation between the two Gaius. It is possible that John's reference in verse 4 is nothing more than the fatherly kindness of an elder to a leading member of the local church. Paul speaks of those who show hospitality to the whole church body (Rom 16:23). John commends Gaius for his love of strangers (5, 6). This may create a tie between the different remarks, making them all about the same person.

The purpose and issue involved seems to be the practice of supporting and entertaining traveling missionaries and evangelists. Gaius is praised for this type of service to the church (v5-8), as compared to Diotrephes, whom John chastises for failing to do so (9-11). John's letter is written to assure Gaius he has acted correctly and that the Elder will deal with Diotrephes when John visits. The Apostle then recommends Demetrius to Gaius' hospitality in light of the attitude of Diotrephes.

*2 Be not forgetful to entertain strangers:
for thereby some have entertained angels
unawares. 3 Remember them that are in bonds,
as bound with them; and them which suffer
adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.*

Hebrews 13:2,3

Hospitality was an important trait of Old Testament times. So strong was this duty, that the Jews considered it a sin not to be hospitable (cf Gen 19). John's approach is slightly different. A combined reading of 2 and 3 John make it clear that Christians are to exercise discernment in their dealings with others. They are to reach out in hospitality, but if the would-be guests are clearly false teachers, one should conclude John would not invite them to dinner and the theater.

How should we show hospitality today?

Why do all the epistles written deal with a concern for false teachers?

Can you see why people call

Peter the Apostle of Hope
Paul the Apostle of Faith
John the Apostle of Love

<p>FAITH HOPE LOVE</p>

True Faith

In the *General Epistles*

Hebrews presents *Examples of True Faith*

James presents *Works of True Faith*

Peter presents *Suffering for True Faith*

1 John presents *Evidence for True Faith*

2 John presents *Walking Together in True Faith*

2 John presents *Working Together for True Faith*

Jude presents *Contending for True Faith*

How True is your Faith?

LOOKING AHEAD TO . . .

Revelation

Key Verse(s):

1:7

1:19

19:11-16

22:20, 21

Key Chapter(s):

Chapters 2, 3

Chapters 4, 5

Chapters 19-22

Key Word(s) or Concept(s)

Revelation

Victory

Eternity

God's in control

Judgement

Redemption

Kingdom of God

Consider:

Is there a key theme to the book?

How is Jesus presented?

Do you find this book to offer great hope and comfort?

Suggested Reading beyond the Key Chapter(s):

Chapter 7

Chapters 13

Chapter 22

Revelation

We come to the end of our New Testament survey by studying the book which in the past four or five years has raised more interest than any in the Bible. The Revelation or Apocalypse is the story of THE END. With the approach of the new millennium, many soothsayers, prophets, and doomsayers have appeared on the scene with works of terror and mayhem. Some jump on the bandwagon simply to cash in on the public fascination of the next millennium. Others have used situations such as the Y2K computer issue to predict ill-fortune for all.

At the same time, one must remember that Revelation has grabbed the hearts and minds of commentators and the public over the centuries. While Christ assures us no one knows the day nor the hour (Matt 24:36), entire groups come and go and come again based upon predictions of the Second Coming.

In 1818, William Miller, a Baptist minister, confidently taught that Jesus would return between March, 1843 and March, 1844. Needless to say, this did not happen and the Millerites regrouped by proclaiming the belief Christ would return on the 10th day of the seventh month, October 22, 1844. Following the failure of this event, the group basically disbanded. One part of this group developed the theory that Christ had returned to a heavenly sanctuary and was at work judging His people. A second group developed the concept of observing the Sabbath and commenced to worship on Saturday. A third group developed “the testimony of Jesus” which was present in the surviving remnant of the church. This last group was led by James White and his wife Ellen G. White. Between 1855 and 1860

these three groups combined to form the Seventh Day Adventist Church!¹¹

We must remember the eschatological conclusion of history is the great hope of all the New Testament writers. It is the Resurrection which provides the great hope of salvation, but all of Scripture looks forward to the return of the Lord. Remember the progression in the endings of the Gospels? John's ends with the promise of the return of Christ. Luke's Gospel contains the words we should live by in the meanwhile.

And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.

Luke 19:13

The mystery book of the Bible represents this end, the story of the finalization of God's judgment of mankind and the entryway into eternity.

Theme and Purpose

By his own admission, the author writes from the Isle of Patmos, the prison island of Rome. He writes to a church being persecuted, an event that most likely is the reign of the Roman Emperor Domitian. This dates the work at A.D. 95/96, close to the end of John's life. All evidence as to authorship supports the premise that John the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, is the author of this work.

John writes to seven churches in Asia Minor. These churches are in the midst of persecution and the Apostle writes to offer them comfort. This comfort lies in the completion of the prophecies of the Old Testament – the return of God, in the form of His Messiah Jesus Christ, to deal with the enemies of God. The Revelation, then, is not a work of judgment (although it certainly is

¹¹It is to be noted that the basic doctrine of the Seventh Day Adventist is conservative and orthodox. For example, salvation is obtained solely by faith in Christ. It is to be admitted that some of their other doctrines are mixed up or incorrect, but many students of the cults do not consider this group to be a cult. Of course, that also means many do.

this), but rather is a work of great hope and blessing as God completes the plans laid forth throughout Scripture, the gathering of all His people to His bosom for an eternity of great blessings.

This book is the Revelation of Jesus Christ (1:1). Our English title comes from the Latin translation, the Vulgate, *revelatio* which means "to reveal or unveil that which has previously been hidden." This title is essentially the same as the Greek title, *Apokalupsis*, a word which has the same meaning and is found as the first word of the Greek text.

It is at this point that the difficulties begin. No other book of the Bible has produced so many theories of interpretation or controversies of meaning. Four basic schools of thought exist.

- † The Preterist school sees the book as having already been fulfilled by A.D. 312 with the conversion of Constantine. Under this view, most of the judgments are related to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by Titus in A.D. 70.
- † The Historical school sees the book as a panorama of the history of the church from the days of John to the end of the age.
- † The Idealist school sees the book as a conflict of the age-long principles of good and evil, using non historic elements.
- † The Futurist school sees the book from chapter four onward as proclaiming prophecies yet to be fulfilled.

The historical approach was widely used by a variety of reformers in the first couple of hundred years following the Reformation. This allowed them to relate the events of their day to events in Revelation. Thus, the French Revolution became an event predicted by the Apocalypse. Sound familiar?.

Not surprisingly, how one outlines the book, how different events in the work are interpreted, as well as one's views on the Rapture of the Church and the existence of an actual millennial kingdom, are dependent upon where one sits on the above views. These differing postures are usually classified as premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism.

- † Postmillennialism teaches that the preaching of the Gospel message will result in the continual improvement of life until the earth enters a "golden age." Christ's return will follow this "golden age." Obviously, the "golden age" is the millennium, so Christ's return is "post" or after the millennium.

- † Amillennialism does not believe in a literal return of Christ to the earth. Christ's rule over the church is a spiritual millennium. Under this view, Satan is already defeated and the believers reign in this current life by Christ.
- † Premillennialism believes in a literal return of Christ before the actual reign of Christ on earth. The millennium is an actual 1,000 year "golden age." The church will reign with Christ on earth during this period. Premillennialism has two schools connected with it. The Historical premillennialists believe exactly what is stated. Dispensational premillennialist see God's dealings with mankind as being a series of ages or "dispensations. Christ's return will occur in two stages, the Rapture of the church and the return in victory at the end of the Great Tribulation.

We have already looked briefly at the Rapture in the chapter on 1 Thessalonians. To better understand this view, let us take a brief side journey into the land of *Dispensations*.

- ☆ There are really only two key elements here. First, God has dealt with mankind in a series of progressive instructions. There are (depending upon one's view) six-to-nine dispensations. In general, these are from Adam to the Fall, from the Fall to the Flood, from the Flood to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, from Moses to Christ, the Church age from Christ to the Tribulation, the Millennial Kingdom, and Eternity. In each dispensation, God reveals new knowledge to man. Man attempts to understand and apply this new knowledge. Man fails in his efforts. God chastises man. God commences the cycle all over again. All of this is designed to teach man and to demonstrate the utter futility of life without God.
- ☆ Second, in God's dealing with mankind, the Jewish Nation and the Church are two separate and distinct groups. God's Old Testament covenant with Abraham runs to the Jewish Nation and God will deal with the Nation and fulfill this covenant in the future. Revelation is primarily the story of God's final chastisement and offer of salvation to Israel.
- ☆ Third, in order for God to deal with Israel, He must first remove the Church. This is the *Rapture*, the taking home of the body of Saints. It sets the stage for the actions of the Anti-Christ. God uses the Anti-Christ much as He used Pharaoh. God will demonstrate His power, and in the process, will save the Jewish remnant.
- ☆ Fourth, within premillennialism there are also differences of opinion over the timing of the Rapture.

- † Pre-Tribulation sees the Rapture as described above, as an event which must occur prior to the Tribulation. This is based the concept that God will not allow the church to undergo the judgments of the Tribulation. This is Dispensational premillennialism.
- † Mid-Tribulation sees the Church being part of the Tribulation, but not part of the terrible, final judgments. The Church is Raptured home midway through the Tribulation.
- † Post-Tribulation views the Rapture as coming at the end of the Tribulation. This ushers in the Millennial Kingdom. This is basically a historical premillennial view.
- ☆ Since postmillennialism and amillennialism do not view the Rapture in relation to an actual tribulation and millennial period, there is no need for them to be concerned with the timing of the Rapture.

*Having given you all of the definitions, I will state that it is the position of this chapter and my belief that what Scripture teaches is a **premillennial, pretribulation, dispensational position.***

A review of any literature on Revelation will strongly show that your view of the interpretation of the book is based upon your position with regard to the above issues. If you are an amillennialist, you will not find the Rapture or the millennial kingdom in this book. Likewise, if you hold a premillennial, pretribulation position, you will find breakpoints which relate to this interpretative view. Since this is the position taken in this course, all of the following discussion is based upon this interpretative position being the correct view. This doctrinal position arises from several other doctrinal positions which incorporate an entire viewpoint upon all of Scriptures. At the risk of repeating myself, the key points of this posture are:

- † First, there is a dispensational approach to the revelation of God throughout Scripture.
- † Second, the church and the Jewish nation are NOT the same entity. God has promised to the Jewish nation the ultimate salvation of a godly remnant separate and apart from the body of Christ. The *Great Tribulation* (Matt 24:21) or the Times of Jacob's Trouble (Jer 30:7) applies to the Jewish nation. It is a time of the fulfillment of the covenants.

- † Third, the church will not go through the *tribulation*. The *tribulation* is the final chastisement and refining of the godly remnant of Judaism.
- † Fourth, the resurrections of the dead are not a finite event, but rather a carefully defined series of resurrections. This will become clearer as we review the details of Revelation.

Having set forth the ground work for the interpretative model of this book, I believe it may be best to provide you with the outline of the book first and then to discuss the important issues.

Outline

- I THE THINGS WHICH YOU HAVE SEEN--THE CHRIST (1:1-20)
 - A. Prologue - 1:1-8
 - B. The Vision of Christ - 1:9-20
 - 1. The Occasion of the Vision - 1:9-11
 - 2. What John Observed - 1:12-16
 - 3. The Outcome of the Vision - 1:17-20
- II THE THINGS WHICH ARE--THE CHURCHES (2:1--3:22)
 - A. Ephesus - 2:1-7
 - A. Smyrna - 2:8-11
 - B. Pergamum - 2:12-17
 - C. Thyatira - 2:18-29
 - D. Sardis - 3:1-6
 - E. Philadelphia - 3:7-13
 - F. Laodicea - 3:4-22
- III THE THINGS WHICH SHALL BE HEREAFTER--THE CONSUMMATION - (4:1-22:5)
 - A. The Prologue--The Heavenly Court - 4:1-5:14
 - B. The Program During the Tribulation - 6:1-19:21
 - 1. The Seven Seals - 6:1-8:1
 - 2. The Seven Trumpets - 8:2-11:19
 - 3. Historical, Explanatory Prophecies - 12:1-14:20
 - 4. The Seven Bowls - 15:1-16:21
 - 5. An Explanation of the Institution During the Tribulation - 17:1-19:5
 - 6. The Intervention of Christ - 19:6-21
 - A. The Program After the Tribulation - 20:1-22:5

IV THE POSTLUDE--COMFORT CAUTION, AND CONCLUSION (22:6-21)

Special Considerations and Interpretative Comments

Chapter 1 forms the interpretative basis for the book. This is particularly true of 1:19.

*Write the things which thou hast seen,
and the things which are, and the things which
shall be hereafter;*

Revelation 1:19

The opening verses show the special blessing of this revelation from God (1:3). The uniqueness of this blessing lies in the concept that this is the final revelation. This book is the final prophecy and closes the New Testament. John is the last of the Apostles and with him a very special era comes to a close.

In 1:19 the prophecy is broken down into three time frames, *the things which have been, the things which are, and the things which will be*. The ***things which have been*** are found here in this first chapter. Jesus the God-man has come to earth, sacrificed Himself, been Resurrected from the dead, and has returned to heaven to rule with the Father. The description given in verses 9-20 provides a vivid description of the Risen Christ.

The second section is that which discusses *the things which are*. This involves chapters 2 and 3. These chapters set forth seven letters to seven churches located in close proximity to each other in Asia Minor. Their location forms a loose circle. They were the natural centers of communication for all the inner districts of Asia Minor. One would go north from Ephesus to Smyrna and Pergamum, then return south through Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and, finally, Laodicea.

Tradition holds that these are the churches for which John was the overseer.

The seven letters follow a similar pattern.

- † A description of Christ, drawn mostly, but not completely, from 1:12-16.
- † Commendations and criticisms

- † Warnings / Exhortations
- † Promise

There are many thoughts on the purposes of the seven letters. Foremost, it must be remembered the letters have been written by John to seven existing churches to warn and exhort them about their current practices. But is there a second meaning to the letter?

One school of thought views the seven letters as a prophecy of the church age. Under this view, the church age looks like this:

- † Ephesus is the 1st century, generally a praiseworthy church, but already drifting away from its first love.
- † Smyrna is the 1st to 4th century church, the church which suffered persecution under Rome.
- † Pergamum is the church of the 4th and 5th centuries the church which became the official religion under Constantine.
- † Thyatira is the church of the 6th to 15th centuries, the church under the control of the Roman Catholic Pope.
- † Sardis is the church of the 16th and 17th centuries, the post-Reformation church which has already lost the light of the Reformation.
- † Philadelphia is the church of the 18th and 19th centuries, a time of mighty revival and missionary outreach.
- † Laodicea is the church of the last days, lukewarm and apostate. It is the church of ecumenism and modernism.

!! Revelation itself speaks against this interpretation. Remember that the seven churches did not suffer these problems in succession, but, rather, all of these spiritual conditions existed simultaneously. As such, the secondary purpose of these letters should be viewed as a picture of the types of churches and the types of problems they will face during the current age of grace, the “Church Age.”

Beginning with chapter 4, Revelation looks forward to the *things which will be*, the future. Christ has already dealt with the Church and will now deal with the Jews and Israel, judging the Gentile nations in the process. These chapters become confusing because:

- ☆ Some are written from heaven’s point of view
- ☆ Some are written from earth’s point of view
- ☆ Some are interludes or explanatory interruptions
- ☆ Some are historical “flashbacks”

In general, however, beginning with Chapter 4, the book seems to be chronological in its presentation.

One of the great difficulties of Revelation is the extensive use of symbolism and imagery used by John. Since some of this may have been specifically directed to the circumstances of the time, you must be careful not to attempt to read too many modern details into the prophecy. The book portrays throughout a conflict of earthly personalities and people directed and energized by demons, especially Satan, in order to overthrow Christ's rule on earth. The book reaches its climax with God's ultimate triumph through Jesus Christ overthrowing evil and establishing His Kingdom. This climax is accomplished by John taking the reader behind the scenes to see the power which rests in the line of Judah, the Lamb that was slain, the throne room of God, and by addressing judgment (14:7; 20:11-15), redemption (1:5; 5:6; 7:14; 12:11), and the Kingdom (5:10; 11:17; 12:10; 20:4; 22:5).

*After this I looked, and, **behold, a door was opened in heaven:** and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, **Come up hither,** and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter. 2 And **immediately I was in the spirit:** and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and one sat on the throne.*

Revelation 4:1

!! These verses picture the *Rapture* of the Church, symbolized by John being taken to heaven.

This section can be divided into three parts:

- ✧ Prologue: the heavenly court (4:1--5:14)
- ✧ The program during the tribulation (6:1--19:21)
- ✧ The program after the tribulation (20:1-22:5),

A second difficulty with Revelation is the timing or fit of the three series of judgments. Are they completely chronological? Do they merely occupy the same general time frame, but run simultaneously? Or is there some other fit? This is an interpretative issue and I would urge you to remember three points.

† First, the basic order of the balance of Revelation from chapter 4 onward is chronological.

- † Second, it is best to apply the plain, normal meaning to the words of this books (as with all of Scripture), accepting that many symbols used by John are designed to convey meaning to the readers.
- † Third, there are over 350 Old Testament quotations or allusions in this book. The purpose of Revelation is to “wrap up” all the teachings of God.

On this basis, the judgments should be viewed as chronological in nature. They follow each other since the seven trumpet judgments come from the seventh seal (8:1) and the seven bowl judgments come from the seventh trumpet (11:15; 15:1, with an interlude occurring between 11:19 and 15:1).

God is the *Judge* of all the earth (Gen 18:25). He is, indeed a God of justice (Mal 2:17). All of this flows from God’s character traits of love, mercy, truth, and righteousness, for the judgment of God is not some abstract event. This *judgment* is a strongly personal, vigorous action against evil. The Old Testament prophets yearn for the day when God will judge the unbelievers. This becomes a prominent theme of the Old Testament writings. God, in His infinite wisdom, has turned all judgment over to Jesus Christ (Matt 3:11ff; 10:34; John 3:19; 5:30; 8:12, 16; 9:39). The aspect added by the New Testament is that most of the judgments will be eschatological in nature with Christ Himself being the Judge (John 5:22; 12:47ff; Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim 4:8).

There are several *judgments* envisioned by the Scriptures. One of these has past, two are present, and the balance lie in the future events of Revelation.

- † On the Cross, Christ judged Satan and sin (John 16:11; Rom 6:6-10; 8:1-4). Satan faces his final penalty at the end of the millennium (Rev 20:10).
- † Paul and John write of the self-judgment of believers who sin (1 Cor 11:27-31; 1 John 1:9).
- † The believer is subject to the Divine discipline of God when the saint neglects to exercise self-judgment (1 John 1:5-10).
- † At some point after the Rapture, during the Tribulation, the believers must appear before the judgment seat, the *bema* seat, of Christ where their works will be tested. Failure to pass the test results in a loss of rewards (2 Cor 5:10; 1 Cor 3:10-15).
- † Living Jews are judged immediately after the Second Coming of Christ. This will separate believing from

- unbelieving Israel, creating the promised remnant which will be blessed. (Matt 25:1-30).
- † The Living Gentiles will also be judge immediately after the Second Coming of Christ (Matt 25:31-46). These judgments reflected in Matthew 25 are the story of the sheep and the goats. Believers enter into the Millennial Kingdom with Christ. Unbelievers are cast into the outer darkness where they await the final judgment.
 - † Fallen angels are judged for following Satan (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). This most likely occurs at the time of the final judgment.
 - † The Great White Throne judgment is the final judgment of all unbelievers. This event probably occurs after the earth has been judged by fire (2 Pet 3:7-10). All unbelievers are cast into the lake of fire where Satan already has been cast. Death and hell are also cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:11-15).

A Brief Account of These Chapters

Chapter 6 introduces the seven seal judgments. These occur during the first half of the Tribulation. The first four seals represent the spirits of conquest, war, famine, and death. The fifth seal shows God's people present with Him and the sixth seal looks to the coming Divine judgment. While some want to find these events as existing through the centuries, thus, being preludes to the Tribulation, this requires these seals be in existence continually. This removes them from the *"things which will be."* It is better to understand these as the conditions which exist during the first half of the Tribulation period.

6:2 introduces us to the rider on the white horse. Since Christ is in heaven, this must be our first introduction to the Anti-Christ, the man of sin. He comes as a man of peace to seduce the world, and in particular, the Jewish nation. The four horsemen of these verses are frequently referred to as the four horsemen of the apocalypse.

The great prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27 sets the time table for the Tribulation. This is the prediction of the Seventy Weeks. Without getting into too much detail, it can be demonstrated that the first 69 weeks ended with the Crucifixion of Jesus. There is then a gap until the commencement of the Tribulation. The Tribulation is the 70th week. In this context, each "week" represents a period of seven years.

Chapters 6 and 7 represent the first half of the Tribulation period, or three-and-a-half years.

In Chapter 7, there is an interlude. God seals His witnesses to the Jewish nation, the 144,000 from the twelve tribes of Israel. Then, the seventh seal is broken to reveal the seven trumpet judgments (chapters 8 and 9). The second half of the Tribulation has commenced. This is the Great Tribulation, the Time of Jacob's Trouble. Notice that the judgments of this next period, the time of the seven trumpets, are only partial judgments. God still desires that the Jewish nation, as well as members of the Gentile nations, would come to accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. God still seeks to bring all men to *repentance*.

The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

2 Peter 3:9

In the Old Testament, two different words are translated as *repent* or *repentance*. One carries the idea of being sorry or changing one's mind, while the second means to turn back or return. The Greek word used in the New Testament carries much the same idea, meaning to change one's mind so as to regret or feel remorse. The biblical idea of repentance, then, is a turning away from sin back to one's dependence upon a merciful God.

Chapters 10 and 11 represent the second interlude. In chapter 10 a commentary on the Bible is presented. God's Word is a book which will become bitter to anyone for whom it holds judgment rather than life. Chapter 11 presents the consummation of this era or age.

And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Revelation 11:15

Chapters 12-to-14 represent a third, separate interlude. Here, partially in a historical review, the players of Scripture and of the end times are presented.

The players are:

- † Jesus Christ
- † The Jewish Nation
- † Satan
- † The Anti-Christ, described in 13:1-10
- † The false prophet, describe in 13:11-18
- † The Tribulation saints, who will suffer and die during this period (11:7, 8)
- † Victory Chp 14

Chapters 15 and 16 present the bowl judgments. These judgments are complete in their nature and are against mankind right from their commencement (as compared to the earlier judgments which were also against nature). The sixth bowl prepares the way for the final battle of Armageddon.

*And he gathered them together into a
place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon.*

Revelation 16:16

Armageddon in Hebrew means the mountain of Megiddo. The valley or plain is generally believed to be the plain of Esdraelon (Joshua 17:11; 1 Chron 7:29). Here, Solomon walled the city (1 Kings 9:15). It is the valley where Deborah defeats Sisera (Judges 5:19). Ahaziah dies here (2 Kings 9:27) and Josiah is slain here by Pharaoh-neco (2 Kings 23:29,30; 2 Chron 35:22-24). It has been the site of important battles ever since, including one fought by Tuthmosis III in 1468 B.C. and that of Lord Allenby in 1917. The “mountains of Israel” witness Gog’s defeat in Ezek. 39:1-4, which is most likely this same valley.

The seventh bowl judgment, the last, leads to the fall of Babylon and the final consummation (16:17-21). Chapter 17 describes the religions of the earth and their final fall. Chapter 18 describes the materialistic kingdoms and systems of the earth and their final defeat.

Chapter 19 is the great battle of Armageddon and the final defeat of world empires. The opening verses show us Jesus and the Church, His bride, at the marriage feast of the Lamb. Then, verse 11 depicts the Second Coming of Christ in Victory!

11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. 12 His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. 13 And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. 14 And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. 16 And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, **KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS**. 17 And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; 18 That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. 19 And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. 20 And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. 21 And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Revelation 19:11-21

Outline of the Judgements

Judgement Series			
<p>The Seven Seal Judgements 6:1-8:6</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Anti-Christ 2. War 3. Famine 4. Death 5. Martyr's Prayers 6. Great earthquakes 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Opening of the Trumpet judgments 	
<p>The Seven Trumpet Judgments 8:7-9:21</p>		<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. One-third of the vegetation burned 2. One-third of the sea plagued 3. One third of the fresh water attacked 4. One-third of the heavens darkened 5. Demon activity increases 6. The army from the East invades Palestine 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. The Bowl judgments are opened.

<p>The Seven Bowl Judgements 15:1-16:21</p>			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Malignant sores 2. The sea is turned to blood 3. Fresh waters are turned to blood 4. Men are scorched with fire 5. The beasts throne is judged 6. Invasion of Palestine from the East 7. The greatest earthquake of all time
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Chapter 20 is the Millennium. This word simply means one thousand, or in this case, one thousand years. This is the earthly kingdom of Israel with Christ ruling on the Throne of Earth. Satan is cast into the bottomless pit for this time period so that men on earth are not tempted by the great tempter, Satan. At the end of the thousand years Satan is loosed for a short time (20:7). It is clear that only those who accepted Christ as Lord and Savior entered into the Millennium. All of His enemies were destroyed at the end of the Tribulation. But, many of those born during this time will not come to accept Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior. Satan gathers these together to make one final attempt against God. This effort is short lived as God reaches out from heaven to defeats this vast army. The Devil is cast into the lake of fire, the second death (20:8-10)!

This sets the stage for the Great White Throne judgment, the judgment of all unbelievers. All of the dead and hell itself are cast into the lake of fire (20:11-15).

In Chapters 21 and 22 we see eternity and life with Jesus Christ. This phase of God's story is finished. All believers will now live with Christ. The new heavens and new earth have arrived!

*20 He which testifieth these things saith,
Surely I come quickly. Amen. **Even so, come,***

*Lord Jesus. 21 The grace of our Lord
Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.*
Revelation 22:20,21