

***LB 102: INTRODUCTION TO THE
NEW TESTAMENT***



Certificate and Diploma Levels

**Student Workbook
Nazarene Theological Institute
Africa Region**

Nazarene Theological Institute
Church of the Nazarene
Africa Region

Syllabus

LB 102: Introduction the New Testament

Course Contributors:

Extensive use was made of the
RIIE Module, *Telling the New Testament Story of God*

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Note to teacher: If you discover any typing or factual errors in this
Teacher Handbook, please send notification to:

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Course Description

This course is an introduction to the content, history and personalities of the New Testament. The different genres will be studied in their cultural and theological contexts.

Program outcomes

The following program outcomes assigned to this course are identifiable competencies required of the student in this course.

- CN 2 The history and content of the New Testament
- CN 3 The principles of Biblical interpretation
- CN 4 The theological foundations of the Christian faith from the Biblical point-of-view when read from a Wesleyan perspective
- CN 6 The theological foundations of the Christian faith from the Biblical point-of-view when read from a Wesleyan perspective
- CN 12 The application of Christian morality in daily life

- CP 4 The ability to teach the Word of God and make disciples that can make other disciples
- CP 7 The ability to evangelize in public and private
- CP 10 The ability to interpret and apply the Bible according to the best principles of Biblical interpretation

- CR 1 Ability to give value to Christian morality and how to apply this ethic to life
- CR 3 Ability to worship God by using personal and public means of grace

- CR 4 ability to allow Christ's character to form the attitudes and actions of one's daily life
- CR 11 ability to allow Christ's character to form the attitudes and actions of one's daily life
- CX 2 Ability to understand the context within which he or she lives with objectivity
- CX 3 Ability to understand the principles of trans-cultural ministry
- CX 4 Ability to understand the differences between the worldviews of the Western world, that of Africa, and that of the Bible

Course outcomes for this module

For achieving the competencies listed above, this course organizes several learning activities and requirements around the following intended learning outcomes for this course.

At the end of the course, the student will be able to:

1. Know the basic elements of the life and person of Jesus Christ and the life and mission of Paul (CN 2, CN 6)
2. Know the chronological or thematic order of the New Testament books, including principal personalities, events and their roles in the history of the New Testament period. (CN 2, CN 4; CP 10)
3. Explain the different perspectives of the four Gospels in the life of Jesus Christ. (CN 2, CN 3; CP 10)
4. Describe the cross-cultural ministry led by Paul in his travels (CN 2; CX 2, CX 3)
5. Know the introductory elements of each book of the New Testament (outline, author, date, themes, etc.) (CN 2, CN 6; CX 4)
6. Practice interpersonal relationships according to the life and teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul, including forgiveness, honesty, and respect for others. (CN 12; CP 4; CR 1, CR 4)
7. Explain the literary structure of the New Testament and the differences between the genres of the various books of the New Testament and what this means for interpreting these texts (CN 3; CP 10)
8. Be prepared to describe certain aspects of one's worldview in light of the worldview of the New Testament and reflect on what it means for evangelizing and being a witness for the Gospel in daily life (CN 4; CP 7, CX 2, CX 4)
9. Use the reading and memorization of the New Testament texts as sources of continual spiritual formation (CN 12; CR 3, CR 11)
10. Explain briefly the historical period before and during the historical background of the New Testament, including the cultural changes that took place during the inter-testamental period as well as the later acceptance by the Church of the canon (standard) of certain books and letters as inspired Holy Scriptures. (CN 2)
11. Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between the Old and New Testaments. (CN 2, CN 4).
12. Note briefly the steps involved in historical, literary, and theological analysis of a passage in the New Testament. (CN 3)

The following sessions and exercises of this course offer the following percentages of the four Cs:

Content	33%
Competence	20%
Character	27%
Context	20%

Course recommended reading and resources

The Bible

Bruce, F.F. Paul., *Apostle of the Heart Set Free*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977.

Drane, John, *Introducing the New Testament*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, San Francisco, 1986.

Elwell, Walter A. and Yarbrough, Robert W., *Encountering the New Testament*. Grand Rapids†: Baker Books, 1994.

Gundry, Robert H., *A Survey of the New Testament, 3^d ed.* Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994.

Harrison, Everett F., *Introduction to the New Testament. New Revised edition*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964.

Mears, Henrietta. *What the Bible Is All About*.

Perkins, Pheme. *Reading the New Testament. Second Edition*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988.

Telling the New Testament Story of God. RIIIE Course Module. Kansas City: Clergy Services, 2005.

Tenney, Merrill C. *New Testament Survey*. Revised by Walter M. Dunnett. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992.

Tracing the Story of the Bible. RIIIE Course Module. Kansas City: Clergy Services, 2005.

Varughese, Alex, Editor. *Discovering the Bible: Story and Faith of the Biblical Communities*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2005.

Varughese, Alex, Editor. *Discovering the New Testament: Community and Faith*. Kansas City: Beacon Hill Press, 2005.

Course requirements/assignments

- 1. Regular attendance** to all course sessions and preparation of all assignments prior to their deadlines are vitally important to the successful completion of this course. The following minimum attendance standards should be adhered to: Courses should have a minimum of 30 hours of class time and include close to 10 hours of outside work.

Students who miss an entire day of class will receive a minimum of a 10% reduction in their final course grade, with further reductions for additional missed class time. Course credit will not be given to students who miss over a day and a half of class, or more than 10 instructional hours.

2. **Journaling.**

Diploma Level: You will complete journal entries throughout the course. The journal is not a diary. It should be guided thought about what is speaking to you in relation to what you are learning.

Certificate Level: You will complete journal activities throughout the course by sharing with a partner. Find a partner and verbally complete the journal assignments as given by the instructor. Your partner will tell the class leader throughout the week if you have completed these journal activities. This sharing time should be telling about what is speaking to you in relation to what you are learning in the class.

3. **Group Activities.** These group work activities are critical in this class. There will be one of these group activities each day of class (marked with **), in which you will form groups to discuss the following:

- a. Ten advantages of studying the New Testament presented in class (Course outcomes 6, 9, 11).
- b. The religious context of the New Testament period (Course outcomes 7, 8, 10).
- c. The meaning of two of Jesus' teachings (Course outcomes 3, 6, 9, 12).
- d. Five ways to improve our ministry that pastors can learn from Jesus' lifestyle. (Course outcomes 1, 3, 5, 6)
- e. New Testament teaching on family and community responsibilities of a pastor (Course outcomes 1, 7).

4. **Memorize NT Books** – Memorize all the New Testament Books in their correct chronological order, and know who was the author (writer) of each book. (Course outcomes 2, 5, 6, 9)

Diploma Level: This will be written as part of the final exam – last day.

Certificate Level: This will be oral presentation as part of the final exam.

5. **Drama or role play** – choose one of the following to present in a group before the class. Due 3rd day (Wednesday)

- a. Three events or three important people found in the New Testament (Course outcomes 4, 6).
- b. Convince an unbeliever to understand that Jesus is truly the son of God. (Course outcomes 1, 3, 5, 6).

6. **Chronology of Paul's Life:** Using the Scriptures below as well as a map and timeline, construct a **chronology** (events in their proper sequence order) of Paul's ministry. (Course outcomes 4, 6) Due 4th day

Diploma Level: This will be presented as a written assignment.

Certificate Level: Be prepared to present this orally before the class.

- Acts 9:1-31, 11:19-30, 13:1-28:31
- Gal 1:11-2:21
- Rom 15:22-29
- 1 Cor 16:1-9

7. **Book Study:** Choose **one** of the following studies (a or b) of a book of the New Testament. (Course outcomes 5, 7, 8, 12) Due 5th day (Friday)

- a. **The Book of Acts:**

Diploma Level: Read the Book of Acts (5-6 chapters each day). As you read, make notes in your exercise book. For each entry in your lists, include the reference (chapter and verse(s)).

Certificate Level: Read (or have someone read to you) the Book of Acts (5-6 chapters each day). As you read, prepare to share with the teacher (or his/her designated assistant) the following:

- i. Background study of the book:
 - a. Who is the author?
 - b. To whom is this book addressed?
 - c. What is the approximate date it was written?
 - d. What genre of literature is this book?
- ii. List the important:
 1. People involved (at least 10)
 2. Places Paul traveled to on his missionary journeys.
- iii. List the events that show the operations or the ministries of the Holy Spirit as they issued into:
 1. Redemption or salvation.
 2. Church planting.
- iv. Think about how the Book of Acts relates to the Old Testament – write one paragraph about this (7-9) lines in your exercise book).
- v. Think about how the Book of Acts can be applied to church planting and development in your context today – write one paragraph about this (7-9) lines in your exercise book).

b. Presentation of a Study of an Epistle: Select **one** of the following epistles of the New Testament: Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, or 1 Peter.

This study will provide the following information and address the following issues. Answer all questions in your presentation.

Background preparation:

Diploma Level: Read the text of the passage several times (at least 10). Listen to the text. Meditate on the book. Ponder it and soak it into your mind and heart. Presented as a written assignment to the instructor.

Certificate Level: Read (or have someone read to you) the text of the passage several times (at least 10). Listen to the text. Meditate on the book. Ponder it and soak it into your mind and heart. This will be an oral presentation before the class.

Questions:

- i. Background study of this epistle:
 1. Who is the author?
 2. To whom is this epistle addressed?
 3. What is the approximate date it was written?
- ii. What are the specific genres of literature **within** this epistle, such as poetry or hymns, prayers, OT quotations or passages of a certain type, historical facts or references, etc? List the

- type(s) of genre found in this epistle, and the verses where they are found.
- iii. Analyze the structure of the text. Consider:
 - 1. What is the flow of thought of the author—the major moves or points?
 - 2. Present an outline of the structure of the text.
 - iv. What are the major theological themes in this epistle?
 - v. Of these major theological themes, what are the timeless truths that relate in some way to redemption, salvation, holiness (the way of salvation) to be communicated to a contemporary audience (class or congregation)?
 - vi. Share how you would present these **timeless truths** with passion to bring them alive to a contemporary audience today (1-2 pages).

8. Quizzes. Quizzes will provide an in-class learning activity.

9. Final Exam.

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**Grading** (out of a total of 100 points)

|                                                    |     |
|----------------------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Class attendance                                | 10% |
| 2. Journal/sharing                                 | 10% |
| 3. Group activities (participation & presentation) | 10% |
| 4. Memorize NT Books                               | 10% |
| 5. Drama/Role play                                 | 10% |
| 6. Book Study                                      | 10% |
| 7. Paul's Life                                     | 10% |
| 8. Quizzes                                         | 10% |
| 9. Final Exam                                      | 20% |

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Course Outline

- Lesson 1: Why Study the New Testament?
- Lesson 2: Historical, Social, and Religious Settings of the World of Jesus
- Lesson 3: The Life and Ministry of Jesus
- Lesson 4: The Gospels
- Lesson 5: The Historical, Social, and Religious Setting of the 1st-Century, Greco-Roman World
- Lesson 6: The Apostle Paul
- Lesson 7: Paul's Letters to the Churches
- Lesson 8: Paul's Letters to Individuals
- Lesson 9: The General Epistles
- Lesson 10: Revelation

Lesson 1

WHY STUDY THE NEW TESTAMENT?

Objectives for this lesson

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- know the difference between the Old Testament, Apocrypha, and New Testament
- classify and list the books of the New Testament
- understand basic terms used in New Testament study
- explain why the New Testament canon is trustworthy

√ Why study the New Testament?

The Bible: A big investment

- People have died for the Bible.
- More copies of the Bible have been printed than any other single book.
- The Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, has deeply affected the world we live in.

The Old and New Testaments

The Old Testament

The Old Testament Apocrypha

The New Testament

- The _____: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John
- _____: Acts
- _____ (Letters):
 1. **Pauline:** Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.
 2. **Johannine:** 1, 2, and 3 John
 3. **General (Catholic):** Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude (1, 2 and 3 John are also usually considered General Epistles.)
- Apocalyptic or Book of _____: Revelation of John

Discussion: Why study the New Testament?

1. It mediates God's presence and God's truth.
2. It is of ultimate personal significance.
3. It is foundational to much cultural literacy.
 - Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure of the history of much culture for almost 20 centuries
 - New Testament teaching influences us today.

√ **Definitions of terms relating to the Bible**

Revelation: By revelation we mean God's self-disclosure to humanity through His words and actions. This revelation is recorded in the Bible and is based on historical events. Biblical history is best described as a theological understanding of historical events that happened to or around God's people.

Inspiration: When the term "inspiration" is used it means the involvement of God in the process of communicating His revelation (self-disclosure) and usually refers to its written form. Inspired, or "God-breathed," means the Holy Spirit worked in and through the minds and hearts of His people to produce a trustworthy account of God's truth.

- Dictation (Verbal Inspiration):
- Guidance of the Holy Spirit (Dynamic Inspiration):
- Influence of Tradition, Religious Practices, and Biases:

Authority of Scripture: Protestant tradition regards Scripture as the only source of the Church's beliefs and practices. This *sola scriptura* principle was adopted by Martin Luther in the Reformation. Our own Wesleyan tradition is based on this, but also recognizes that historic Church tradition, human reason, and human experience are very important to the interpretation of Scripture. We recognize that the Bible has authority because God is the "author." The Bible is the record of His self-disclosure.

Hermeneutics: This is the art of biblical interpretation. The technical study of hermeneutics covers the rules and principles used in the practice of biblical interpretation. The goals of hermeneutics are: (1) to discover the

Informal witnesses: By informal we mean the casual use of the books of the New Testament by Early Church fathers. These quotations testify to the existence and authority of the books at the time of the writing by the Early Church fathers.

1. The earliest document to quote any of the books of the New Testament was 1 Clement, written from Rome to the church in Corinth and is usually dated about AD 95. It contains allusions to Hebrews, 1 Corinthians, Romans, and the Gospel of Matthew.
2. Ignatius of Antioch in Syria (AD 116) knew all of Paul's letters, quoted Matthew and possibly John.
3. Polycarp of Smyrna (AD 150) knew Paul's letters, Matthew, and quotes from 1 Peter and 1 John and alludes possibly to Acts.
4. The *Didache* (AD 100-150) used Matthew, Luke, and many other New Testament books in its attempt at a catechism or discipleship course.
5. By Irenaeus' time (AD 170) there was no question the books of the New Testament were authoritative. The growth of Gnosticism and other heresies forced a flood of apologetic literature that continued until the time of Origen (AD 250). This literature carefully outlined which books were orthodox and which were not.

Formal lists: These are the official lists of New Testament books accepted by groups of Christians or Church Councils. Examples include:

1. Canon of Marcion (AD 140).
2. Muratorian Canon (fragment copy from about AD 170).

The Councils: The earliest council we know of which dealt with the issue of canon is the Council of Laodicea (AD 363). The Council of Hippo in AD 419 gave the same list.

Conclusion: The canon, then, is not the product of any one person's arbitrary judgment, nor was it set by councilor vote. It was the outcome of the use of various writings that proved their merits and their unity by their inward dynamic. Some were recognized more slowly than others because of the smallness of their size, their remote or private destination or anonymity of the authorship, or their seeming lack of applicability to the immediate ecclesiastical need. None of these factors mitigates against the inspiration of any one of these books, or against its right to its place in the authoritative word of God.

--Tenney, *New Testament Survey*, 111.

**** Group Activity: Advantages of studying the New Testament**
In you small groups, discuss and list **ten** advantages of studying the New Testament. Prepare to present this in class.

Historical, Social, and Religious Settings of the World of Jesus

Objectives for this lesson

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- understand the historical events that led up to the Jewish messianic expectations in the first century.
- understand the setting for the “hellenization” of the Jews, especially Diaspora Jews (Jews outside of Palestine)
- understand the customs and religious setting of first-century Jews and be able to identify the differences among the major Jewish religious groups of the first century
- be able to use this historical, social, and religious data as a basis for interpreting the New Testament

√ Historical setting

539 BC—Persian Empire

Cyrus, the Persian king, proclaimed freedom to the Jews in Babylon and allowed them to return to Palestine

The return of the Jews to their homeland took place in stages.

- The first group of homecoming Jews was led by Shezbazzar in 538 BC and they began the rebuilding of the Temple.
- A second group, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, continued the rebuilding program.

The arrival of Haggai and Zechariah from Babylon brought new energy to the Jews living in Jerusalem. The Temple was completed and dedicated in 515 BC.

The arrival of Ezra and Nehemiah between 500 and 450 BC brought reformation to the religious and civil life of the people.

- Nehemiah
- Ezra,

Under the Persian rule, the Jews enjoyed relative peace and economic and political stability.

334-332 BC—Greek Empire

Alexander of Macedonia (the Great) began his conquest of the Persian Empire in 334 BC and completed it in 332 BC.

The Ptolemies captured Jerusalem in 320 BC

The Greek General Seleucus conquered Palestine and chase the Ptolemies back to Egypt.

“Hellenization,” the imposition of Greek culture and language on the east.

198 BC—Seleucid (Syrian) Empire

The desire on the part of the rich to be “Greek” was very strong. The poor opposed hellenization.

The term “poor” also carried the meaning of pious or holy people by the first century AD.

Jewish religious crises

- Antiochus IV (Epiphanes) promoted Greek culture and customs throughout the empire.
- In 168 BC, Antiochus ordered the desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem.

167 BC—Maccabean period and the Hasmonean dynasty

Maccabean period (167 BC)

- Judas the Maccabee led a revolt and conducted guerrilla warfare against hellenized Jews and Syrians.
- Festival of the Dedication (Hanukkah) celebrates the Liberation of Jerusalem in 164 BC

Hasmonean dynasty (134-63 BC)

Jewish kingdom that developed after this revolt was the Hasmonean Dynasty

- Jerusalem was the capital city.
- The Jewish sects of the Pharisees and Sadducees developed.
- Powerful Hasmonean king, John Hyrcanus, expanded the borders and destroyed the Samaritan Temple on Mount Gerazim.

- In 63 BC, internal struggle for power within the Hasmonean family led to the occupation of Palestine by the Roman Empire.

63 BC—Roman rule of Palestine

Pompey captures Jerusalem in 63 BC

Antipater, the Hasmonean king’s minister and power behind the throne (Herod the Great’s father), was given a political position with the Roman government because of his help to the Romans.

Pompey added the Decapolis (which means “10 cities”) on the eastern frontier of Palestine as a buffer between the Roman Empire and the Arabian steppe.

Republic fell apart and Caesar became emperor

Government:

Road System:

Language:

- _____
- _____

Ethnic Languages:

- _____
- _____

63-4 BC—Herodian period

Herod the Great

- ruled Judea, Idumea, Perea, and Galilee.
- was part Jew and part Idumean, and more Hellenistic than most Jews.
- was a regional king or “puppet” king for Rome.
- was a passionate builder, he began the rebuilding of the Temple (20 BC-AD 63).
- died around 4 BC and his kingdom was divided between his three sons:
 - Archelaus was given Judea, Idumea, and Samaria.
 - Herod Antipas received Galilee and Perea.
 - Philip ruled the land north and east of the Jordan.

√ **Jewish life: social and religious setting**

597/587—539/8 BC—Babylonian Exile

Significant changes in Jewish lifestyle

- Identified themselves as members of the tribe of Judah and became known as “Yehudites” or Jews rather than one of the 12 tribes.
- They adopted the language of Babylon, Aramaic, which became the official language of Judaism for the next 600 hundred years.
- Preserved the sacred writings, and the beginning of the process of canonization of the Old Testament Scriptures began, which was completed in AD 90 at the Council of Jamnia.
- Adopted a commercial way of life, i.e., merchants and bankers, in contrast to the agricultural way of life.
- Organized small-group assemblies for the purpose of reading and studying the Law and for prayer. This was the beginning of the synagogue as a religious institution.

Jerusalem became a _____ city

The Jerusalem Temple remained the religious center of Judaism until AD 70.

- The Temple area, including the large Court of the Gentiles, was 26 acres or 108,000 square meters.
- “Court of the Gentiles”—the outside court where money was exchanged, sacrificial animals were bought and sold, the only place converted Gentiles could pray to Yahweh.
- The women’s court—alms boxes, storage rooms for wine, oil, and wood, consulting rooms
- Great Gate or Nicanor’s Gate—ritually pure Jewish man could proceed to the Court of the Israelites. From this court the men would bring their sacrificial animals and food to the priests, who would take the sacrifices into the Court of the Priests.
- The Court of the Priests contained the altar for sacrifice, the laver for water purification, and probably slaughtering rooms.

- The holy place and the holy of holies was housed in a tall cubical building at the back of the Court of the Priests. In the holy place were the altar of incense, the menorah (lampstand), and the table of showbread. Behind a curtain was the holy of holies.
- The Temple layout not only reveals zones of holiness or purity but also indicates the hierarchy of the Jewish society.

The Synagogue

The Synagogue _____ reminds us that many early Christians attended synagogue services.

- Singing a Psalm
- Reciting the Shema and Blessings (Deut 6:4-9)
- Reading from the Law
- Reading from the Prophets
- Sermon
- Blessing by the President of the Synagogue
- Priestly Blessing (Num 6:24-27)

Religious _____ and _____

Annual Feasts/Festivals

New Year festival, Rosh Hashanah, Feast of Trumpets

Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur

Feast of Tabernacles or Booths

Hanukkah

Purim

Passover

Pentecost

Important First-Century Jewish Beliefs

The Law was a framework for Jewish life and was the legal basis for regulation of activities in Palestine.

The Jews believed keeping the Law (God's revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai) was the basis for receiving God's covenant blessings.

They also believed God will create a new order of things and deliver His people.

_____ and _____ conditions

The high priests and the wealthy lived in luxurious palaces and villas.

The common people lived in lower Jerusalem or in the towns.

Rome protected Jewish privileges.

- Jews could pay Temple tax in lieu of public works taxes.
- Protected the sacred Torah scrolls even from Roman soldiers and leaders.
- Allowed to observe the Jewish Sabbath
- Exempted from military service.

Jewish religious roles, parties, and sects

Religious _____.

- **High priestly families** were collaborators with the Romans because their positions were political appointments.
- **The Levites** were the priests for Temple service.
- **The Scribes** were teachers and interpreters of the Law.

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- **The Pharisees** included both priests and laypeople. They developed the oral law, believed in angels, spirits, and bodily resurrection.
 - **The Sadducees** came mostly from priestly families and the wealthy. They opposed the oral law of the Pharisees and their belief in angels, spirits, and resurrection. They tended to collaborate with the Romans. They only accepted the Pentateuch as authoritative.

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- **The Essenes** withdrew from society either physically or socially to maintain their pure religion. The Qumran Community, which existed during the time of Jesus, was Essene
 - **The Zealots** were so called because of their zeal for the Law. They advocated rebellion against non-Jewish rulers as a sign of loyalty to Yahweh.

****Group Activity: religious context**

Discuss in your groups the various aspects of the religious context of the New Testament period, and be prepared to share your conclusions with the class for 3-4 minutes.

Lesson 3

THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF JESUS

Objectives for this lesson

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- understand Jesus’ life, ministry, and teaching in its original setting
- use historical data as a basis for interpreting Jesus’ teachings
- understand the authority with which Jesus taught
- know the theme and methods of Jesus’ teaching

√ Who Is Jesus?

The Gospel material was preserved

_____ tradition

_____ tradition

Roles of Jesus found in the New Testament

Teacher

Healer

Lord

Miracle worker *dunamis, power; semeia, sign; tepas, wonders*

Provision

Healing

Destruction

Authority over the physical world

Authority over the spiritual world

New creation miracles, which are exorcisms and resurrection

Messiah and Savior

√ When did Jesus live?

Before Herod the Great died in 4 BC

Quirinius was made governor of Syria in AD 6-7

Possible explanations for the Christmas star

- 7-6 BC—A conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn
- 5 BC—Comet, Williams No. 52
- 4 BC—Nova or Comet, Williams No. 53

Jesus baptized in the 15th year of Emperor Tiberius' reign

Conclusion

Luke indicates Jesus began His ministry about AD 24-25. Traditions say His ministry lasted one to three years. So His death and resurrection would have been no later than AD 29-30 and perhaps as early as AD 27-28.

Harmony of the Gospels

Topic/Event	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Preexistence of Jesus				1:1-5
Birth and Childhood	1-2		1-2	
John the Baptist	3:1-12	1:1-18	3:1-20	1:6-42
Temptation	4:1-11	1:12-13	4:1-13	
First Miracle/Cana				2:1-11
Early Judean Ministry				2:13-4:3
Samaria				4:4-42
Galilean Ministry	4:12-19:1	1:14-10:1	4:14-9:51	4:43-54 and 6:1-7:1
Jerusalem				5:1-47
Perea and Judea (4 months)	19-20	10	9:51-19:28	7:2-11:57
Last Week	21-27	11-15	19:29-24:1	12-19
Post-Resurrection	28	16	24	20-21

√ The teaching of Jesus

Jesus had authority

The Scriptures say Jesus had *exousia*, a Greek word meaning:

- Freedom of choice or right to act
- The ability, capability, or power to do something
- The authority, absolute power, warrant to do something

Jesus did not have role authority, *huperokee*, which is a place of earthly superiority or prominence.

Jesus' authority according to Luke

- He speaks with authority (power): 4:32
- He acts with authority: 4:36
- He forgives sins with authority: 5:24
- He gives His disciples authority: 9:1-2

Kingdom of God is the central theme: Mark 1:15

Mark and Luke use the phrase "kingdom of God," which probably reflects a primarily Hellenistic audience. Matthew uses primarily "Kingdom of the Heavens," with "Heavens" being an alternative term for "God." This reflects the Jewish practice of avoiding using the name of God

By the "kingdom of God" Jesus meant the "kingship of God." Therefore, kingdom of God means God's reign or rule. The kingdom of God is both future and present.

- _____: Mark 14:25
- _____: Luke 17:21-21
- Wherever the presence of Jesus is present: Luke 11:20

What did Jesus teach through His life/roles?

Compassion and justice issues

- As a _____ He showed, not only His ability to heal, but His compassion for the people.
- Jesus is talked about as a _____, champion of the peasants, or a spokesperson for the poor.
- Jesus is also portrayed as a _____ to judge unrighteousness.

Jesus Is the Savior

- The Apostle Paul tells us the Resurrection is God's definitive word on who Jesus is.

Theological issues: Jesus' roles in salvation and God's agent of salvation

New Testament words that define Jesus' roles in salvation.

_____ (Lk 24:26)

_____ of _____ (Mt 25:31-32, Lk 9:22)

_____ of _____ (Mk 1:11, 9:7, Jn 1:14)

_____ (Phil 2:6-11, 1 Cor 16:22, 1 Cor 8:6)

*****Group Activity: how did Jesus teach?***

Instructions: In a discussion group

- Tell what the passage is talking about
- Identify the main points or principles being taught
- Suggest a modern application of these principles

Parables are the language of faith

Mk 4:11—They reveal the mystery of the Kingdom.

Mt 13—The Parables of the Kingdom (Lk 4:1-33)

Lk 15—The Parable of the Lost Sheep, Coin, Son

Lk 10:25-37—The Good Samaritan (love your neighbor)

Jn 15—Vine and Branches (abiding in Christ)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Wisdom in the sayings of Jesus

Mt 13:52—Things old and new

Mt 25:1-13—The wise and the foolish

Mt 5:17-48—The old and new covenant, Sermon on the Mount, fulfilling the law, murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, eye for an eye, love for enemies

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Lesson 4

THE GOSPELS

Objectives for this lesson

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- understand the genre and purpose of each of the Gospels
- appreciate the trustworthiness of the Gospels
- discover the core content of each of the Gospels
- gain a basic understanding of the elements of exegesis
- understand the major comparisons between the Gospels

√ **Introduction to the Gospels**

Discussion: the content of the "Gospel"

The content of the preaching message about Jesus as our Savior is referred to as the *kerygma*.

Find "factual information" from these passages. Select one person to report your findings to the class. You have 10 minutes to work together.

- Acts 10:34-43
- Acts 2:22-28
- Acts 2:29-36
- Acts 3:17-26
- Acts 4:8-12
- Acts 5:29-32
- Acts 7:44-53
- Acts 13:21-31
- Acts 13:32-41
- 1 Cor 15:3-7

The general nature of the Gospels.

Modern biographies usually begin with an account of the subject's childhood years, and progress consecutively through adolescence and adulthood. The Gospels are very different from this.

New Testament "genre" (type of literature)—we need some other term that history or biography to characterize the Gospels.

- "Aretalogies," Greco-Roman accounts of the life of a Greek hero
- The language of theater and refer to Gospels as dramas, "comedies" or "tragedies"
- Characterize the gospels as *midrash* or commentaries on the Old Testament.

There are unique features of the Gospels, to be sure, generally related to the unique events they narrate and the distinctive nature of the person of Jesus of Nazareth. But this makes them no less historical or biographical by the convention of their day. Perhaps it is best, then to refer to the Gospels as *theological biographies*.

The four Gospels are primarily witnesses to Jesus. Their main emphasis is the last week of Jesus' life.

Why the Gospels were written.

Selective accounts

Incidents in Jesus' life are used as appropriate illustrations to explain theological points.

Details appropriate to "winning other people to faith in their Lord."

Each story is told for a _____

To understand a stories it must be related to the purpose of the author or to the theology of the author.

How do the writers themselves describe what they are doing?

Mark 1:1: "*The Beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ.*"

- Gospel = *euangelion* = Good News. "
- *Beginning.*

Luke 1:3-4:

John 20:31-31

Matthew

The trustworthiness of the Gospels

Eyewitnesses accounts

Old Testament Texts—*testimonia*

Words of Jesus: *logia*

- collections of sayings of Jesus
- *The Gospel of Thomas*
- Papias' *Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord*.

Matthew and Luke have large sections of the teachings of Jesus which are absent in Mark.

Logia "Q" coming from the German word *Quelle*,

√ **Exegesis: learning to _____ the right questions**

Proper Bible study does "exegesis," which means to "read out" of the text the meaning of the scripture. The Bible was written many years ago and in different cultures from our own. Sometimes the meaning of the text is very straightforward and simple to understand, but many times there is danger of reading a verse "out of context" because we do not understand or take into consideration the historical and cultural setting of the passage.

There are many ways to "do exegesis," but this method was developed to give you an easy way to remember the most important questions to ask about your text as you prepare to interpret it correctly to your audience.

_____?

This question reminds us we need to identify both the person(s) speaking and the listener(s).

Author: The speaker's point of view

Audience: The listener/reader's point of view

Cultural considerations:

_____?

What does the text say?

- Make a simple outline of the text—identify the major events or points of teaching
- Identify the form and style of writing/speaking – is it a story? A warning? A lecture? A sermon? A poem? A hymn?
- Pick out two or three key words

- The important thing is to identify what the author/speaker is trying to communicate.

_____?

What is the geographical setting of the text?

- Is a town or city name mentioned?
- Are there animals or crops talked about?
- Try to answer the question, "How does this geographical setting affect how the people would have heard/read your text?"
- How would they have understood the text from their geographical perspective?

_____?

What is the historical setting?

- Is a political or civil event mentioned?
- Is a ruler mentioned?
- Try to answer the question, "How does this historical setting affect how the people would have heard/read your text?"

_____?

The why question has three parts:

- Why did the speaker say what he or she did?
- Why did the author include this section in the book?
- Why is it important for us today?

Step back mentally from the Who? What? When? Where? questions and answers, and think about what you have learned in the process. What is the central point of the passage and why is it important in each of the three situations above? This is creative thinking time!

Follow these _____ of interpreting Scripture

1. Always interpret a verse in agreement with its context.
2. When interpreting a passage, consider the customs and events when it was written.
3. Interpret a passage in the light of all other Scripture.
4. Interpret a passage according to the best use of the original language.
5. If there is a principle set forth in the passage, do not interpret or apply the passage in such a manner as to deny or reverse the principle.

Hermeneutical questions

Matthew

Matthew is usually characterized as a Jewish-Christian Gospel. In art and literature its symbol has been the Lion, representing Christ's kingship as "the lion of the tribe of Judah." The Lion is the symbol of royal authority and strength.

WHO? (This question is NOT obvious in Scripture)

- Author: Matthew, a disciple of Jesus, former tax collector, Jew.
- Audience: Christian Jews in Syria, Diaspora Jews.

WHERE? (This question is NOT obvious in Scripture)

- Author: Antioch in Syria.
- Audience: Syria.

WHEN?

- AD 60-70 (Some scholars date Matthew after Jerusalem's fall, 70-80's).
- Before the destruction of the Jewish Temple.
- Written during the first Jewish Rebellion and increasing tension between Rome and the Jewish people as well as between the Jews and Jewish Christians.

WHAT?

- Outline of Matthew.
- Jesus the Messiah is the fulfillment of prophecy. See 1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:53-54; 27:9, 35.
- Characteristics: Jewish-Christian; systematic arrangement; gospel of the Kingdom; church gospel; Hebrew poetic form, parallelism; use of Old Testament quotations.

WHY?

- To show Jesus was the promised Messiah.
- To preserve what Matthew remembered of what Jesus said and did.
- To encourage these Christian Jews in the midst of Roman/Jewish tensions as well as Jewish/Jewish-Christian tensions.

Group activity: unique & special passages in Matthew

Briefly answer the five hermeneutics questions for these specific passages. Since in class we have just answered the questions for the whole book, concentrate specifically on the passage itself. Each group/individual will report to the class. Read the passage out loud first, then give the answers to the five questions, and close with what you think is the most important application of this passage for our contemporary society/church.

- Mt 1:18-25: The angel announces Jesus' birth to Joseph.
- Mt 5:3-12: The beatitudes
- Mt 6:9-13: The Lord's Prayer
- Mt 28:18-20: The great commission

Hermeneutical questions

Mark

Mark is the fast-action gospel which seems to want to get the facts down so they can be preserved and passed onto the next generation. In art and literature it has been symbolized by the Ox, the Bull, or the Calf. These represent Christ's patient work, service, and power.

WHO?

Author:

Audience:

WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

WHEN?

WHAT?

WHY?

Group activity: unique & special passages in Mark

Do this activity in the same way that you did it for Matthew

- Mk 13:1-37: Signs of the End of the Age or "The Little Apocalypse"
- Mk 16:15-18: The Great Commission (Note: 16:9-20 is not included in some early manuscripts. What does this suggest about how to treat this passage?)

Hermeneutical questions

Luke

Luke is usually characterized as the Gentile Christian Gospel concerned for the common person. It is symbolized in art and literature by a man or a man's face representing Christ's humanity, His human sympathy, wisdom, and character.

WHO?

Author:

Audience:

WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

WHEN?

WHAT?

WHY?

Group activity: unique & special passages in Luke

Do this activity in the same way that you did it for the previous books.

- Lk 1:5-25: The announcement of John's birth to Zechariah
- Lk 10:25-37: The parable of the Good Samaritan
- Lk 15:1-32: The parables of the Lost Sheep, Lost Coin, and Lost Son
- Lk 24:13-25: Jesus and the two disciples on the Road to Emmaus

Hermeneutical questions

John

John is characterized as the theological or reflective Gospel because it tends to dwell on the meaning of Jesus' life and His divinity. This Gospel is symbolized in art and literature with an eagle. This symbolizes Christ's deity and His soaring heavenliness.

WHO?

Author:

Audience:

WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

WHEN?

WHAT?

WHY?

Group activity: unique & special passages in John

Do this activity in the same way that you did it for Matthew

- Jn 3:1-21: Jesus and Nicodemus: the new birth (includes Jn 3:16)
- Jn 14:16-17 and 16:12-15: The promise of the Holy Spirit
- Jn 17:1-26: Jesus' high priestly prayer
- The "I Am" Passages found in various places in John:

6:35 ff.	Bread of Life
8:12	Light of the World
10:7-9	Door (Sheep gate)
11:25	Resurrection and the Life
14:6	The Way, the Truth, and the Life
15:1-15	The Vine

Four Gospels Compared

	Mark	Matthew	Luke	John
Date of Writing	50s-early 60s	60-70	Late 50s-early 60s	80-90
Place of Writing	Rome	Antioch in Syria	Rome, etc.	Ephesus
First Readers	Christian Gentiles/Jews in Rome	Jews in Syria	Gentile Christians	Christians in Asia Minor
Theme	Jesus the Supernatural, Suffering Servant and Conqueror	Jesus the Messiah, the fulfillment of prophecy	Son of Man—the Universal Savior	Son of God—God Incarnated
Characteristics	Messianic secret; realism; action; Peter's influence; historical mode; vivid detail; little of Jesus' teachings; no genealogy or infancy stories	Jewish-Christian; systematic arrangement; gospel of the Kingdom; church gospel; Hebrew poetic form, parallelism; use of OT quotations	Social concern; individuals and women highlighted; childhood of Jesus; medical and technical terms; prayer; poetry; two-volume work with Acts	Theological gospel; the human Jesus; preexistence of Jesus; contrasts of: light and darkness, life and death, belief and unbelief; the "Jews"; the "world"

Holy Week

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Sunday

~~~~~  
**Lesson 5**

***THE HISTORICAL, SOCIAL, AND RELIGIOUS SETTING OF  
THE 1ST- CENTURY, GRECO-ROMAN WORLD***

***Objectives for this lesson***

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- understand the historical events and public, social climate of the first century and their impact on the spread of Christianity
- understand the social and religious settings of the first century and their impact on the spread of Christianity
- understand the setting for the development of the Early Church
- use this historical, social, and religious data as a basis for interpreting the New Testament

√ **Historical setting of the 1st-century, Greco-Roman world**

**Herod the Great**

Augustus Caesar said of him: "It is better to be Herod's pig (*hus*) than his son (*huios*)."

Herod ruled under Octavian or Augustus Caesar (31 BC-AD 14).

Herod's kingdom was divided between three sons after his death.

Archelaus ruled Judea, Idumea, and Samaria from 4 BC to AD 6.

Antipas ruled Galilee and Perea from 4 BC to AD 39. After Archelaus' exile he also ruled Judea, Idumea, and Samaria.

Philip ruled a small area west of the Upper Jordan and a larger area east of the Jordan from 4 BC to AD 34.

Agrippa I (AD 37-44) became king of all Palestine under Emperors Caligula and Claudius.

Agrippa II (AD 44-66) shared power over Palestine with the Roman Governor Felix and later Porcius Festus. Agrippa II appointed the high priest.

## **First Jewish revolt and destruction of Jerusalem**

**Nero** blamed the fire in Rome (AD 64) on Christians and started the first organized persecution of Christians.

**Vespasian** was emperor from AD 68 to 79. He was in power when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed.

**Emperor Domitian** ruled from AD 81-96 and decreed the first official persecution of the Christians.

Council of Jamnia in AD 90

Emperors **Nerva** and **Trajan** continued the persecution.

**Emperor Hadrian** (AD 117-138) crushed the second Jewish war and renamed Judea and Jerusalem.

## √ **Public social climate of the 1st-century Greco-Roman world**

### **Social classes**

Sharp contrast between the rich and the poor

Roman classes: aristocrats, freedmen, and slaves

Jewish classes: upper—chief priests and rabbis, middle—farmers, artisans, and small business owners

*Am ha-Aretz* (people of the land)

### **Christians were both Jewish and Gentile**

Craftspeople, traders, merchants seem predominate

Both slaves and masters

Wealthy Christians and poor

Public officials

Women were actively involved

### **Entertainment**

Gladiator shows

Sports heroes

Theater shows

Music and literature were highly honored

### **Business and labor**

Trade guilds

Industry was limited to small, local shops and home industry.

Overland caravans, shipping

Agricultural practices were highly developed.

Banking services were available.

### **Science and medicine**

Jews were not interested in science.

Greco-Roman medicine, surgery, and dentistry were widely practiced.

Greco-Roman mathematics and astronomy were highly developed.

## √ **Public social climate of the 1st-century**

### **Everyday life issues in Roman Palestine**

#### **Meals**

Romans ate four meals a day.

Jews ate two meals a day.

Main meal for both groups was at night.

Common people ate largely a vegetarian diet.

Meat for the common people was associated with religious feast days.

### **Clothing and \_\_\_\_\_**

Men wore tunics to the knee, a warm cloak. Only Roman citizens could wear togas.

Women wore short under-tunic and a colored outer tunic to the feet.

Married women covered their heads in public.

Non-Jewish males were shaved with short hair. Jewish men grew beards and had longer hair. Women's hair was generally kept long.

### ***The* \_\_\_\_\_**

Caesar Augustus was somewhat of a moral reformer. The Augustan Social Laws: sumptuary laws, laws against adultery, and laws which encouraged marriage and having children.

The extended family was the basic unit in the Jewish population.

Female babies were unwanted.

No family surnames.

Average marriageable age for Roman women was 12, Roman men 30 to 50.

Average marriageable age for Jewish women was 13-14, Jewish men 25 to 50.

### ***Morals***

Greco-Roman gods were guilty of every type of immorality.

Jews demanded a very high level of morality.

## **Competing \_\_\_\_\_**

Greek and Roman mythology

Emperor \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ religions

Superstitions

## **Competing philosophical schools**

### **Neo-Platonism**

Mind over body

Body not important

### **Epicurean School**

Withdraw from society

### **Stoic School**

“Que sera, sera”—what will be, will be!

To be happy, do your duty.

### **Cynicism**

Anti-social behavior

### **Skepticism**

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.

Lesson 6

**THE APOSTLE PAUL**

**Objectives for this lesson**

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- develop a chronology for Paul’s life
- understand the historical, geographical, social, and literary setting for Paul’s life and ministry
- identify the major points of Paul’s theology
- understand the questions Paul was facing in his ministry
- gain an understanding of the author, audience, date, and place for Acts
- gain an appreciation of why Acts was written

√ **Paul’s ministry: Christianity in an urban environment**

**Major cities in Paul’s life**

**Tarsus, Cilicia**

A busy commercial city on the southeast coast of Asia Minor

A regional Roman capital

On a major road

A world-class university

Greek language and culture predominate

**Antioch, Syria**

Cultural area

Major trade route

Church community first consisted of Jews

Disciples were first called “Christians”

Antioch church sent Paul and Barnabas as missionaries

Church was growing fast in urban areas using communication networks

## **Chronology of Paul's life**

|            |                                                                            |
|------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6 BC       | Paul's birth                                                               |
| 28-30      | Public ministry of Jesus                                                   |
| 33         | Paul's conversion                                                          |
| 33-36      | Paul in Arabia (being taught by revelation of Jesus Christ)                |
| 35 or 36   | Paul's first postconversion visit to Jerusalem                             |
| 35-44      | Paul preaches in Cilicia                                                   |
| 44-46      | Paul invited to Antioch, Syria, by Barnabas (famine in Palestine)          |
| 46         | Paul's second visit to Jerusalem                                           |
| 47-48      | First missionary journey with Barnabas to Cyprus and Galatia               |
| 49         | Jerusalem Council                                                          |
| 49         | Jews expelled from Rome by Claudius because of the "Chrestus" riot         |
| 49-52      | Second missionary journey with Silas through Asia Minor and Greece         |
| 52         | Third visit to Jerusalem and a visit to Antioch                            |
| 52-55      | Third missionary journey—Ephesus                                           |
| 55-57      | Third missionary journey—Macedonia, Illyricum, and Achaia                  |
| 57-59      | Fourth visit to Jerusalem, arrested and imprisoned at Caesarea under Felix |
| 59-60      | Appears before Festus and King Agrippa; appeals to Caesar; voyage to Rome  |
| 60-62      | Under house arrest at Rome                                                 |
| 62-64 (65) | Released, journeys to Spain (?)                                            |
| 64         | Fire in Rome                                                               |
| 64 (67)    | Paul returns to Rome and is martyred under Emperor Nero                    |

# √ Historical and literary issues for Paul's life and ministry

## Debate in dating Paul's life

### Acts records five trips to Jerusalem

9:26, right after his conversion

11:29-30, to bring money for famine relief

15:2-4, to attend the Jerusalem Council

18:22, after his second missionary journey

21:17, final visit when he is arrested

### Which visit is mentioned in Galatians 2:1-10?

One side assumes Paul is referring to the Acts 15 Council in Jerusalem

The other side believes it refers to the famine relief visit

## Background issues to understanding Paul in his context

Jewish/Gentile Christianity: we find four different but related views of the relationship of Judaism, Christianity, and Gentiles stated or reflected in the New Testament. These views all existed at the same time, bringing conflict and misunderstanding to the Early Church. Some of these views were more prevalent at different times than others.

### Four types of Jewish/Gentile Christians

|                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                          |                             |
|------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Gentiles must become Jews after becoming Christians. | Gentile Christians are Gentiles living within Israel who must compromise so as not to offend Jews.<br>1. Eat no meat offered to idols.<br>2. Keep from sexual immorality<br>3. Avoid eating blood and meat from animals with blood inside of them | Gentile Christians are not under the dietary laws and practices of Jews. | Jesus has replaced Judaism. |
| Judaizers                                            | James (Peter)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Paul                                                                     | John,<br>Author to Hebrews  |



## **Models for Paul's \_\_\_\_\_**

As mentioned before, Paul grew up in a town known for its rhetoric. An extension of rhetoric, which usually refers to the spoken word, is the letter.

The typical letter of this period generally followed this pattern or form:

Salutation (from/to)

Prayer or expression of thanks to god (or gods)

Body

Advice or exhortation

Closing farewell

## **Types of letters**

Letter of friendship

Letter of praise and blame

Letter of exhortation and advice

1. *Paraenetic* letters (exhortation and dissuasion)
2. Letters of advice
3. *Protreptic* letters
4. Letters of admonition
5. Letters of rebuke
6. Letters of reproach
7. Letters of consolation

Letters of mediation

Accusing, Apologetic and accounting letters

## √ **The teachings of Paul**

### **Which letters did Paul write?**

Agreement on Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon

Less agreement on Ephesians, Colossians, and 2 Thessalonians

Many scholars do not think the Pastoral Epistles of 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus were written by Paul.

### **Paul's Gospel and Jesus' Gospel**

#### **Rationalistic viewpoint**

- Jesus taught a simple ethical spirituality or called for political or social revolution.
- Paul transformed the simple, gentle Jesus into an idealized diving man.
- Rationalistic view does not acknowledge Jesus as the divine Christ.

#### **Orthodox Christianity viewpoint**

- Acknowledges there are differences between Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of God and Paul's of the risen Christ.
- Paul and Jesus are not identical in their message, but they are complementary.

## √ **Paul's theology**

### **GOD is to be feared, loved, served, and worshiped.**

God is at the center of Paul's theology. Of the 1,300 times the New Testament uses the word "God," over 500 of them are in Paul's writings.

- God is all-wise and all-knowing (Rom 11:33-36, 1 Cor 1:21, 24, 2:7; Eph 3:10).
- God is worthy of all praise and glory forever (Rom 16:27, Gal 1:5, Eph 3:21, Phil 4:20, 1 Tim 1:17, 2 Tim 4:18).
- God is faithful (2 Cor 1:18) and commands that the gospel be made known to all (Rom 16:26).
- God comforts the distressed (2 Cor 1:3-4), raises the dead and rescues from deadly peril (2 Cor 1:9-10), and establishes believers in their faith and gives us His Spirit (2 Cor 1:21-22).
- God is the creator and sustainer of creation (Rom 1:25, Col 3:10, Acts 14:15-17).
- God is the King of Kings, immortal, invisible (1 Tim 6:15-16).
- God is one: versus polytheism (1 Tim 6:15, Rom 3:30, Gal 3:20).
- God is personal and accessible: versus stoicism/ fatalism (2 Cor 1:3-4, 10, 21-22).

- God is concerned with social morality and personal ethics: versus Roman and Greek mythology (Rom 1:18-2:11, 12:20-21).
- God is more than a spirit experienced through rites of worship, ascetic denial, or mystical sensuality: versus mystery religions (2 Cor 5:18-6:4, 6:16b-18).

### **EVIL**

- Paul does not speculate on the origin of evil, but does acknowledge that under the ultimate rule of God (1 Tim 3:15), evil exists, orchestrated by the devil or Satan, mentioning the devil 5 times and Satan 10 times (1 Cor 7:5, 1 Tim 3:7, 2 Tim 2:26).
- The devil/satan is a personal, powerful, malevolent being with subservient underlings, human and angelic (Eph 6:11-12, 2 Cor 11:14-15, 12:7).
- Evil, mentioned by Paul 43 times, is real and influential, but passing, and will not triumph (2 Tim 4:18, Eph 6:10-16).

### **HUMAN CONDITION**

- Human beings were created in God's image—we are God's offspring (Acts 17:28-29).
- Each person has an outer nature (body) and an inner nature (mind, soul, heart) (2 Cor 4:16, 5:8). The body can be controlled by the mind or the inner person (1 Cor 9:27).
- Human beings have physical bodies here on earth, but they will be transformed into spiritual bodies in heaven (1 Cor 15:35-46).
- Each person has a conscience (Rom 2:15) which may be spoiled by sin (1 Cor 8:7, 1 Tim 4:2).
- No one is righteous within oneself (Rom 3:1-20).
- Human beings can be good or bad depending on whom they belong to (2 Tim 3:13-17).
- All have sinned (Rom 3:23-28), and naturally follow the passions of the flesh (Eph 2:1-5). They are held captive by the devil, but can escape with God's help (2 Tim 2:24-26).
- Each person has a mind which has been darkened by sin (Eph 4:17-18) but can be renewed by God (Rom 12:2).
- Christians are adopted by God and therefore become His children, not just His servants (Gal 4:1-9).

### **THE LAW**

- "The Law" or the Old Testament is authoritative for all (Rom 3:31, 7:12, 14, Gal 5:13-14, 6:2) and emphasizes that all are lost (Rom 3:10-11, quoting Ps 14:1-3). It condemns legalism which believes one is saved by the merit of one's good works and points to the need of forgiveness (Rom 3:23-24, Col 1:13-14). Therefore it points to Christ (Rom. 3:21-24, Gal 3:24).
- "The law" or the Jewish dietary or circumcision customs are definitely not necessary for salvation. Paul characterizes this use of the term as a legalistic misrepresentation of the Old Testament. The Law rightly understood requires salvation by faith, wrongly understood requires salvation by works (Rom 3:28, Gal 2:16, Eph 2:15).

### **PEOPLE OF GOD**

- Paul does not see himself as the founder of a new religion. He sees the Church as a continuity with the true Jews, a remnant truly following God's will. The foundation of Paul's gospel is on the covenant God made with Abraham (Acts 13:17, Rom 9:4-8, 11:12; 2 Cor 11:22, Gal 3:8-9).
- As people of God we are children and heirs of God, no longer servants or slaves (Gal 4:4-5, Rom 8:16-21, Phil 2:15).

### **REVELATION AND SCRIPTURE**

- Paul was called to reveal the gospel or the mystery of the gospel and lay the foundation for the Gentiles' faith. God gave him special grace for this task (Rom 15:15-16, 16:25-26; 1 Cor 3:10, Gal 2:6-9).
- Christ is the awaited Messiah, the word of salvation itself (2 Tim 2:10).
- Gentiles were co-heirs of God's covenant favor with believing Israel (Eph 3:4-9).
- These ideas were also held by Christ, other apostles, and Old Testament Scripture (Acts 24:14, Gal 2:6-9).
- All Scripture is inspired by God and useful for correcting and instructing people so they might be equipped for the ministry God has for them (2 Tim 3:16-17).

### **CHRIST/MESSIAH**

- Messiah: Paul uses the Greek translation of Messiah, "Christ," close to 400 times.

- Christ is one with God, yet willingly humbled himself by taking on human form and enduring the shameful cross (Phil 2:6-11).
- Christ was integral in creation and even now upholds the created order (Col 1:15-20).
- Christ came in human likeness, vindicated by the Spirit, was seen by angels, proclaimed to the nations, believed in all over the world, and taken up in glory (1 Tim 3:16).
- "God was in Christ" (2 Cor 5:19).

### **REDEMPTION**

- Christ died for us when we were still sinners (Rom 5:7-8, 1 Tim 2:6).
- "Redemption" refers to the paying of a price, or "ransom" for the release of prisoners from captivity. It has rich Old Testament associations with the liberation of God's people from Egypt. It is both a present event (forgiveness of sins) and a future event (heavenly inheritance of believers) (Rom 3:24-25).
- Redemption is also a future event and will involve all of creation including our bodies (Rom 8:23).
- We are redeemed by the blood of Christ which means we have forgiveness of sins, an inheritance in Christ, and have received His Holy Spirit as a pledge of our coming redemption (Eph 1:7-14).

### **THE CROSS**

- Punishment reserved by the Roman overlords for the most despicable crimes. Jews in Jesus' day interpreted Dt 21:23, "anyone who is hung on a tree is under God's curse," to refer to crucifixion and thus this proved to them Jesus was not the Messiah, but was cursed by God (1 Cor 1:18-23, 2 Cor 13:4).
- Paul turns this around to say Christ became a "curse" for us so blessing might come to the Gentiles (Gal 3:13-14).
- The Cross became a symbol of the means by which God in Christ atoned for sins (Eph 2:16, Col 1:20, 2:14).
- The Cross is also the means by which believers walk in the footsteps of Christ. It is an inspiration and effective agent in "killing" the sinful nature and its passions and desires (Gal 5:24, 6:14).

### **RESURRECTION**

- He refers to resurrection at least 60 times in his letters (2 Tim 2:8).
- Paul says the Christian message stands or falls with the truth of Jesus Christ rising bodily from the dead (Acts 13:34-37, 1 Cor 15:14).
- There will be a resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous before judgment (Acts 24:15-21).
- Jesus' resurrection means we have victory over sin which is the ultimate cause of death (Rom 4:24-25).
- Jesus' resurrection means we will also be resurrected (Rom 8:11).

### **THE CHURCH**

- He uses the term over 60 times in his letters.
- The Church is the Body of Christ (Eph 1:22-23, 4:15, 5:23).
- The Church is the one body God created out of two: Jew and Gentile. It emphasizes unity and interdependence (Gal 3:28, Eph 2:11-16, Rom 12:3-5).
- The Church as a social entity means the believers are to live humbly and exercise their gifts for the sake of others in the body of Christ and for the extension of the kingdom of God (1 Cor 12:1-31).
- The Church is connected to Christ, the bride of Christ, and so must be holy and pure (2 Cor 11:2).

### **ETHICS**

- We are to be imitators of God and Christ (Eph 5:1, Phil 2:5-11).
- Our conduct is regulated by God's presence in our lives and His purpose in saving and calling us (Eph 1:4, 4:1, Titus 2:6-10).
- We are the temple of God and as such we must keep ourselves holy (1 Cor 3:16-17, Titus 2:14).

- Our ethics are also a means of witness. We are to meet the minimum expectations of a “decent” person in our society (1 Thess 4: 11-12, Titus 3:1-14).
- Above all, love is the crowning virtue (1 Cor 13:13).

### **LAST THINGS**

- The future has profound implications for how life is to be lived now (Rom 2:1-11, 8:15-18).
- Creation itself is waiting and longing for redemption (Rom 8:19-22).
- When Paul talks about the Parousia (appearing) of Christ it includes final judgment (2 Thess 1:5-10).
- The Holy Spirit is a sign of the end of the age which believers are already enjoying. The Holy Spirit is a “seal” of the inheritance and adoption believers have and enables them to call God, “Abba” (Rom 8:15-17).
- Paul’s view of the end times means we must live in a state of readiness for Christ’s return as well as continue to spread the good news of salvation to everyone who will hear it (Rom 13:11-14, Phil 3:17-4:1).

## √ **Acts: the Gospel to the nations**

### **Hermeneutical Questions**

## **Acts**

### **WHO?**

Author:

Audience:

### **WHERE?**

Author:

Audience:

### **WHEN?**

### **WHAT?**

### **WHY?**

## **Peter and Paul: parallel stories**

Not only does Luke divide the book into two parts, describing the Church's witness to "Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria" and "the ends of the earth." But he also has a main character or "hero" for each of these sections: Peter for the witness nearby and Paul for the witness faraway.

Notice how carefully Luke tried to parallel these two "giants" of the Early Church. The careful writing is part of what scholars are referring to when they talk about Luke's style as "cultured Greek."

|                                              | <b>Peter</b>         | <b>Paul</b>    |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------------|
| <b>Structure of apostle's mission</b>        | Acts 1-12            | Acts 13-28     |
| Witness to risen Christ                      | 1:21-22              | 23:1; 26:16    |
| Spirit initiates                             | 2:1-40               | 13:1-40        |
| Heals lame and speech                        | 3:12-26              | 14:8-17        |
| Persecution (stoning) leads to wider mission | 6:8-8:4<br>(Stephen) | 14:19-23       |
| Defends Gentile mission in Jerusalem         | Ch. 11               | Ch. 21         |
| Imprisoned at Jewish feast                   | 12:4-7               | 21:16-28       |
| Conclusion: success of Word of God           | 12:24                | 28:30-31       |
| <b>Deeds of the apostle</b>                  |                      |                |
| Encounters a magician                        | 8:9-24               | 13:6-12        |
| Gentiles try to worship him                  | 10:25-26             | 14:13-15       |
| Raises the dead                              | 9:36-43              | 20:9-12        |
| Delivered from prison                        | 12:6-11              | 16:24-26       |
| Laying on hands gives Spirit                 | 8:14-17              | 19:1-6         |
| Appoints leader with prayer/laying on hands  | 6:1-16               | 14:23          |
| Defended by Pharisees in Sanhedrin           | 5:34-39              | 23:9           |
| Accused of acting against Moses              | 6:13-14<br>(Stephen) | 21:20-21; 25:8 |

## √ **The missionary efforts of the early church**

### **Why was Acts written?**

The purpose of Acts

### **How the story of Acts develops**

Peter dominates chapters 1-12

Paul dominates chapters 13-28

## ***PAUL'S LETTERS TO THE CHURCHES***

### ***Objectives for this lesson***

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- gain an understanding of the types of letters written in the first century
- know the purpose and main content for Paul's letters

### **√ Letter to the Romans**

#### **Hermeneutical questions**

**Type:** Romans is a protreptic letter in that it is exhorting the Romans to take up the Christian life. It is also epideictic, in that it uses "praise and blame" to locate ideas and people within their proper place in the Christian worldview.

#### **WHO?**

Author:

Audience:

#### **WHERE?**

Author:

Audience:

#### **WHEN?**

#### **WHAT?**

#### **WHY?**

#### **The importance of Romans**

Paul's letter to the Romans has greatly influenced the development of Christianity.

St. Augustine

Martin Luther

John Wesley

Karl Barth

Although Romans is not truly a "systematic" theology, it is Paul's major work on what he believed and why he believed it. The principles Paul gives us in this book are vital for understanding many of his other letters, which seem to be much more occasional in the sense that they are addressing very specific problems and issues.

## √ Letter to the Corinthians

### **Hermeneutical questions**

These two books give us our first encounter with Paul's letters that deal with specific problems in a church.

**Types:** Paul uses friendship terms common to the friendship letters, but these letters are primarily a mix of letters of exhortation, advice, and praise and blame. Paul is anxious to help this primarily Gentile congregation understand the Christian lifestyle. Through praise and blame of certain persons and actions as well as direct advice, Paul is helping this congregation to understand what is proper and acceptable for a Christian. They are also *paraenetic* in that Paul spends a lot of time reminding them of what he had already explained to them when he was with them.

### **WHO?**

Author:

Audience:

### **WHERE?**

Author:

Audience:

## **WHEN?**

## **WHAT?**

## **WHY?**

### **Specific issues**

#### **1 Corinthians:**

- They were tolerating open immorality in their church community (5:1).
- Paul answers specific questions on marriage, divorce, and celibacy (7).
- Paul also answers specific questions on diet, idolatry, and personal Christian freedom (8-10).
- Paul answers their questions about worship, spiritual gifts, and congregational order (11-14).
- Paul answers questions about resurrection and the age to come (15).

**2 Corinthians:** Paul's theme is "The way to glory is the way of the cross." The Corinthians saw Christ as a way to better themselves, a way to power and affirmation by peers. Paul taught them about the constructive outcome of suffering and that his suffering is evidence that his ministry is legitimate.

- Paul has to defend his apostolic authority because the Corinthians were setting aside his teachings, even though he was the founder of the Corinthian church.
- Paul is encouraging the church to be generous in giving money for the Jerusalem church (8-9).
- Paul appeals for complete reconciliation (6:1-7:4).

#### ***Discussion: salvation by faith***

- *Why do you think Paul emphasizes salvation by faith versus salvation by works?*
- *For Paul, what is the relationship between good works and salvation?*
- *Discuss this statement and its implications for our contemporary setting:*
- *If what we do hinders people from coming into the Kingdom or weakens their resolve to remain Christians, then we should adjust our actions.*

# √ Letter to the Galatians

## Hermeneutical questions

**Type:** The Letter to the Galatians is a letter of rebuke. It is unusual among Paul's letters because of the "harshness" of his tone. We don't have any other letters to this church or group of churches, but can assume Paul tried, reminding them of what he had taught them and giving them strong advice, but none of that had worked. This is a church that had known conversion and the filling of the Holy Spirit, but was now caught up in legalism (3:3). It no longer understood the freedom that comes in the Spirit.

## WHO?

Author:

Audience:

## WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

## WHEN?

## WHAT?

**Thesis:** Salvation comes only through faith in Christ (2:15-21).

**Conclusion:** Maintain your freedom in Christ (5:1-12).

**Ethical applications:** Defines what freedom in Christ is not (5:13-21), and what it is (5:22-6:10).

### Special passages:

2:20: "I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me."

3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."

5:22-23: Fruit of the Spirit

## WHY?

- To remind them salvation by faith brings freedom and not bondage.
- To clarify the issues being confused by the Judaizers, that Christians had to follow the dietary and ritual laws of Judaism to please God.
- To reestablish Paul's authority and thus the authority of his gospel in their minds.
- To remind them they are all one and equal because they have been baptized in Christ.

# √ Letter to the Thessalonians

## Hermeneutical questions

**Types:** Friendship terms, praise used in introductory thanksgiving. Uses elements of paraenetic, admonition, and consolation letters.

## WHO?

Author:

Audience:

## WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

## WHEN?

## WHAT?

### 1 Thessalonians:

- God's call to a life of holiness—4:1-12.
- Resurrection and the need to prepare for the parousia—4:13-18, 5:1-11.
- Christian relationships and attitudes—5:12-24.

### 2 Thessalonians:

- Teaching on the preparation and nature of the parousia—1:3-2:12.
- Stand firm in the gospel of salvation and sanctification—2:13-17.
- Warning against the rebellious idle, how to deal with the disobedient—3:6-15.

### Special verses:

- 1 Thess 4:1-3: How do we please God?
- 1 Thess 4:3: It is God's will that you be sanctified.
- 1 Thess 4:3-8: What does holiness "look like" in our private/intimate lives?
- 1 Thess 4:9-10: How does holiness affect our relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ?
- 1 Thess 4:11-12: What does holiness "look like" to those outside the church?
- 1 Thess 4:15-18: How does Paul describe the *parousia*, or second coming of Christ?
- 1 Thess 5:23-24: Sanctification benediction
- 2 Thess 2:1-12: What does Paul say about the timing or date of the second coming of Christ?
- 2 Thess 2:16-17: Encouragement benediction
- 2 Thess 3:6-15: What is Paul's attitude toward the "idle" and how should they be treated?

## WHY?

### 1 Thessalonians:

- Paul wants to help these Greek Christians understand persecution is part of being a Christian.
- Paul encourages the believers by praising their faith and by reminding them of his instructions.
- Paul encourages them by giving them insight into the last things, an issue their city was very concerned about, but viewed in a very different way than Christianity did.

### 2 Thessalonians:

- This letter is similar to 1 Thess in its content, but narrows the topics to those Paul understands them to be dealing with specifically: Nature of and preparation for the parousia.
- Paul corrects a misunderstanding about the end times. Apparently some in the church thought the end times had already come. He also gives a strong warning against the "ataktoi" – Greek word best translated "the rebellious idle."

### ***Discussion: growing Christians***

Compare the issues of these growing Christians in Galatia and Thessalonica with new and growing Christians of today.

- *How are new and growing Christians similar? How are they different?*
- *What principles can we apply to our current time?*

# √ Letter to the Ephesians

## Hermeneutical questions

Paul writes this letter from prison in Rome. He wants to reassure the church and remind them of his teachings. He does not deal with specific church problems, so it may have been a circular letter written to a group of churches in the Ephesus area.

**Type:** Primarily a *paraenetic* letter. Paul is writing to remind the Ephesians of what he taught them when he was with them.

## WHO?

Author:

Audience:

## WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

## WHEN?

## WHAT?

Theme: Christ is the Head of the Body, His Church.

Brief outline:

- Re-creating the Human Family of God—What God Has Done—1:3-3:21.
- Re-creating the Human Family of God—What God Is Doing—4:1-6:20.

Special verses:

- 2:11-22: Unity of Jew and Gentile in Christ
- 3:4-20: Prayer for holiness
- 4:11-16: Spiritual gifts and growth
- 5:21-33: Christ and the Church as a model for marriage

## WHY?

- To encourage those who had once worshiped the pagan gods but were now Christians by reminding them of Paul's teaching.
- Paul's emphasis on the supremacy of Christ was important in a city of many gods.
- Paul ends with exhortations on how they should live, what their lifestyle should look like in their particular situation.

# √ Letter to the Philippians

## Hermeneutical questions

Philippians is unique in Paul's writings, as it is the only letter written to primarily Roman Gentile Christians whom Paul has personally discipled. Paul is writing to them while in prison in Rome, their mother city. He wants to assure them his chains have served to advance the Kingdom and he is in prison only because of Christ and not for any other reason.

**Type:** Friendship letter, *Paraenetic* letter

## WHO?

Author:

Audience:

## WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

## WHEN?

## WHAT?

## WHAT?

**Main purpose:** Express Paul's pastoral concern for them. He felt they needed reassurance that the gospel they believed in was marching on to victory, in spite of Paul's imprisonment.

### Special verses:

1:21: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."

2:5-11: Kenosis passage. Christological poem.

3:7-11: Considers all things loss compared to knowing Christ.

4:8-9: What to think about: whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable.

4:13: "I can do everything through him who gives me strength."

4:19: "And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

## WHY?

- Paul wants to express his pastoral concern for the readers whose mother country has Paul in prison.
- Paul wants to identify the enemies of the gospel. They include Rome, false teachers, and troublemakers in the church in Philippi.
- Paul also reminded them of his high Christology. Jesus was not just a human, but divinity itself.

# √ Letter to the Colossians

## Hermeneutical questions

Colossians is a letter that uses friendship terms, but, is primarily a *paraenetic* letter that reminds the church what Paul taught when he was with them.

**Types:** Friendship letter, *Paraenetic* letter

## WHO?

Author:

Audience:

## WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

## WHEN?

## WHAT?

## WHAT?

Colossians is similar in content to Ephesians

| <b>Ephesians</b> | <b>Colossians</b> |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1:1-2            | 1:1-2             |
| 1:15-17          | 1:3-4, 9-10       |
| 2:5-6            | 2:12-13           |
| 3:1-13           | 1:24—2:5          |
| 5:19-20          | 3:16-17           |
| 5:22—6:9         | 3:18—4:1          |
| 6:21-22          | 4:7-8             |

### **Special verses:**

1:15-20: Hymn on Christ as the image and fullness of God

3:1-17: Rules for holy living

3:18-4:1: "Household code" rules for Christian households: wives, husbands, children, fathers, slaves, and masters

## WHY?

- To assure the Colossians and Laodicians (Col 4: 16) of Paul's interest and care.
- To refute false teaching and teachers who are misleading some in the church.
- To make assertions about Jesus Christ as the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all Creation, and the one in whom all things hold together.
- The Colossian heresy included legalism (salvation based on works) and asceticism (harsh treatment of the body as a means of earning God's favor).

Lesson 8

**PAUL'S LETTERS TO INDIVIDUALS**

**Objectives for this lesson**

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- gain an understanding of the types of letters written in the first century
- know the purpose and main content for Paul's letters to Philemon, 1 and 2 Timothy, and Titus

√ **Letter to Philemon**

**Hermeneutical questions**

Philemon is a unique letter of Paul in that it is a pure letter of mediation. It is the first one we have encountered in which Paul addresses an individual, and it is the only letter Paul writes to an individual who is not an "overseer" or someone with pastoral authority over more than one church.

**Types:** Friendship letter, *epideictic*, letter of mediation

**WHO?**

Author:

Audience:

**WHERE?**

Author:

Audience:

**WHEN?**

**WHAT?**

**WHAT?**

Main purpose of the letter is to ask Philemon to accept Onesimus as a brother in Christ. Paul knows what society would demand, but he urges a new Christian relationship (15-16). Paul could command Philemon to accept Onesimus, but he chooses not to (8-9).

**WHY?**

- Onesimus, a runaway slave, was converted under Paul. Paul felt the right thing for Onesimus to do was to return to his master and straighten things out. Most likely Onesimus was a slave because he or his family owed money to Philemon.
- Paul writes to urge Philemon to treat his slave with mercy, as he is now a fellow believer.

# √ Letters to Timothy

## Hermeneutical questions

1 and 2 Timothy, along with Titus are referred to as the Pastoral Epistles. 1 and 2 Timothy are written to Paul's "son" in the faith and an able early leader, who organized and trained leadership in the churches Paul started. These Pastoral Epistles are unique in that they are letters written to individuals in administrative leadership over several churches or groups of churches.

**Types:** *Paraenetic* letters

## WHO?

Author:

Audience:

## WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

## WHEN?

## WHAT?

## WHAT?

These are handbooks for church leaders and discuss issues of qualifications for leadership, as well as the organization and administration of the churches.

### Special verses:

1 Tim 2:1-7

1 Tim 4:1-3

1 Tim 4:12: "Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but . . ."

1 Tim 4:13-16

1 Tim 6:10: "For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil."

1 Tim 6:12: "Fight the good fight of the faith."

2 Tim 1:8-12

2 Tim 2:3 "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus."

2 Tim 3:14-17

2 Tim 3:16-17: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking . . ."

2 Tim 4:2: "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct,

2 Tim 4:7: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

## WHY?

- To encourage Timothy/pastors in face of opposition from false teachers.
- To give Timothy/pastors a list of priorities for the local church: prayer, worship, high standards for leadership, sound teaching, and care for the church members.

# √ Letter to Titus

## Hermeneutical questions

Titus is also a Pastoral Epistle written to a person Paul left in charge of organizing and training leadership for young churches.

**Type:** *Paraenetic* letter

## WHO?

Author:

Audience:

## WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

## WHEN?

## WHAT?

**Special issues** in Titus include

- Qualifications for elders
- Instructions for various age and gender groups

**Special verses:**

2:11-13: "For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say 'No' to ungodliness . . . and to live self-controlled . . . while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ."

## WHY?

The purpose is to give Titus practical direction until Paul's aides, Artemas and Tychicus, arrive.

Paul lists his qualifications for elders in 1:6-9, so Titus has an "objective" standard in choosing leadership as well as Paul's authority for the qualifications

Paul also gives Titus special instructions for his churches (2:1-2; 2:3-5; 2:6-8; 2:9-10).

## **Discussion: guiding principles of interpretation**

### **Leadership of women in the Church**

- *How do we interpret 1 Tim 2:11-15?* Along with 1 Cor 14:33b-36?

It contradicts what we know of Paul's practice and beliefs in other letters.

What about other Scripture passages like:

- Acts 1:14, 2:14-17, 18:26, 21:9
- Gal 3:28
- 1 Cor 11:5
- Rom 16:1,7

"Selective" interpretation is not consistent or acceptable.

We have to find a way to understand the passage that is consistent with all other Scripture, or admit we don't know what the author had in mind.

Two main interpretation problems in this passage:

1. the role of women in the church and
2. how women are saved.

The big question is how to interpret this passage in the light of all other Scripture.

The one thing that seems to be true is that this passage was written for a specific situation at a specific time.

**The interpretation principle** that best helps us to interpret this passage is to interpret unclear passages in light of those with clear and consistent meaning.

Thus,

1. we do not interpret the passage to bar all women from speaking, praying, or teaching in church and
2. we do not condition a woman's salvation on whether she has had a child or not.

Immediately after this passage in 1 Tim 3 there is listing of the qualifications of bishops and deacons that emphasizes their need to be mature Christians. Considering the lack of educational opportunity for women in the first century, perhaps the problem Paul is addressing in 1 Tim 2:11-12 is their lack of education on religious issues and knowledge in general. This suggestion is only a guess as to what the author was trying to say in these very obscure passages.

## ***THE GENERAL EPISTLES***

### ***Objectives for this lesson***

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- gain an understanding of the types of letters written in the first century
- know the purpose and main content for the General Letters, Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, and 1, 2 and 3 John.

Hebrews and James, as well as 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, (and many add 1, 2, and 3 John) are called General Letters, General Epistles, or Catholic Epistles because their audience is not specific.

Most probably they were written to a certain type of people—Jewish Christians for Hebrews and James—but not to a certain local church. “Catholic” in this context means “universal” or general and does not refer to the Catholic Church as a specific denomination. “Epistle” is an old English word for “letter” and does not mean anything beyond that.

# √ Letter to the Hebrews

## Hermeneutical questions

Hebrews resembles a sermon or speech to which a letter closing is added (13:22-25). Its style and oratory are remarkable as well as the author's grasp of the Jewish traditions and rituals.

**Type:** *General Epistle*

## WHO?

Author:

Audience:

## WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

## WHEN?

## WHAT?

Hebrews does not follow the regular form of a letter. Rather it seems to be a sermon adapted to the letter form. It follows the form of alternating from doctrinal teaching to practical application and exhortation (2:1-4).

The author is "legitimizing" Jesus as the promised one, Messiah, prophet, priest. That is, he or she is showing how Jesus fulfills the promises of the Jewish tradition while at the same time is even better than the old Jewish tradition.

### Special verses:

2:17; 3:1; 4:15; 5:10; 7:26-27: Jesus as our High Priest  
1:1-3, 4; 3:2-6; 7:16, 19; 8:6; 9:13-14; 19:34; 11:16: Christ as better than . . .

## WHY?

- Jesus is the fulfillment of Scripture.
- There is no forgiveness of sin WHILE we are denying Christ.
- True faith believes God even when His works are not seen.
- Post-Pentecost Christians face more stern judgment for disobedience than those in the Old Testament did because they have had the benefit of the revelation of Christ and the experience of the Holy Spirit.

# √ Letter of James

## Hermeneutical questions

James is a letter written, not to a specific church, but to a specific group of people, "12 tribes in the Diaspora," or better, Jewish Christians in the Diaspora. It addresses issues that are important to the Jewish Christian Church, but are useful also for the Gentile Church. Because of its very Jewish character with emphasis on "good works," it took a while before it was accepted into the New Testament canon.

**Type:** *Paraenesis*

## WHO?

Author:

Audience:

## WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

## WHEN?

## WHAT?

The theme of James could be "Salvation by Obedient Faith."

James is not really telling his audience anything new, but encouraging them to follow what they have been taught by him and to keep that faith pure.

### Special verses:

- 1:2-3: The attitude we are to have in temptation
- 1:22-25: Hearing and doing the will of God
- 2:14-26: The relationship between faith and obedient works
- 3:5-13: The control of the tongue
- 4:1-17: The source of division and problems in the Christian life
- 5:13-16: The place of prayer in the Christian life

## WHY?

- True faith will be reflected in our actions and lifestyle, including social and economic justice.
- Violence and anger is not a "faith" response to trials and persecution.

### Special verses:

- 2:18: "Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."
- 3:1-12: Taming the tongue.
- 4:7 "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."
- 5:14-16: The prayer of faith.

# √ Letters of Peter

## Hermeneutical questions

These two General Epistles are the only direct writing we have of the apostolic hero Peter. They address the situation and needs of the Early Church from a primarily Jewish standpoint, although Peter does not narrow his audience to just Jewish Christians as James did.

**Type:** General Epistles

## WHO?

Author:

Audience:

## WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

## WHEN?

## WHAT?

### Special verses:

- 1 Peter 1:7: “[Trials] have come so that your faith— . . . may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”
- 1 Peter 1:15-16: “But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’ ”
- 1 Peter 1:18-23: By whom and at what price were we ransomed?
- 1 Peter 2:11—3:13: Conduct codes for Christian aliens and exiles, specifically slaves, wives, husbands and everyone
- 1 Peter 3:14-17: The attitude we should have when suffering for righteousness’ sake
- 1 Peter 5:5-6: God and humility
- 1 Peter 5:7: “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”
- 1 Peter 5:8: “Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”
  
- 2 Peter 1:5-7: With what should we support or add to our faith?
- 2 Peter 2: 1-22: Description and fate of false teachers
- 2 Peter 3: 3-18: Second Coming of Christ
- 2 Peter 3:15-16: Indicates Paul’s letters are known and authoritative.

## WHY?

### 1 Peter:

- To encourage the believers in face of persecution.
- To keep their eyes on eternal salvation and not on the temporal persecutions.
- He contrasts life as a foreigner or “Pilgrim”—citizen of heaven—versus the life of the world.
- He concludes that the Christian’s main goal is to follow Christ, wherever that leads.

### The life of the pilgrim

### The life of the world

Be obedient to God (1:14, 22)

Rebellion against God

Be holy (1:15)

Unholiness

Live as servants (2:16, 4:11)

Live selfishly

Be prayerful (3:7, 4:7)

Reject God

Live openly, transparently (2:16, 3:16)

Live deceitfully

Do what is good (2:15, 3:16-17)

Do what is wrong

Be gentle and respectful (3:15)

Live harshly and insolently

Love one another deeply (1:22, 4:8)

Hate one another

Exercise self-control (1:13, 4:7, 5:8)

Live excessively, wildly

Live humbly (5:6)

Be proud and arrogant

Reject evil (2:11)

Embrace evil

Accept human rule (2:13, 17)

Reject human rule

Control sinful desires (2:1, 11)

Give desires free rein

Do God’s will (4:2)

Reject God’s will

Share with other (4:9)

Hoard one’s possessions

Use our gifts for others (4:10-11)

Refuse to share

**2 Peter:**

- Christians are to grow in grace and he lists the virtues that will help do that (1:5-8).
- Believers can have confidence in the Old Testament and in the apostolic teachings (1:12-21).
- Believers must beware of false teachers and doctrines (2:1-22).
- Peter gives an explanation as to why Jesus had not returned: God's time is not like our time and delay indicates God's patience. He also explains the day of the Lord will come like a thief, so we must be ready by living holy and godly lives (3:8-13).

## √ Letter of Jude

### Hermeneutical questions

Jude is a short, one-chapter letter that is very similar to 2 Peter 2. It reflects the same, tension-filled time as Peter's letters and a similar concern for how to identify and deal with false teachers.

**Type:** General Epistle

### WHO?

Author:

Audience:

### WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

### WHEN?

### WHAT?

#### Special verses:

4, 8-19: False teachers; Compare these verses with 2 Pet 2:1-22. *What are the similarities, what are the differences?*

24-25: "To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy—to the only God our Savior be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and forevermore! Amen."

### WHY?

Some principles that come out of this little letter include:

- Believers must fight for the doctrine of the deity of Jesus because this is fundamental to the Christian faith.
- Salvation involves moral transformation.
- False teachers can be identified by their lifestyles, which do not live up to their teachings.

Jude urges the believers to build one another up and resist evil, false teachers, and doctrines (Jude 4, 8, 10-16).

# √ Letters of John

## Hermeneutical questions

The first two letters were written to congregations and the third letter was written to an individual, who was probably part of one of the congregations in Asia Minor. They are written in very simple and clear Greek and express the concern of an aging pastor for his people.

**Type:** Johanine Epistles

## WHO?

Author:

Audience:

## WHERE?

Author:

Audience:

## WHEN?

## WHAT?

The themes of **1 John** include right belief and right living. These both directly confront the incipient Gnostic teachings apparently trying to take over in the church(es) John was writing to.

**2 John** was written to the "chosen lady," which is an unusual Greek term for the New Testament, *kuria*, or the feminine form of *kurios*, which is translated "Lord, master, or Sir." This letter is only one chapter long and is really an announcement that John wants to come and visit. He wants to explain his position and reinforce "the truth." His two main "commands" are to "love one another" and to watch out for the deceivers who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh.

**3 John** was written to "my dear friend Gaius." This short, one-chapter letter is also an announcement of John's desire to come for a visit. He commends Gaius for his hospitality to "brothers" who were strangers to Gaius. Following the tradition of a praise and blame letter, he praises the behavior of Gaius and Demetrius and "blames" or states his disapproval of Diotrephes' behavior.

### Special verses:

- 1 John 1:7-8; 2:1; 3:4-5, 8-9; 5:16-17: Sin
- 1 John 2:5, 15; 3:1, 11, 14-18, 23; 4:7-21; 5:2-3: Love
- 2 John 1:1, 3, 5-6: Love
- 3 John 1:1: Love

## WHY?

- **1 John:** So their joy might be full, so they will not sin, so that they will love one another, and to assure them of their victory in Christ.
- **2 John:** Similar to 1 John, adds the concern about those who might deny either the humanity or deity of Christ.
- **3 John:** Gaius is commended for his hospitality to traveling Christian evangelists, discusses the vices of Diotrefes and the virtues of Demetrius.

## Exploration of the false teachings

### Gnosticism vs. Christianity

John contrasts the false teachings of Gnosticism with the true Christian belief.

#### *Gnosticism*

#### *Christianity*

#### *wrong belief*

#### *right belief*

1:6: Believes a lie

2:20-23: Believes the truth

4:6: Spirit of falsehood

4:6: Spirit of truth

2:22-4:3: Denies Jesus

4:2: Confesses Jesus

1:10: Denies sin

1:9-2:1: Accepts forgiveness

#### *excuses sin: a sinning religion*

#### *victorious Christian living*

1:6: Walks in darkness

1:7: Walks in the light

2:19: Division comes from the spirit of the anti-Christ

1:9: Has fellowship with God and others

2:4: Disobeys Christ

2:3, 17: Obeys Christ and does God's will

3:8: Sins continually

3:4-6: Freedom from sinning

5:19: Under the control of the devil

3:9-10, 4:4, 5:4-5 Has God's victory by faith

These three letters of John were written late in the first century and to people who were probably facing Gnostic or pre-Gnostic teachings as well as Docetic teachings, which were surfacing in the church. Let's briefly define these two early heresies.

### **Gnosticism:**

The Church Fathers compared Gnostic teaching to the many-headed hydra of Greek legend. In other words, it was hard to pin down what the Gnostics believed.

There was no Gnostic church or normative theology, no Gnostic rule of faith, and no dogmas of exclusive importance.

Gnostic systems attached themselves to "host" religions, so they did not have their own tradition, sacred books or stories, but borrowed ones from the host religion or a mixture of host religious ideas.

The essential features of Gnosticism consist of:

- Their name comes from the Greek word "gnosis," which means knowledge. The Gnostics claimed to have special knowledge. They were "gnostics" or knowers, people of understanding. This "gnosis"—special knowledge—had a liberating and redeeming effect. It was given by revelation only to the elect who were capable of receiving it.
- In each person there is a divine "spark" which comes from the divine world and has to be awakened. For some people this is very easy to do, because the spark glows brighter; for others it takes more effort.
- They believed in dualism on the cosmological and anthropological levels. So there are good and evil gods/goddesses or heavenly beings as well as good and evil people. Good and evil forces or beings tend to be of equal strength in pure dualism, so the question of who wins in the end is still to be determined.
- Angels and other heavenly beings played an important role in the creation of the world, and they explain why things are the way they are.
- Soteriology: God/god/goddess and his/her helpers open up a way in which the soul can escape to heaven. This is where the special knowledge comes in. Those with special knowledge know how to get the God/god/goddess and his/her helpers to "reveal the things that are difficult to interpret and the things that are secret."
- Eschatology: The deliverance of the heavenly soul has cosmic significance. So when a soul is liberated from its earthly body and condition, this will affect the gods/goddesses as well as the rest of the heavens.

-- From *Trimorphic Protennoia*, XIII, 35, in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, trans. John D. Turner, ed. James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1981).

## **Docetism**

In brief, this is the belief that Jesus was not truly human; He just *seemed* to be human. And if Jesus was not human, then He was not the "Messiah" ("Christ"), since by definition the Messiah was an anointed human being and He was not the Son of God, but God himself.

Greek thinking found it very difficult to understand how a truly human person could reveal the character of God. Contrary to Old Testament Jewish teaching, they believed the human world was quite separate from the heavenly world, and the goal of every human soul was to escape this world (or the body) for life in the supernatural world. Note how Gnostic ideas of finding the secret of escape fits also into this perspective.

The religious/philosophical issue Docetism tried to solve was how an all-powerful God could be imprisoned in a human being. Since this was thought to be impossible, Jesus must have only *seemed* to have been human. One of the prominent Docetists who lived at the same time as John (according to Irenaeus in *Against Heresies* 3.3.4) was Cerinthus. Irenaeus tells us the apostle John went to a public bathhouse in Ephesus, but refused to take a bath because Cerinthus was there. Some have suggested 1 John was written in reply to Cerinthus himself.

## **Facing False Teachings**

Select a recorder/reporter.

Read and discuss how John deals with Gnosticism and Docetism in the following passages:

1 John 2:22-23

1 John 4:1-3, 15

1 John 5:1-5, 10-12

What do John's concerns tell us about the churches in Asia Minor at the end of the first century?

What similarities do they have with the 21st-century churches?

What differences?

Lesson 10

**REVELATION**

**Objectives for this lesson**

By the end of this lesson, students should:

- gain an understanding of the Jewish apocalyptic literature
- know the purpose and main content for Revelation

√ **A summary of Revelation**

**Hermeneutical questions**

The first two letters were written to congregations and the third letter was written to an individual, who was probably part of one of the congregations in Asia Minor. They are written in very simple and clear Greek and express the concern of an aging pastor for his people.

**Type:** Johanine Epistles

**WHO?**

Author:

Audience:

**WHERE?**

Author:

Audience:

**WHEN?**

**WHAT?**

“Apocalypsis Jesu Christus”: A Revelation of Jesus Christ. This is the first line of Revelation and Vernard Eller, in *The Most Revealing Book of the Bible: Making Sense Out of Revelation*, says

In his title John also has given us the primary principle for interpreting his book . . . his desire to proclaim and expound the person of Jesus Christ . . . John has given us a revelation of Jesus Christ which is to be harmonized with the larger

revelation of Christ which is the New Testament itself—this, RATHER THAN as a revelation of future history to be correlated, now, with 'signs,' i.e., whatever can be observed in today's world and in the political events of the twentieth century.  
--(Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 12.

"Apocalypse" is a Greek work which means to uncover or unveil something hidden. It is a highly symbolic book which uses the language of Jewish apocalypticism to express its message.

It is also a book of "apocalyptic" prophecy. As prophecy,

## **WHY? Interpretations of Revelation**

Classical theories of interpretation  
Idealism

Preterism

Historicism

Futurism

Some views  
Premillennial view

Amillennial view

Postmillennial view

Dispensational Premillennial view

## √ **The nature of Apocalyptic literature**

### **Modern approaches**

Modern historical critical approach

The sociological approaches

Elements of social crisis

Experience of trauma

A call for social radicalism

### **Jewish Apocalyptic symbolism**

Similarities between Revelation and Jewish Apocalypticism

Use of images

Expansion of evil toward the end

Division of time into periods

Differences with Jewish Apocalypticism

No attempt at pseudonymity

Not as intense a pessimism

The prophesied event is not from the vantage point of the seer (John), but from the viewpoint of the exalted Christ.

## √ **Theology of Revelation**

### **God**

Exists

Created the universe

Guides the course of history

Has overcome evil

Will bring a triumphal end in "His own good time"

### **Son of God**

Jesus is to return as "King of kings" and "Lord of lords."

Jesus is the Divine Being with the same divine qualities as God, the Father.

Jesus is the "Lamb" who was slain and is the Savior of the World.

### **People of God**

Individual churches have their strengths and weaknesses.

As a whole they are victorious over the beast, his image, and his followers.

They are referred to as: servants of God, a kingdom, priests, saints, the blameless, the called and chosen, the bride of the Lamb, the redeemed.

Their job is to keep believing in the testimony of Jesus and the Word of God. They do this by being alert, keeping God's commands, being pure, and doing the work God has asked them to do.

### **Eschatology**

Personal eschatology (what happens at the end of our lives)

Certainty of life after death

Comfort of the believer in the presence of God and Christ

Resurrection and reward of the saints

Cosmic eschatology (what happens at the end of the world)

Second coming of Christ

Assignment of all to eternal reward or punishment

Creation of a new heaven and a new earth