

New Testament Survey

The term *Palestine* is used throughout this course to identify the geographic region generally located between the Sea of Galilee and the Negev desert and west of the Jordan River. Although this term is not an official political label for this area either now or during the first century AD, it is a convenient way to reference a geographic area that is very difficult to name due to its tumultuous political, ethnic, and religious history. This descriptive term has been used since the fifth century BC, even though it was not officially applied as a political designation until the second century AD. It is used for convenience because of its general recognition and does not intend any historical, political, or ethnic implications.

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General Course Design

- Each course is based on course objectives.
- Each course is composed of several units.
- Each unit is composed of several chapters.
- Each chapter is composed of two or more lessons.
- Each lesson contains one or more lesson objectives.
- Each lesson objective corresponds to specific lesson content.

Course Objectives

Course objectives represent the concepts—or knowledge areas—and perspectives the course will teach you. Review these objectives before you begin studying to have an idea of what to focus on as you study. The course objectives are listed on the course introduction. [Click here to view them now.](#)

Unit Overview and Interactive Learning Objects

A unit overview previews each unit's content and outlines the unit development.

Chapter, Lesson Content, Lesson Objectives, and Numbering System

Each *chapter* begins with an introduction and outline. The outline presents the chapter's lesson titles and objectives. Chapters consist of short lessons to allow you to complete one lesson at a time (at one sitting), instead of the entire chapter at one time.

The *lesson content* is based on lesson objectives.

Lesson objectives present the important concepts and perspectives to be studied in the course.

Each chapter, lesson, and objective is uniquely numbered. This numbering system is designed to help you relate the lesson objective to its corresponding lesson content. Chapters are numbered consecutively throughout the course. Lessons are numbered within each chapter with a two-digit decimal number. For example, Lesson 2 in Chapter 3 is numbered 3.2. The first number is the chapter (3), the second number is the lesson (2) within the chapter.

Lesson objectives are tagged with a three-digit decimal number. For example, Chapter 1, Lesson 1, Objective 1 is identified as Objective 1.1.1. Chapter 1, Lesson 2, Objective 3 is Objective 1.2.3. The first number is the chapter, the second is the lesson, and the third is the objective. The numbering system is to assist you in identifying, locating, and organizing each chapter, lesson, and objective.

What to Look for in the Boxes

Boxes within the text contain two important learning tools—*lesson objectives with their respective numbers* and *interactive questions* that focus on key lesson principles. Always read, understand, and use these two learning tools as you study the lesson sections to which they relate.

Interactive questions relate to specific lesson content and specific lesson objectives. Interactive questions, along with lesson objectives, will help you learn the concepts and perspectives that are tested in exam questions. Interactive questions are numbered consecutively within each chapter.

Understand what the interactive question is asking. Once you understand what the interactive question is asking, search for the answer as you study the lesson's related content section. Suggested responses can be viewed by clicking on the interactive question. Return to your location in the textbook by clicking on the question again, on the answer page.

Lesson objectives present the key concepts. These tips on using lesson objectives will help you master the course content and be prepared for exams:

- Identify the key concept(s) and concept perspectives in the objective.
- Identify and understand what the objective is asking you to do with the key concept(s).
- Think of the objective as an essay test question.
- Read and study the lesson content related to the objective and search for the answer to the “essay test question”—the objective.

Lesson Titles and Subheads

Lesson titles and subheads identify and organize specific lesson content.

Enrolled students who do not have access to the Internet may request a printed final examination. For faster service, please call Enrollment Services at 1-800-443-1083. Please allow 7–10 business days for delivery of your final examination.

Glossary, Reference List, Suggested Reading List

A *glossary* (which defines key words) and *reference list* (works cited in each chapter) follow the last chapter of the IST. A *suggested reading list* offering additional resources for further study may also be included.

Recommended Reading Textbook

An optional textbook is recommended for use with each course. The textbook recommended to accompany this course is listed on the course introduction page. Some courses may provide additional suggested reading lists following the *reference list*.

New Testament Survey

The New Testament is God's revelation of himself to humankind through His Son, Jesus Christ. In a ministry of continual revelation of the love and compassion of the Father, Jesus implanted the truths of God's love and holiness into the hearts of His disciples. His entire ministry was one of giving. The Father gave the Son, and the Son gave himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, thus making possible again fellowship between the Father and all humanity.

Upon completion of His earthly ministry, Jesus gave His disciples the directive to continue this mission of love (John 20:21). It was these disciples who recorded, in the Gospels, the events of their master's life. All the writers of the New Testament, except the apostle Paul and Luke, lived and walked with Jesus. However, while Paul did not physically walk with Jesus, his personal encounter with the Savior and Lord was no less transformational. This former persecutor of Christians was now dedicated to manifesting Jesus Christ to a lost and dying world. God chose this zealous, educated, self-giving Jew to take the gospel to the Gentile world. It was Paul who gave us the fullest exposition of Christian doctrine and instruction in his Epistles to new converts in the early church.

As you immerse yourself in the study of the New Testament, may you receive greater vision of the love and passion of the Father, as seen through His Son. Then, as did the apostle Paul, you must continue Jesus' mission by communicating His love and compassion to the world.

Course Objectives

Upon completion of this course, you should be able to

1. Explain how God used the Jews, Greeks, and Romans to prepare the world for His Son.
2. Analyze the political, social, and religious characteristics of New Testament times.
3. Explain the formation of the New Testament canon.
4. Identify five nations, five districts, ten cities, and five bodies of water related to New Testament times.

5. Divide the New Testament into four groups, listing the books and characteristics of each group.
6. Summarize how Jesus Christ is a unifying theme of the New Testament.
7. Analyze the authorship and historical context of each New Testament book.
8. Explain and apply the theme and purpose of each New Testament book.

Unit 1 The Gospels and Acts

In the midst of Roman rule, a child was born who would change the world. That child—Jesus, the Son of God—lived, died, and rose from the dead. After ascending to heaven, He sent His Spirit as a helper, guide, and comforter. On the Day of Pentecost, 120 believers were filled with the Spirit, receiving power to witness for Jesus through words, deeds of kindness, and supernatural signs and wonders. The new community began as a group so small it met in one upper room, yet it grew and spread all over the Roman Empire. While the new community began as one Jewish group with one language and culture, it grew to be an international church of many languages and cultures.

The books of the New Testament were written for the church (groups of believers). The Gospels teach believers about the life and teachings of Christ. Acts and the Epistles, Romans through Jude, record the history and development of the church and teach how to live the Christian life. The last book, Revelation, predicts the final victory of God over His enemies. Regardless of the audience or subject or genre, however, each book of the New Testament provides a picture of Christ.

In this unit, after a brief synopsis of the New Testament, we will focus on the Gospels and Acts. We will consider the background or setting, purpose, and outline of each book, along with its major teachings and emphasis. Most of all, we will discover the truths God wants to teach us through the unique perspective of each writer. Please take time to read each of the books of the New Testament as you approach the specific lessons.

Chapter 1 An Overview of the New Testament

Lessons

- C1.1 Preparation for the New Testament
- C1.2 Setting of the New Testament: Palestine in the First Century
- C1.3 Books of the New Testament
- C1.4 Christ in Every Book of the New Testament

Chapter 2 The Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke

Lessons

- C2.1 The Gospel of Matthew
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Chapter 3 The Gospel of John

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- C3.1 Understanding John
- C3.2 The Structure of John
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Chapter 4 The Book of Acts

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- C4.1 Understanding the Book of Acts
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Chapter 1 An Overview of the New Testament

God plans ahead. He told Abraham that his descendants would be slaves for four hundred years, but He promised to deliver them (Genesis 15:13–16). When Joseph was only a boy, God gave him dreams about ruling (Genesis 37:2, 30). Those dreams were not fulfilled until Joseph was thirty (41:46).

The Almighty made every nation of people from one man. He planned the times for each nation and the places where each nation would live (Acts 17:26). He showed Daniel that the Medes and Persians would conquer the Babylonians, the Greek kingdom would then arise, and the Romans would in time conquer the Greeks. Finally, God said that an eternal kingdom would rise above the ruins of all human kingdoms (Daniel 2:24–47).

Therefore, we are not surprised that He planned for our salvation. Although He allows each person to accept or reject the gospel, He made a plan to save us before He created us:

- “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world’ ” (Matthew 25:34).
- God “chose us in [Christ] before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight” (Ephesians 1:4).
- God “has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time” (2 Timothy 1:9).
- “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake” (1 Peter 1:18–20).
- “But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons” (Galatians 4:4–5).

Consider ways in which events in history and in your own life demonstrate that God planned ahead for your salvation.

In this chapter, we will consider God’s ways of preparing the world for Jesus through the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans; the history behind and elements of the New Testament; and the unique ways Jesus is presented in each New Testament book. Throughout our study, we will be reminded of God’s preparation for our salvation through Jesus and for our eternity in heaven with Him. Indeed, God plans ahead, and we are part of His plans.

Lesson 1.1 Preparation for the New Testament

Objectives

- 1.1.1 Explain how God used the Jews, Greeks, and Romans to prepare the world for His Son.*
- 1.1.2 Define Pharisees, Sadducees, Sanhedrin, and Septuagint.*

Lesson 1.2 Setting of the New Testament: Palestine in the First Century

Objectives

- 1.2.1 Describe six rulers of Herod’s family, the high priest, the temple, and synagogues.*
- 1.2.2 Discuss the origins of the New Testament.*

Lesson 1.3 Books of the New Testament

Objective

- 1.3.1 Identify the four groups of New Testament books, placing each book in its proper group.*

Lesson 1.4 Christ in Every Book of the New Testament

Objective

1.4.1 Summarize three pictures of Christ from each group of New Testament books.

Lesson 1.1 Preparation for the New Testament

The interval of time between the end of the Old Testament and the writing of the New Testament (approximately four hundred years) is called the intertestamental period. The following chart examines the major historical events that occurred during each era of that time.

Four Time Periods from Malachi to Christ (Barker 1985, 1430)

Period	Date	Event
Persian (539–330 BC)	430–420	Malachi, a prophet during the time of Nehemiah, wrote the last book of the Old Testament. The Persians controlled Judah for about one hundred years after Nehemiah, but they allowed the Jews to worship God.
	334–323	By conquering the Persian armies in Macedonia , Alexander the Great gained control of Europe and the Middle East. He allowed the Jews to follow their religion.
	323	At Alexander’s death, his kingdom split. Two of his generals, Ptolemy and Seleucus, started dynasties (kingdoms in which one

Greek or “Hellenistic” (330– 320–198
166 BC)

family ruled for several
generations).

Ptolemy and the kings who
ruled after him reigned in
Egypt and controlled Israel.
Still, they allowed Jews to
worship the God of Israel.
Seleucus set up his kingdom
in Antioch, Syria.

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The Seleucids gained control
of Palestine and, for a time,
gave the Jews relative
religious freedom.

175–164

A Syrian tyrant named
Antiochus IV Epiphanes
(meaning “God revealed”)
began to rule. He attempted
to Hellenize the Jews; that is,
he tried to force them to
forsake Jewish ways and
follow Greek (Hellenistic)
ways. He tried to destroy all
copies of the Torah or
Pentateuch. This caused most
Jews to rebel in 167.

Maccabean or Hasmonean 167
(166–63 BC)

A messenger from Antiochus
IV ordered a Jewish priest
named Mattathias to offer a
Greek sacrifice. Mattathias
refused. When another Jew
stepped forward to offer it,
Mattathias killed both him
and the king’s messenger.
The priest and his five sons
destroyed the Greek altar and
fled to the mountains. Thus

began the Maccabean revolt. *Maccabeus*, meaning “hammer,” was the name some gave to Judas, one of Mattathias’ sons. Others refer to this period as the Hasmonean period, based on the name Hasmon. He was the great-grandfather of Mattathias. Another Jewish group of this period was the *Hasidim*, which means “holy ones.” Members of this group were loyal to the law of Moses and joined with the Maccabeans in their revolt. In time, the Hasidim split into two groups: (1) the Essenes, who withdrew from society and lived alone, and (2) the **Pharisees**, who comprised the larger group from the Hasidim (Douglas 1978, 981).

Roman (63 BC through the time of Christ) 63

When the Roman General Pompey conquered Jerusalem, the provinces of Palestine came under Rome. Herod the Great was the ruler of all of Palestine when Christ was born.

Thus, at the time of the New Testament, Rome ruled the world. The top Roman rulers, called Caesars or emperors, had great, king-like authority. Yet even hundreds of years before Christ’s birth, God was at work in the nations. God prepared the world for Christ through the Persians, Jews, the **Greeks**, and the **Romans**^{kw}.

Explain how God used the Jews, Greeks, and Romans to prepare the world for His Son.

The Jews

Location of the 12 Tribes of Israel in Canaan/Palestine

Religious Beliefs

God chose the people of Israel to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exodus 19:6). He wanted them to be His messengers to the nations around them, but they failed. Because they repeatedly disobeyed God and worshipped idols, He punished them.

Eventually, the twelve tribes of Israel were divided into two kingdoms: The ten tribes who lived in the northern part of Palestine were called Israel or the Northern Kingdom. The Southern Kingdom was called Judah and included the tribes of Judah, Simeon, and part of Benjamin. We hear little of the northern tribes after **Assyria** conquered them in 722 BC. Nebuchadnezzar, king of **Babylon**^{kw}, conquered Judah in 586 BC and carried the people away as captives.

Explain two ways in which the Jewish religion prepared the world for Christ.

The Babylonian captivity changed the Jews in many ways and served to fulfill God's original purpose for His people. At the end of captivity, some Jews returned to Palestine, some remained in Babylon, and many others moved to various nations. All of these Jews openly worshipped Yahweh (Jehovah), the one true God.

Two aspects of Judaism differed from the pagan religions surrounding them: (1) the Jews adhered to monotheism, the belief in only one God (from the Greek *mono*, meaning "one," and *theism* referring to God), and (2) they believed in the law of Moses. These two Jewish beliefs helped prepare the way for Christ and the gospel. Because of the Jews' dispersion among the nations, the world knew about the God of Israel, the Messiah, and the old covenant under Moses

before Jesus was born. Thus the words, ideas, and message of the gospel were not completely new.

Define Pharisees, Sadducees, Sanhedrin, and Septuagint.

How did the Septuagint help prepare the world for Christ?

The Septuagint

One way in which the Jewish beliefs spread was through the Septuagint. Originally written in Hebrew, the Old Testament Scriptures were translated into Greek between 250 and 150 BC. Legend says that, to fill a gap in his library, King Ptolemy II Philadelphus (284–247 BC) asked the high priest in Jerusalem for six scholars from each of the twelve tribes of Israel to translate the Jewish Law into Greek. The legend claims that these seventy-two scholars completed an exact Greek translation of the Law in seventy-two days. The number was rounded off to seventy, and the Latin word for seventy, *septuaginta*, became a descriptive title of the translation (Lohse 1987, 128–129). Thus, this Greek translation of the Old Testament became known as the Septuagint.

How did the beliefs of the Pharisees and Sadducees differ from each other?

Although the legend was likely fabricated, the need for the Septuagint was genuine. This translation made the Old Testament teachings available to every educated person through Greek, the world's common language at the time (see the section on the Greeks). The greater Jewish population lived outside Palestine (called the *Diaspora*) and was largely Hellenized; that is, they spoke only Greek and had adopted Greek values and customs. The Septuagint provided a way for these Jews, as well as Gentiles, to read about the God of Israel and reestablish their religious roots. In fact, the book of Hebrews frequently quotes from the Septuagint.

What are some ways that Christians today can avoid legalism? Is it possible to have precise doctrine, yet somehow miss the importance of showing love and mercy to humankind?

Pharisees and Sadducees

During the two centuries before Christ, the Jews developed two groups of strong religious leaders: the Pharisees and **Sadducees**. We read about them often in Matthew through Acts.

The Pharisees were the larger of the two groups and had very strong religious beliefs. They not only accepted all of the Old Testament as God's Word but also believed the oral traditions of Judaism to be inspired (Barker 1985, 1476). They believed in angels, spirits, and life after death. The Pharisees were usually quite devout, but some were legalists, being more concerned with small details than with the more important parts of the Law (Matthew 23:23–24). Of the two groups, it was the Pharisees who most often challenged Christ's teaching. They became angry with Jesus for healing on the Sabbath, eating with unwashed hands, and having mercy on sinners.

The Sadducees became a primary opposition to the Apostles, especially their teaching about the Resurrection. The Sadducees did not give credence to oral tradition and did not believe in angels, spirits, or resurrection (Acts 23:6–8). They were powerful political leaders. Seventy elders, together with the high priest, comprised the highest Jewish court, called the *Sanhedrin*. Of those, the high priest and the leading officials were Sadducees. Both Pharisees and Sadducees made up the other representatives on the court.

The Pharisees, Sadducees, and Sanhedrin would play a major role in the fulfillment of God's ultimate plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The Greeks

How did God use the Greeks to prepare the world for His Son?

More than three hundred years before Christ's birth, a young Greek prince named Alexander dreamed of having one language for the whole world. In 334–323 BC, Alexander the Great began to make his dream come true. As his army quickly overpowered the known world, he made Greek the official language of the people he conquered. He set up Greek cities and Greek culture so that Greek customs became the way of life for everyone. Although Alexander's empire fell apart soon after his death at the age of thirty-three, the Greek language and way of life continued.

Even centuries later, Greek remained the common language of the world, easing the spread of the gospel message. Many Jews studied their Scriptures in Greek through the Septuagint, the apostles preached mostly in Greek, and the authors of the New Testament books wrote in Greek.

The Romans

After the Greeks, the Romans conquered most of the Mediterranean world and organized it into a great empire. They ruled from the western end of the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River in the East.

Name two ways that God used the Romans to prepare the world for Christ.

Local governors ruled over the provinces and districts of the empire. In God's plan, the Romans also prepared the world for the coming of Christianity, specifically in two important ways.

First, the Romans established law and order. Under Caesar Augustus, the large Roman army brought peace to the world. During this time, Jesus was born in the little village of Bethlehem, in the Roman province of Judea (Luke 2:1–7). Throughout the years of Roman rule, God worked through the Caesars to fulfill His purposes for His people and the world (see the following chart).

Roman Caesars or Emperors Related to the Early Years of the New Testament

Date	Caesar	Explanation	Bible Reference
30 BC– AD 14	Caesar Augustus	Ordered a census at the time of Jesus' birth	Luke 2:1
AD 14–37	Tiberius	Ruled during Jesus' ministry and death	Luke 3:1
AD 37–41	Caligula	Demanded that people worship him	

AD 41–54	Claudius	Ruled during a great famine Expelled the Jews from Rome	Acts 11:28 Acts 18:2
AD 54–68	Nero	Persecuted Christians; Peter and Paul were martyred during his rule. Was the Caesar at Paul’s trial	2 Tim. 4:16–17 Acts 25:10–12 Acts 27:24
AD 69–79	Vespasian	Ordered his son, Titus, to destroy Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70	Luke 21:20
AD 81–96	Domitian	Was probably the Caesar persecuting believers when John wrote Revelation	Rev. 17:8–11

Second, the Romans built a system of roads. Well-built and usually protected, these roads provided an opportunity for people to travel more easily across the empire. Paul used many of these roads as he traveled across Achaia and Macedonia.

Yet, despite Rome’s progress in these areas, sin increased greatly. Losing faith in their old gods, people began searching for a way of true salvation. The state religion of Rome lacked meaning and could not satisfy the heart, so people felt empty. Although various “mystery” religions promised salvation and fellowship with the gods, they also could not satisfy the hearts of individuals. People were ready for a Savior.

Jesus came into a world prepared for Him. He was born “when the time had fully come” (Galatians 4:4).

Lesson 1.2 Setting of the New Testament: Palestine in the First Century

Describe six rulers of Herod's family, the high priest, the temple, and synagogues.

Herodian Rule

Herod the Great and his family ruled in Palestine at the time of Christ. Herod the Great's parents were from nearby Idumea (ancient Edom) and had been coerced into Judaism prior to his birth (Ehrman 2000, 215). The Romans appointed this Herod to be the king of the Jews. He ruled from 37 to 4 BC and was known for his superb building projects and his ruthless use of power. Herod murdered anyone who seemed to threaten his rule, including his wife, his wife's mother and uncle, his brother-in-law, and three sons (Gromacki 1974, 16). Though tragic, it came as no surprise when Herod ordered the killing of all babies in the small village of Bethlehem (Matthew 2). After Herod the Great's death, his kingdom was divided among three of his sons: Archelaus, Philip II, and Antipas.

Archelaus ruled in Judea, Idumea, and Samaria from 4 BC to AD 6. On their return from Egypt, Joseph and Mary avoided Judea because he was ruling there (Matthew 2:19–23).

Herod Philip II ruled the northeast territories of Iturea and Trachonitis from 4 BC to AD 34. Caesarea Philippi was within his realm (Matthew 14:3, Luke 3:1).

Herod Antipas was the **tetrarch** of Galilee and Perea from 4 BC to AD 39 and is often referred to in the Gospels. John the Baptist accused this Herod of adultery because Antipas married his former sister-in-law, Herodias. This accusation cost John his life (Matthew 14:1–2). Jesus called Antipas “that fox” (Luke 13:32). Herod Antipas was also involved in Christ's trial in Jerusalem (Luke 23:7–12).

After Antipas, Herod Agrippa I ruled over Galilee, Samaria, and Judea (AD 37–44). He was the grandson of Herod the Great. Acts 12 says that he murdered James, the son of Zebedee, and also put Peter in prison. Acts then briefly describes this Herod's death (Acts 12:21–23).

Herod Agrippa II, the great-grandson of Herod the Great, was the last of Herod's family to rule (AD 50–100). Agrippa II was king of Judea, and his name is found in Acts 25–26 at the time of Paul's trial before Festus in Caesarea. He agreed with Festus that Paul should be released (Acts 26:31–32).

Roman Authority

How did Pilate's position differ from that of Herod Antipas?

Appointed by Caesar, Pontius Pilate was the Roman governor of Judea at the time of Christ (AD 26–36) and presided over Jesus' trial. After first saying He was "not guilty," Pilate eventually condemned the Lord to death (John 18:38–19:6). Shortly after Christ's death, the Romans removed Pilate from office and ordered him to appear before the emperor in AD 36. We have no further record of Pilate after this.

Summarize the facts about each Palestinian ruler by completing the adjacent chart.

Palestinian Rulers

Ruler	Place(s)	Dates	Scriptures
Herod the Great	Palestine		
Archelaus			
Herod Philip II			
Herod Antipas			
Herod Agrippa I			
Herod Agrippa II			
Pontius Pilate			

Religious Aspects

People of Authority

The Jewish **high priest** and the Sanhedrin ruled over Jewish religious matters in these difficult times. The New Testament identifies three of these high priests: (1) Caiaphas was the high priest at the time of Jesus' trial (John 18:13). (2) Annas, Caiaphas' father-in-law, was the former high priest. He also took part in Jesus' trial (John 18:24). (3) A high priest named Ananias oversaw the Sanhedrin during Paul's trial (Acts 23:2).

Places of Worship

In Christ's time, how did Jews use the temple and synagogue?

The temple in Jerusalem was the center of religious life for the Jews, who came from all nations to worship, offer sacrifices, and observe religious feasts there. Synagogues, which emerged due to the Diaspora, functioned as schools, community centers, and places to teach the Scriptures on the Sabbath. They did not include priests or sacrifices. For the many Jews who lived far from Jerusalem and seldom went to the temple, the local synagogue provided a place of prayer and religious instruction. During the synagogue worship service, the people offered prayers at certain times. Both Jesus and the early Christians often worshipped in synagogues (Luke 4:16–30; Acts 13:14; 26:11).

The Old and New Testaments

Discuss the origins of the New Testament.

Jews considered the Old Testament to be the Book of God, believing it contained God's Law and God's will. The Old Testament taught that there is only one God and that all of life is under His control. The Jews believed that God would help and save them in time of need (Luke 2:25).

What was the essential criterion for accepting books into the New Testament canon, and what three factors supported this criterion?

Since the key to understanding New Testament Scriptures is often found in the Old Testament, what are some practical ways you can increase your knowledge and understanding of both Testaments?

The New Testament completes the record of God's revelation of himself to humankind. It clearly teaches all people, Jew and Gentile, the eternal truths of the living God. Just as the Old Testament became a canon for the Jews to live by, many of the books and letters written about Jesus' life and teachings developed into the New Testament canon. Although several criteria were used to ascertain which books were worthy of inclusion into the canon, the essential criterion was divine inspiration. Inspiration was determined by the book's apostolic authorship (the author was an apostle or closely associated with an apostle), its orthodox (correct) doctrine, and its universal acceptance by the early church as inspired and authoritative.

Lesson 1.3 Books of the New Testament

The Twenty-seven Books of the New Testament

Identify the four groups of New Testament books, placing each book in its proper group.

The New Testament's twenty-seven books can be divided into the four groups described below. If you are not already familiar with the books, memorizing their names, in order, will help you navigate through the New Testament more easily.

Historical Books: The Four Gospels and Acts (Matthew–Acts)

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John comprise the four Gospels. With specific purposes in mind, inspired by the Holy Spirit, each Gospel writer emphasized a different aspect of Jesus' nature:

How do the five historical books describe Jesus?

- Showing Jesus Christ as the “King of the Jews,” Matthew outlines the fulfillment of Jewish hopes through many Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. This book places the most importance on the teachings of Christ.
- Mark pictures Jesus as “the Servant of the Lord,” busy doing His Father’s work and will. As a result, Mark emphasizes Christ’s work, especially the work of redemption.
- Luke emphasizes Jesus as “the Son of Man,” the perfect example of humanity. As Savior of the world, Jesus gave His life “to seek and to save what was lost” (Luke 19:10). Christ’s love and compassion are important thoughts in this Gospel.
- John presents Jesus as “the Son of God,” the eternal Word who came to reveal God to all. This Gospel shows the relationship of Christ to those around Him. It tells about the people He met and the way He changed their lives. People received eternal life when they accepted and believed Him to be the Son of God.

A continuation of Luke’s Gospel, the book of Acts shows the risen Christ as “the Baptizer,” working through His apostles who have new power by the Holy Spirit. Acts is the first church history textbook, describing the beginning of the church and its growth “to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Letters from Paul (Romans–Philemon)

Memorize and name the five history books and the thirteen letters from Paul in order.

The New Testament letters (Epistles) not only explain who Jesus is and what He did but also show believers how to apply His teachings. The apostle Paul wrote thirteen epistles, which may be divided into four groups. (Do not try to memorize this list now. We will spend more time on Paul’s letters later in the course.)

1. Letters about salvation: Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, and Galatians
2. Letters from prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon
3. Letters about the future: 1 and 2 Thessalonians
4. Letters for pastors: 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus

Letters to All (Hebrews–Jude)

Memorize the names of all twenty-seven New Testament books, and practice saying them in order.

Various people wrote the eight remaining New Testament letters. We can divide these letters into two groups:

1. Letters to those who are suffering: Hebrews, James, 1 Peter
2. Letters about false teachers: 2 Peter; 1, 2, and 3 John; Jude

The problems of suffering and false teachers became worse as time passed. Persecution of Christians came first from non-Christian Jews and then, after AD 64, from the Roman government. Jesus had warned His followers that false christs and false prophets would come (Matthew 24:24). Paul also warned the elders of the Ephesian church about this threat (Acts 20:29–30). In the second century, false teachers, called Gnostics, who claimed to have special spiritual knowledge created great problems in the church. One purpose of John’s letters was to combat false teachings that would eventually develop into full-blown Gnosticism.

Apocalyptic: Revelation

Explain three forms of writing in Revelation.

Revelation is a blend of three types or forms of writing: (1) This final book of the Bible begins with “the revelation,” or *apokalupsis* (Revelation 1:1). *Apokalupto* is a Greek word that means “to unveil or reveal.” The *apocalyptic* form of writing uses visions and symbols to unveil the future, such as in Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah. (2) In Revelation 1:3, John refers to “the words of this prophecy.” *Prophetic* writings speak God’s word about the present and future, often using fewer visions and symbols than in apocalyptic writings. The Major and Minor Prophets of the Old Testament are other examples of this type. (3) John also wrote Revelation, from the greeting through chapter 22, as a *letter* “to the seven churches” (Revelation 1:4). Other examples of biblical letters include the letters (epistles) of Paul and Peter.

Revelation shows the final victory of God over Satan and good over evil. It reveals the completion of redemption. Paul wrote that God’s purpose was “to bring all things ... together under one head, even Christ” (Ephesians 1:10). John understood this as he recorded the words he heard during his vision of heaven: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever” (Revelation 11:15).

The following chart summarizes data for each New Testament book. We encourage you to review this chart throughout your study of this course.

The New Testament

Group	Book Title	Book Subgroup	Date	Author
Historical Books (5)	Matthew	Synoptic Gospels	60–69	Matthew
	Mark		55–65	Mark
	Luke		60–63	Luke
	John		80–95	John
	Acts		63	Luke
Paul’s Epistles (13)	Romans	Salvation Epistles	57	Paul
	1 Corinthians		55–56	
	2 Corinthians		55–56	
	Galatians		48–49	
	Ephesians	Prison Epistles	60–62	
	Philippians		60–62	
	Colossians		60–62	
	Philemon		60–62	
	1 Thessalonians	Epistles about the future	51–52	
	2 Thessalonians		51–52	

	1 Timothy	Pastoral Epistles	62–66	
	2 Timothy		67	
	Titus		62–66	
Hebrews and the General Epistles (8)	Hebrews	Epistles to suffering believers	67–69	Unknown
	James		45–49	James
	1 Peter		60–63	Peter
	2 Peter	Epistles to correct false teachings	66–68	Peter
	1 John		85–95	John
	2 John		85–95	John
	3 John		85–95	John
	Jude		70–80	Jude
Apocalyptic	Revelation		95	John

Lesson 1.4 Christ in Every Book of the New Testament

Summarize three pictures of Christ from each group of New Testament books.

The Bible contains sixty-six books. Yet it is one Book with one main theme: Jesus Christ. The following chart summarizes how each section of the New Testament relates to Jesus Christ (Dunnet 1963, 6).

New Testament

Group	Theme
History (Matthew–Acts)	The Gospels record Christ's appearance and tell of Christ's working in human flesh. Acts shows the continuing ministry of Christ and tells of Christ's working through His body, the church.
The Epistles (Romans–Jude)	The Epistles interpret and apply Christ. They describe the meaning of His death and resurrection, explain and apply redemption and sanctification, defend our freedom in Christ, explain our sufferings for Christ, and describe our blessings in Christ.
Prophecy (Revelation)	Revelation announces Christ's return as King of kings and Lord of lords. Whereas Genesis records what God started through Christ, Revelation records what God will finish through Him. Jesus will complete what God started in Eden. He will judge evil, and all of creation will worship Him.

Christ is the theme of each group of books in the New Testament.

Study the following pictures and descriptions (Mears 1983, 337–649) of Jesus in each book of the New Testament (Roberts 1965).

Historical Books: The Gospels and Acts

The five books of history may be grouped in various ways. A person may view the four Gospels as historical biographies on the ministry of Jesus and the book of Acts as a historical account of the happenings from Jerusalem outward after Jesus ascended into heaven. Another way to view these books is to put Matthew, Mark, and Luke together as similar accounts of the ministry of Christ. Since John seems to have so little overlap with the other three Gospels, it is often treated independently. Luke's writings are sometimes referred to as Luke-Acts, since they are two volumes of a single work (Keener 1993, 185).

Describe Christ from each of the five historical books.

As we approach the study of each of these books of history, it is important to recognize that the writers were not simply recording history. For example, Luke emphasizes the work of the Holy Spirit in Luke-Acts. His purpose may be historical, but many conservative Bible scholars believe he was intending to write theology as well (Craddock 1990, 2–3). Just as God breathed His words to humankind through the prophets of old, He also enabled each New Testament writer to write according to His designs and purposes. Regardless of the lens through which a person views these important books of history, the most important aim should be to get to know the One about whom they are written.

Pictures of Christ in the Gospels and Acts

Book	Picture or Description of Christ	Reference
Matthew	The Messiah—King of the Jews	2:1–2; 27:37
Mark	The Servant who came to redeem us	entire book
Luke	The Son of Man and Savior for all	6:5; 19:10
John	The Son of God who gives eternal life to all who believe in Him	3:16–17

Acts	The One who baptizes	1:5; 2:4
	believers in the Holy Spirit	1:8
	The One who empowers	1:9
	believers to witness for Him	7:56
	The ascending Lord	
	The One standing at the Father's right hand	

The Letters of Paul: Romans through Philemon

Explain at least five pictures of Christ in Paul's Epistles.

It is difficult to identify a single theme in some books of the Bible. Paul's letters often deal with several different issues stemming from the various needs of the churches to which he wrote. Paul wrote some letters from prison; others were likely written from the comfort of a home that someone had graciously opened to him. The Holy Spirit used him to teach, correct, encourage, and build up the body of Christ. God always knows what the bride of Christ needs most, and He is faithful to impart whatever is needed.

Pictures of Christ in Paul's Thirteen Letters

Book	Picture or Description of Christ	Reference
Romans	Our righteousness	3:22
	The One who delivers us from being slaves of sin	6:15–18
1 Corinthians	The Firstfruits from among the dead	15:20
2 Corinthians	The One who was made to be sin for us	5:21

Galatians	The End of the Law	3:10, 13
Ephesians	The Head over all powers and authorities for the church	1:20–23
Philippians	The One through whom God supplies all our needs	4:19
Colossians	The Image of the invisible God The Creator The Head of the body, the church	1:15–18 2:9 1:18
1 Thessalonians	Our returning Lord	4:15–18
2 Thessalonians	The world's returning Judge	1:6–10
1 Timothy	The only Mediator between God and humanity	2:5
2 Timothy	The Giver of crowns to faithful shepherds and believers	4:8
Titus	Our great God and Savior who gives us grace to be holy	2:13
Philemon	Our Lord and Master	entire book

Eight Letters for All: Hebrews and the Seven General Epistles

Identify five pictures of Christ from Hebrews and the General Epistles.

Two problems facing the early church were persecution and false teaching. The **General Epistles** clearly show Jesus to be the answer to these problems, although perhaps in unexpected ways. Readers were reminded that Jesus endured suffering and persecution and that the answer for suffering was to trust God, to stay connected to the body of Christ. The answer for false teaching was to increase in the knowledge of God and to continue to grow in faith. These admonitions are still relevant for Christians today.

Pictures of Christ in the Eight Letters for All

Book	Picture or Description of Christ	Reference
Hebrews	The One who represents God perfectly and is better than all Our Great High Priest who offered His own blood	1:3 9:11–15
James	The One who demands faith that works The Healer of the sick	1–5 5:15
1 Peter	The Shepherd of our souls who suffered for us	2:22–25
2 Peter	The patient Lord who will return to judge the earth	2:8–10
1 John	The Word of life who came by water and blood Our Standard for truth and practice	1:1; 5:6 1:5–7; 3:3, 16; 4:17
2 John	The union of truth and love	3
3 John	The One who changed the “Son of Thunder” into the apostle of love and truth	entire book

Jude	The Lord coming with thousands upon thousands of His saints	14
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Apocalyptic: Revelation

Summarize three pictures of Christ in Revelation.

Revelation appears to be a complex book filled with incredible images of creatures and events far removed from the reality of our lives today. However, in contrast to Luther's early evaluation that "Christ is neither taught nor known in it" (Koester 2001, 11), we can see that He is indeed the central figure of Revelation. Whatever John's motives for writing, he kept his greatest focus on the victorious Christ. Victory lies ahead for every believer who endures to the end.

Pictures of Christ in Revelation

Book	Picture or Description of Christ	Reference
	The One coming with the clouds and whom all nations will see	1:7
	The One walking among the lampstands, who was dead but is alive for ever and ever	1:13, 18
	The One who holds the keys of death and Hades	1:18
	The One who hates the deeds of the Nicolaitans	2:6

	The One with a sharp two- edged sword	2:12
Revelation	The Son of God with eyes like blazing fire and feet like polished bronze	2:18
	The Lamb who takes the scroll from the Father's right hand	5:6–7
	Israel's Son who will rule the nations with an iron rod	12:5
	The Bridegroom who will come for His bride	19:7
	The King of kings and Lord of lords	19:16
	The Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End	22:13

Chapter 2 The Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke

In studying a crime or car accident, a former police officer explains, “If everyone describes what happened in exactly the same words, the policeman knows that there is a problem. On the other hand, if each witness tells what happened from a slightly different point of view, it has the sound of truth.”

In London's National Gallery of Art, three paintings of King Charles I hang together within one frame. In the first painting, his head is turned to the left; in the second, his head is turned to the right; in the third, he is looking straight ahead. An artist named Van Dyck painted these three

views—that is, different perspectives—of the king to help another artist who wanted to make a stone statue of the king (Mears 1983, 340).

Likewise, the Synoptic Gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—allow us to learn about Jesus Christ from three different points of view. The Synoptics, together with John, give us four portraits of Jesus. Matthew emphasizes that Jesus was a king, but Mark shows that He was a perfect servant. Luke shows that Jesus was the Son of Man, but John emphasizes that He was the Son of God.

Lesson 2.1 The Gospel of Matthew

Objectives

- 2.1.1 Explain Matthew's purpose and the main way he fulfilled it.*
- 2.1.2 Identify and explain the five teaching segments or sermons of Matthew.*
- 2.1.3 Explain why Matthew emphasized the Kingdom. State three ways he stressed it.*

How might you respond to someone who doubts the validity of the Bible, due to the variations in each of the Gospel accounts?

Lesson 2.2 The Gospel of Mark

Objectives

- 2.2.1 Explain Mark's purpose and how he fulfilled it.*
- 2.2.2 Give two examples of how Mark helped Gentile readers.*

Lesson 2.3 The Gospel of Luke

Objectives

- 2.3.1 Contrast the purposes of Matthew and Luke.*
- 2.3.2 Identify five things found only in Luke that emphasize his theme of Jesus, the Savior of all.*

Lesson 2.4 Characteristics of the Synoptics

Objectives

- 2.4.1 Summarize and apply four reasons Jesus taught in parables.*
- 2.4.2 Define the kingdom of God, and explain its two phases.*
- 2.4.3 Explain why Jesus healed and did miracles.*

Lesson 2.1 The Gospel of Matthew

We call Matthew, Mark, and Luke the *Synoptic Gospels* (*synoptic* meaning “seeing together”) because they look at the ministry and teachings of Christ from similar points of view. They tell similar stories about Jesus’ life and present Him from a different perspective than John does.

What does synoptic mean?

The following chart summarizes the readers and purposes of the Synoptic Gospels. We will look briefly at each of the Synoptics, beginning with Matthew.

The Synoptic Gospels: Their Readers and Purposes

<i>Gospel</i>	<i>Readers</i>	<i>Purpose and Theme</i>
Matthew	Jews	Jesus is the Messiah , King of the Jews
Mark	Romans	Jesus is the Servant of the Lord, busy working
Luke	Greeks	Jesus is the Son of Man , the perfect human

Author, Date, and Purpose

Explain Matthew’s purpose and the main way he fulfilled it.

Identify the author and theme of the book of Matthew.

What was one of Matthew's major purposes?

Early church tradition points to Matthew, one of Christ's twelve disciples, as the author of this first New Testament book. At one time, Matthew was a Jewish tax collector for the Roman government, an occupation that other Jews despised. Then Jesus called him, and he left his tax collecting behind to follow the Lord (Matthew 9:9–13; Mark 2:14). What a difference Jesus made in his life! In fact, Matthew wrote his Gospel about AD 60–69 primarily for Jewish readers. One of his major purposes—his theme—was to present Jesus as the King of the Jews, to show the Jews that Jesus was their Messiah. This proved beneficial for both believers and nonbelievers. For instance, because family origins held such importance for Jews, Matthew began his Gospel with the genealogy of Jesus. He showed that Jesus was a son of David and a son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1).

Give three examples of how Matthew showed that Jesus was the Messiah.

The Gospel of Matthew is like a bridge between the Old and New Testaments, joining the prophecies of the coming Messiah with Christ's fulfillment of those prophecies. Although all of the Gospel writers quoted from the Old Testament, Matthew included nine Old Testament quotes that Mark, Luke, and John did not (see the following chart). Matthew connected the words of the prophets with the life and ministry of Jesus. He first gave us the Old Testament message, "The Messiah is coming," then added his own message, "He is here!" Thus, Matthew's primary method of proving that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah was showing how He fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures.

Matthew includes nine quotes from the Old Testament that Mark, Luke, and John do not.

Matthew

Quote from the Old Testament

1:22–23

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”—which means, “God with us.” [Isaiah 7:14]

2:15

Where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: “Out of Egypt I called my son.” [Hosea 11:1]

2:17–18

Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled: “A voice is heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children and refusing to be comforted, because they are no more.” (Jeremiah 31:15)

2:23

And he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: “He will be called a Nazarene.”

4:14–16

To fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, along the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned.” (Isaiah 9:1–2)

8:17

This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases.” (Isaiah 53:4)

12:17–21

This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: “Here is my servant

whom I have chosen, the one I love, in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him, and he will proclaim justice to the nations. He will not quarrel or cry out; no one will hear his voice in the streets. A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out, till he leads justice to victory. In his name the nations will put their hope.” (Isaiah 42:1–4)

13:35

So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: “I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world.” (Psalm 78:2)

21:4–5

This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: “Say to the Daughter of Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’ ” (Zechariah 9:9)

27:9–10

Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: “They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter’s field, as the Lord commanded me.” (Jeremiah 32:6–9)

In addition to highlighting Old Testament prophecies, Matthew writes thirty-three times about the kingdom of heaven (Tenney 1961, 146). He was the only Gospel writer to use this term rather than *kingdom of God*. Why? The Jews perceived God’s name to be so holy that they rarely said it. Therefore, Matthew usually avoided using the word *God*. Mark and Luke write about the kingdom of God, but Matthew substitutes the word *heaven* for God. This was important because he was writing to Jewish readers.

Outline of Matthew

- I. The Messiah’s Birth and Early Years, 1–2
 - A. His family tree (1:1–17)
 - B. His birth (1:18–2:12)

- C. His escape to Egypt (2:13–23)
- II. The Messiah’s Background for Ministry, 3:1–4:11
 - A. His announcement by John (3:1–12)
 - B. His baptism (3:13–17)
 - C. His temptation (4:1–11)
- III. The Messiah’s Ministry in and around Galilee, 4:12–18:35
 - A. The beginning of ministry in Galilee (4:12–25)
 - B. The Sermon on the Mount (5–7)
 - C. Miracles of the Messiah (8–9)
 - D. The commission of the twelve apostles (10)
 - E. Ministry throughout Galilee (11–12)
 - F. Parables of the Kingdom (13)
 - G. Opposition rises against the Messiah (14–17)
 - H. Teachings on life in the Kingdom (18)
- IV. The Messiah’s Ministry in Judea and Perea, 19–20
 - A. Teachings about divorce, little children, and entering the Kingdom (19)
 - B. Teachings about the vineyard, the Lord’s death, and being a servant (20:1–28)
 - C. The healing of blind Bartimaeus at Jericho (20:29–34)
- V. The Messiah’s Final Week of Ministry in Jerusalem, 21–27
 - A. The King’s entrance into Jerusalem, cleansing the temple, and rebuking the leaders (21–23)
 - B. The end-time sermon on the Mount of Olives (24–25)
 - C. The arrest, trial, crucifixion, and burial of the Messiah (26–27)
- VI. The Messiah’s Resurrection and Great Commission, 28
 - A. The Resurrection (28:1–15)
 - B. The Great Commission (28:16–20)

The Five Sermons or Teaching Segments in Matthew

Identify and explain the five teaching segments or sermons of Matthew.

Five places in Matthew contain long portions of the teachings of Jesus: chapters 5–7, 10, 13, 18, and 24–25. Matthew closes each of these sections with words such as, “When Jesus had finished saying all these things.” Note how the Holy Spirit guided Matthew to plan his writing, using the five sermons to help organize his Gospel. Some scholars see a relationship between the

basic concerns of each segment and the five books of the Pentateuch (Scott 1979, 508). These five teaching segments are important parts of the structure of the book of Matthew:

- Matthew uses the first sermon in chapters 5–7 as a transition from Jesus’ private life (Matthew 1–4) to His public ministry.
- The second sermon in Matthew 10 is preceded by ten miracles (Matthew 8–9) and followed by the rising conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders (Matthew 11–12).
- The third teaching segment in chapter 13 includes eight parables. Just past this third section, we find Jesus ministering in Galilee. The conflict between Jesus and Jewish leaders continues to build (Matthew 14–17).
- The fourth segment of teaching in Matthew 18 marks the time that Jesus turned from Galilee and started toward Judea.
- Finally, the fifth teaching section is Matthew 24–25, which comes just before the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection.

The Kingdom of Heaven

Explain why Matthew emphasized the Kingdom. State three ways he stressed it.

As previously noted, the **kingdom of heaven** is a prominent theme in Matthew. The Jews linked the Messiah to the kingdom of God. That is, they expected the Kingdom to come to earth when their Messiah came. They thought the Messiah would conquer the Romans just as the Old Testament kings of Israel conquered their enemies. Also, the prophets had predicted that the Messiah and God’s kingdom would come to the earth. The Jews did not discern that the Kingdom would come in two phases: (1) the Messiah would come first to suffer (Isaiah 53), then (2) He would return to set up God’s kingdom on the earth.

Therefore, because he originally wrote to assure his Jewish readers that Jesus is the Messiah, Matthew mentioned the kingdom of heaven twice as often as any other Gospel writer (Stamps 1975, 1403). He showed that the Kingdom was near or at hand and included many of Jesus’ teachings about it. He emphasized the righteous standards of the Kingdom (Matthew 5–7) and showed the Kingdom’s present power over sin, sickness, demons, and even death. Finally, he wrote about the future triumph of the Kingdom at the end of the age (Matthew 24–25).

Look up each parable referenced in the chart. Then, in the blank space provided, write what the parable says about the kingdom of heaven.

In addition, Matthew included twelve of the Messiah's parables about the Kingdom. Most of these parables begin with the words "The kingdom of heaven is like."

Twelve Parables in Matthew about the Kingdom of Heaven

Parable	Matthew	Your main thought on the kingdom of heaven
The weeds	13:24–30	
The mustard seed	13:31–32	
The yeast	13:33	
The hidden treasure	13:44	
The pearl	13:45–46	
The net	13:47–50	
The workers in the vineyard	20:1–16	
The two sons	21:28–32	
The wicked renters	21:33–46	
The wedding banquet	22:1–14	
The ten virgins	25:1–13	
The talents	25:14–30	

Lesson 2.2 The Gospel of Mark

Author, Date, and Purpose

How did John Mark know so much about Jesus?

Like Matthew, the book of Mark does not name its author. However, early church tradition points to John Mark as the author of the second Gospel. Although not one of the twelve apostles, he lived in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12), was Simon Peter's friend (1 Peter 5:13) and Barnabas's cousin (Colossians 4:10), and worked with Paul and other leaders (Acts 12:25). Thus, he was close to all of the apostles and knew much about the life of Christ and of the early church.

Explain Mark's purpose and how he fulfilled it.

Mark's theme and purpose was to show Jesus as the Servant of the Lord. Although Mark gives no genealogy of Jesus, he shows Christ in action. Forty-two times in this Gospel, we see Christ doing things *immediately*. This shows us that the Servant was busy doing His Father's work. Mark used almost half of his Gospel to tell of the death and resurrection of Christ (Mark 11:1–16:18). In doing so, he portrayed Jesus as the Son who actively serves His Father even to the point of suffering and death. Jesus served us most by giving His life for us and rising from the dead.

Give two examples of how Mark helped Gentile readers.

The book of Mark was likely written before the other three Gospels. Most conservative scholars date it in the late 50s or early 60s. It was written primarily to a Roman audience. Given the Jewish culture in which Jesus lived and ministered, Mark needed to explain to his Roman

readers Jewish customs and the meaning of words from the **Aramaic** language spoken by the Jews.

How did Mark help his mostly Gentile audience understand his account of Jesus the Jew, who lived in a Jewish culture?

Jewish custom or Aramaic word	Explanation for Romans and other Gentile readers	Mark
<i>Boanerges</i>	“Sons of Thunder”; the name Jesus gave to James and John	3:17
<i>“Talitha koum!”</i>	“Little girl, I say to you, get up!”	5:41
Washing of hands	The Pharisees and all Jews did not eat without washing their hands. The tradition also guided them to wash cups, pitchers, and kettles.	7:2–4
<i>Corban</i>	(Hebrew) “a gift devoted to God”	7:11
<i>“Ephphatha”</i>	“be opened”	7:34
<i>Golgotha</i>	“The Place of the Skull”	15:22
<i>“Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?”</i>	“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”	15:34
Preparation Day	This means it was the day before the Jewish Sabbath.	15:42

Outline of Mark

While Matthew emphasized what Jesus said, Mark focused on what He did. Therefore, the outline of Mark emphasizes Jesus in ministry.

- I. The Background of Jesus' Ministry, 1:1–13
 - A. His messenger (1:1–8)
 - B. His baptism (1:9–11)
 - C. His temptation (1:12–13)
- II. Jesus' Early Ministry in Galilee, 1:14–3:12
 - A. Calling the first disciples (1:14–20)
 - B. Capernaum: Driving out demons and healing diseases (1:21–34)
 - C. Ministering throughout Galilee—first trip (1:35–45)
 - D. Return to Capernaum: healing a paralytic, calling Levi, teaching on fasting and the Sabbath (2:1–3:22)
- III. Jesus' Later Ministry in Galilee, 3:13–7:23
 - A. Choosing the Twelve, teaching about Beelzebub, telling parables, calming a storm (3:13–4:41)
 - B. Freeing a man from a legion of demons, raising a dead girl, healing a sick woman (5)
 - C. Visiting Nazareth, sending out the Twelve, feeding five thousand, walking on the water (6)
 - D. Teaching what makes a person clean or unclean (7:1–23)
- IV. Jesus' Ministry Beyond and in Galilee, 7:24–9:50
 - A. In Phoenicia: sharing some “crumbs” with a Gentile woman (7:24–30)
 - B. In Decapolis: healing a deaf and mute man, feeding four thousand (7:31–8:10)
 - C. Around Caesarea Philippi: teaching about yeast, touching a blind man twice, hearing Peter's confession, predicting His death, being transformed on a mountain, freeing a demon-possessed boy (8:11–9:32)
 - D. Return to Galilee: teaching on being a servant, accepting others, and loving children (9:33–50)
- V. Jesus' Ministry in Judea and Perea, 10
 - A. Teaching on divorce, children, and the danger of riches (10:1–31)
 - B. Predicting His death and responding to James and John's request (10:32–45)
 - C. Healing the eyes of blind Bartimaeus (10:46–52)
- VI. The Passion Week, 11–15
 - A. Sunday: Ride into Jerusalem—the Triumphal Entry (11:1–11)
 - B. Monday: Cleansing of the temple, cursing of a fig tree (11:12–19)
 - C. Tuesday: Teaching on faith, authority, tenants, four questions, the end-time, and Mary's gift (11:20–14:11)
 - D. Thursday: The Last Supper with the Twelve (14:12–25)
 - E. Friday: Travel from Gethsemane to Calvary (14:26–15:47)

Lesson 2.3 The Gospel of Luke

Author, Date, and Theme

Early church tradition identifies the author of Luke-Acts as Luke, a doctor (Colossians 4:14) and a friend of Paul (Philemon 24). Some scholars believe Luke wrote his Gospel on the birth and ministry of Christ about AD 60–63, while others place it in the AD 70s or early 80s. The second half of his writing, Acts, is volume two of the Gospel of Luke. It is the history of the early church.

What was Luke's main theme?

Luke, like Mark, was not one of the twelve apostles, but he gives us a sure account of the ministry of Jesus (Luke 1:1–4). His main theme and purpose is to present Jesus as the Savior of all. However, other identifiable themes also emerge, including Jesus' ministry to women, the poor, and the outcasts of society. The plot moves inward toward Jerusalem in Luke, but outward from Jerusalem in the book of Acts (Keener 1993, 186).

Contrast the purposes of Matthew and Luke.

Matthew was a Jew who wrote to the Jews, but Luke was a Greek who wrote to the Greeks. He had at least two related purposes for writing us a history of the Lord's ministry.

First, Luke emphasized that Jesus came "to seek and save what was lost" (Luke 19:10). Matthew's purpose, on the other hand, was to prove Jesus was the Jewish Messiah who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. We see Luke's emphasis on Jesus the universal Savior in many places:

- Gabriel told Mary to name her child Jesus, which means "Savior" (1:31).

- The angels told the shepherds “good news ... for all the people ... a Savior has been born” (2:10–11).
- Simeon held the baby Jesus and praised God, saying, “My eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light ... to the Gentiles and ... to your people Israel” (2:30–32).
- “The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost” (19:10).

Matthew traces the Lord’s genealogy through David and back to Abraham, but Luke’s genealogy of Jesus goes all the way back to Adam, “the son of God” (3:38). Thus, Luke shows that Jesus is related to all people.

How do the purposes of Matthew and Luke differ?

Luke’s emphasis on salvation is also seen in Luke 15, where a trio of parables tells about the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost son. Heaven rejoices when the lost are saved. In fact, Jesus came so “all mankind will see God’s salvation” (3:6).

While Matthew focused on Jesus as the Messiah, Luke wrote good news for the whole world. Luke is truly the global Gospel. The following chart illustrates that Jesus came to save all people.

**Luke shows that Jesus came to be the Savior of all people
(Geldenhuis 1977, 43–44).**

People Jesus came to save	Luke
Samaritans, even though Jews and Samaritans hated each other	9:51–55; 10:30–37; 17:11–19
Gentiles	2:11, 31–32; 3:6, 38; 4:25–27; 7:9; 10:1; 24:47
Jews	1:33; 2:10, 31–32; 19:9–10
Publicans (tax collectors), sinners, and those society casts out	3:12; 5:27–32; 7:37–50; 19:2–10; 23:43
Respected people	7:36; 11:37; 14:1
The poor	1:53; 2:7; 6:20; 7:22; 14:21

The rich 14:2; 23:50

Women and men 7:36–50; 19:1–10

Luke's second purpose was to emphasize that Jesus was the perfect man. Knowing that the highest goal of educated Greeks was to find the ideal or perfect person (Geldenhuis 1977, 45), Luke presented Jesus as the fulfillment of what they sought.

In relation to humans, Jesus is above the highest standards. He was born fully human. From child to adult, He “grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men” (Luke 2:52). Jesus showed love for the sinful, like the immoral woman He forgave, but He showed righteousness when He cleansed the temple. He was tender, but also powerful. He was humble, but fearless. He was wiser than the wisest teachers of the day.

Since Jesus relied on the Holy Spirit to empower His ministry, what priority should we give to living a Spirit-filled life? What are some practical ways you can let the Holy Spirit accomplish God's purposes in your life?

Jesus was also perfect in His relationship to God. More than any other Gospel, Luke stressed Christ's attitude toward prayer and His dependence on the Spirit. Why was the Savior able to preach good news, free the prisoners, heal the blind, and release the oppressed? The Spirit of the Lord was upon Him (Luke 4:18–19). Luke shows Jesus as our model in character, in prayer, and in being filled with the Spirit. As the Son of Man, Jesus was the best man in every way. Thus Luke presents the perfect “Son of Man [who] came to seek and to save what was lost” (19:10).

Fill in the adjacent chart for each Synoptic Gospel.

Gospel

Readers

Purpose and Theme

Outline of Luke

- I. Introduction to Luke's Gospel, 1:1–4
- II. The Savior's Background, 1:5–2:52
 - A. Announcement about John (1:5–25)
 - B. Announcement about the Savior (1:26–56)
 - C. Birth of John (1:57–80)
 - D. Birth and childhood of the Savior (2)
- III. The Savior's Preparation, 3:1–4:13
 - A. His messenger (3:1–20)
 - B. His baptism (3:21–22)
 - C. His genealogy (3:23–38)
 - D. His temptation (4:1–13)
- IV. The Savior's Ministry in Galilee, 4:14–9:50
 - A. Rejection at Nazareth, healing of many in Capernaum (4:14–41)
 - B. A tour of Galilee: call of Simon, James, John, and Levi; healing of a leper and a paralytic (4:42–5:39)
 - C. Healing of a man's hand on the Sabbath, choosing of the Twelve (6:1–16)
 - D. The sermon on the plain (6:17–49)
 - E. Healing of a centurion's servant, raising of a widow's son (7:1–17)
 - F. Jesus and John the Baptist (7:18–35)
 - G. Sinful woman saved through faith in Jesus (7:36–50)
 - H. The Savior's teachings: the sower, a lamp, and His family (8:1–21)
 - I. The Savior's power: calms a storm, frees a man from demons, raises a dead girl, heals a woman (8:22–56)
 - J. Sending of the Twelve, feeding of five thousand, glorification, freeing of a boy from a demon, teaching on greatness (9:1–50)
- V. The Savior's Ministry on the Final Journey to Jerusalem, 9:51–19:27
 - A. The Savior's reaching out to Samaritans and sending out the seventy-two (9:51–10:24)
 - B. The Good Samaritan (10:25–37)
 - C. Mary and Martha (10:38–42)
 - D. Prayer, Beelzebub, Jonah, the eye, six woes (11)
 - E. Fear, riches, worry, watching, division, the end-time (12)
 - F. Repentance, compassion, the Kingdom, Jerusalem's judgment (13)
 - G. A local banquet, the great banquet, discipleship (14)
 - H. The lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son (15)

- I. The unjust steward and the unjust rich man (16)
- J. Sin, faith, ten lepers, the end-time (17)
- K. Prayer, humility, children, riches, the Cross, Bartimaeus (18)
- L. Zacchaeus's meeting with the Savior, the ten minas (19:1–27)
- VI. The Savior's Last Days in Jerusalem, 19:28–23:56
 - A. Triumphal ride into Jerusalem, cleansing of the temple (19:28–48)
 - B. Four questions between Jesus and the Jewish leaders (20)
 - C. Teaching on the end-time from the Mount of Olives (21)
 - D. The Last Supper (22:1–38)
 - E. From Gethsemane to Calvary (22:39–23:56)
- VII. From the Savior's Resurrection to His Ascension, 24
 - A. The Resurrection (24:1–12)
 - B. The post-Resurrection appearances (24:13–43)
 - C. The Savior's final instructions (24:44–53)

Only in Luke

Identify five things found only in Luke that emphasize his theme of Jesus, the Savior of all.

These forty-five teachings and events are found only in Luke's Gospel:

- Songs of Elizabeth, Mary, Zechariah, and Simeon (1:39–80)
- The shepherds and the angels (2:8–20)
- Jesus presented in the temple; Anna and Simeon (2:21–40)
- The boy Jesus in the temple (2:41–52)
- Jesus raises a widow's son (7:11–17)
- Samaritan opposition (9:51–56)
- Plow illustration on following Jesus (9:61–62)
- Jesus sends out the seventy-two (10:1–12)
- Return and report of the seventy-two (10:17–20)
- Parable of the great banquet (14:15–24)
- Comparison: planning of the tower-builder (14:28–30)
- Further comparison: planning of king going to war (14:31–33)
- Parable of the lost coin (15:8–10)
- Parable of the lost son (15:11–32)
- Parable of the shrewd manager (16:1–15)
- The rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31)
- Illustration about duty (17:7–10)
- Ten healed of leprosy (17:11–19)
- The coming of the kingdom of God (17:20–21)

- Parable of the Good Samaritan (10:25–37)
- At the home of Mary and Martha (10:38–42)
- Parable of the persistent friend (11:5–10)
- Parable of the rich fool (12:13–21)
- Repent or perish (13:1–5)
- Parable of the fruitless fig tree (13:6–9)
- A crippled woman healed on the Sabbath (13:10–17)
- Jesus' sorrow for Jerusalem (13:31–33)
- Jesus at a Pharisee's house (14:1–6)
- Parable about feasts and guests (14:7–14)
- Parable of the persistent widow (18:1–8)
- Parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:9–14)
- Zacchaeus, the tax collector (19:1–10)
- Parable of the ten minas (pounds) (19:11–27)
- Jesus weeps over Jerusalem (19:41–44)
- Jesus heals Malchus' ear (22:51)
- The thief on the cross repents (23:32–43)
- On the road to Emmaus (24:13–35)
- Wait for the Holy Spirit baptism (24:49)
- The Ascension (24:50–53)

Lesson 2.4 Characteristics of the Synoptics

Events in All Three Gospels

The main thought of each Gospel differs from the others. However, six events are described in all three Synoptic Gospels. This repetition helps us to know these events well.

Name six events that are in all the Synoptic Gospels.

Six Events Found in All Three Synoptic Gospels

Event or Teaching	Matthew	Mark	Luke
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1. Announcement of the Savior by John the Baptist	3	1	3
2. Baptism of the Savior	3	1	3
3. Temptation of the Savior	4	1	4
4. Transfiguration of the Savior	17	9	9
5. Trial, death, and burial of the Savior	26–27	14–15	22–23
6. Resurrection of the Savior	28	16	24

Christ's Unusual Birth

While the virgin birth of Christ was unusual, it is essential to the Christian faith. Old Testament prophets foretold it, angels announced it to Joseph and Mary, and the Holy Spirit brought it to fruition (Matthew 1–2; Luke 1–2).

Years ago there was an old college teacher who believed in the virgin birth of Christ. Some other doubting professors ridiculed him because of this belief. One of them said, “Suppose a young woman entered the hospital near here today. If she had a baby boy and claimed that she was a virgin, would you believe her?” The old professor stroked his beard and was silent for a moment. Then he answered, “No, I probably wouldn’t. However, if that baby boy grew up and became a man,

- and if he could open the eyes of the blind,
- and if he could enable cripples to walk,
- and if he could cleanse the lepers,
- and if he could raise the dead,
- and if he called a little group of followers and radically changed their lives,
- and if he died like a condemned criminal, but was raised from the dead,

- and if he changed the history of the world,
 - and if, after 2,000 years, a third of earth's population called him Savior and Lord,
 - and if all those people claimed that they knew His living presence in their hearts,
- then I think I would listen to that woman's story a second time!" We believe in the virgin birth of Jesus because of His life and power. (Harding 1984)

The Parables of Christ

Summarize and apply four reasons Jesus taught in parables.

Christ often taught through parables (short stories or illustrations with spiritual meanings) for several reasons:

How might the use of relevant stories help you share truth with others?

- Parables were safe. That is, Jesus' enemies could not easily attack Him for telling a story.
- Parables illustrate and preserve truth and are easily remembered. A parable moves and touches a person's heart. When Nathan told King David a parable about a rich man who sacrificed the only lamb of a poor man, the truth was in David's heart before he realized he was the rich man (2 Samuel 12:1–7). Illustrations carry the truth past people's defenses.
- Jesus used parables to hide new truth from unfaithful people. When the disciples could not understand the parables, Jesus explained the stories privately. However, since the Jews were not faithful with old truth, Jesus chose not to entrust them with new truth (Matthew 13:10–17). "Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him" (13:12; 25:29). The parables therefore became a form of judgment.
- Jesus used parables to teach about the kingdom of God. The common people could more easily identify with stories and mental imagery than with abstract theology. Thus, by using stories and word pictures from everyday life, Jesus left lingering images of what God's kingdom was like. Parables provided a way for people to apply the teachings of the Kingdom to daily life.

What are four reasons Jesus taught in parables?

Although John recorded none, the Synoptic Gospels contain at least thirty of our Lord's parables. Among the best known are the parables of the Kingdom (Matthew 13) and the lost sheep, coin, and son (Luke 15). The Synoptic Gospels also record many other short statements that are similar to parables.

The Kingdom

Define the kingdom of God, and explain its two phases.

Jesus taught much about the *kingdom of God*, sometimes termed *kingdom of heaven*. From His teachings, along with Old Testament prophecies, we learn that God's kingdom has two phases or time periods.

Explain the two phases of the kingdom of God.

First is the invisible phase, referring to God's spiritual rule. John the Baptist and Jesus announced this phase of the Kingdom (Matthew 3:1–3; Mark 1:14–15). Not an outward kingdom of land and buildings, God's kingdom is in the hearts of believers. "The kingdom of God does not come visibly, ... because the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20–21). While we cannot see it now, we do observe the changes God's rule accomplishes in individual lives.

The second phase of the Kingdom, however, will be visible. We will see it "when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and ... all the nations will be gathered before him" (Matthew 25:31–32). The prophets often wrote about this (Isaiah 11:1–10; Zechariah 13:1–6; Malachi 4:1–3). The second phase includes the culmination of judgment on "the Day of the Lord" at the close of this age. At that time, God will separate His followers from His rejecters, and the wicked will depart into everlasting torment. Perhaps we can liken hell to the King's dungeon or prison. After the

judgment, the King will rule over all the earth, and all things will be completed in and subjected to Christ.

The Miracles

Explain why Jesus healed and did miracles.

Through His miracles, Jesus showed that He was the Messiah, God’s Servant, and our Savior. Physical miracles proved that Jesus had power to meet people’s spiritual needs (Matthew 9:6). However, while Jesus may have validated His ministry with signs, wonders, and miracles, it was His tender compassion that motivated Him to heal and restore the lives of the people He encountered. His miracles were not a sideshow to attract the curious; rather, they flowed out of His desire to bring hope and life to people who lived in despair. Once Jesus arrived on the scene, the kingdom of God became more than a distant wish. Not only was the Kingdom near, as announced by John the Baptist, but the King was also among His people. The miracles of Jesus testified to the reality of God’s kingdom coming to earth in the person of Jesus the Messiah.

Jesus’ Healings and Miracles in the Synoptic Gospels

Healing or Miracle	Matthew	Mark	Luke
Man with leprosy	8:2–3	1:40–42	5:12–13
Roman centurion’s servant	8:5–13		7:1–10
Peter’s mother-in-law	8:14–15	1:30–31	4:38–39
Calming of the storm	8:23–27	4:37–41	8:22–25
Two men from Gadara	8:28–34	5:1–15	8:27–35
Paralyzed man	9:2–7	2:3–12	5:18–25

Raising Jairus's daughter	9:18–25	5:22–42	8:41–56
Woman with bleeding	9:20–22	5:25–29	8:43–48
Two blind men	9:27–31		
Man—dumb and possessed	9:32–33		
Man with a shriveled hand	12:10–13	3:1–5	6:6–10
Man—blind, dumb and possessed	12:22		11:14
Feeding five thousand people	14:15–21	6:35–44	9:12–17
Walking on water	14:25	6:48–51	
Canaanite woman's daughter	15:21–28	7:24–30	
Feeding four thousand people	15:32–38	8:1–9	
Boy with epilepsy	17:14–18	9:17–29	9:38–43
Coin in fish's mouth	17:24–27		
Two blind men	20:29–34		
Fig tree withered	21:18–22	11:12–25	
Man—demon-possessed in synagogue		1:23–26	4:33–35
Deaf mute		7:31–37	

Blind man at Bethsaida	8:22–26	
Blind Bartimaeus	10:46–52	18:35–43
Catch of fish		5:1–11
Raising widow’s son at Nain		7:11–15
Crippled woman		13:11–13
Man with dropsy		14:1–4
Ten lepers		17:11–19
The high priest’s servant		22:50–51

Chapter 3 The Gospel of John

John’s Gospel enriches our lives. It presents the life and teachings of Jesus in a way that adds to the Synoptics and emphasizes Christ’s deity. It tells of Jesus’ miracles and stresses the eternal life that Jesus offers to all who believe in Him. In fact, inspiring belief in Jesus is John’s purpose in writing his Gospel: “But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31). Together, the four Gospels give us a thorough understanding of Jesus—who He is, what He did, and what He taught.

Lesson 3.1 Understanding John

Objectives

3.1.1 Explain why John omitted many things that are in the Synoptics.

3.1.2 *Analyze the words signs, believe, and life in relation to John's purpose.*

Lesson 3.2 The Structure of John

Objective

3.2.1 *Analyze the introduction and conclusion of John.*

Lesson 3.3 The Teachings of Jesus in John

Objectives

3.3.1 *Analyze the relationship between the signs and teachings in John 5, 6, 9, and 11.*

3.3.2 *Identify the seven "I am" statements in John.*

3.3.3 *Explain three lessons from people who talked with Jesus.*

Lesson 3.1 Understanding John

Author, Date, and Purpose

Who was most likely author of John's Gospel? Explain.

The most likely author of the fourth Gospel is the apostle John. As with the Synoptic Gospels, this book is anonymous. Nevertheless, the consensus of the early church fathers was that John the beloved disciple wrote it. Various second-century writings utilize the Gospel of John authoritatively, lending credibility to its apostolic authorship (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 109).

How does the date of John's Gospel compare with the dates of the Synoptics and Acts?

John was a fisherman, a son of Zebedee, and the brother of James. When Jesus called him, he may have been about twenty-five years old and a follower of John the Baptist (John 1:40). John became one of the closest apostles to Jesus. Several times, the fourth Gospel refers to him as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (13:23; 19:26–27; 20:2; 21:7, 20). The Lord's patient love changed

John from a Son of Thunder (Mark 3:17) into a gentle apostle. In his early days, John wanted to call down fire from heaven to destroy the Samaritans (Luke 9:54), but later, as an elder, John was gentle (3 John).

John probably wrote his Gospel about AD 80–95, several years after the writing of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Note that this was fifty to sixty years after the resurrection of Christ. John wrote at least twenty years after Luke authored Acts in AD 60–63 and at least ten years after Titus destroyed Jerusalem in AD 70. Thus, John's Gospel was one of the last books of the New Testament to be written. By then, the gospel was well known because the Lord's followers had preached it far and wide. Only John's other letters, and perhaps Revelation, came after his Gospel.

Explain why John omitted many things that are in the Synoptics.

What is one explanation for John's omission of many things covered in the Synoptics?

Since John likely wrote after the life and teachings of Jesus were well known, he did not need to repeat what the other Gospels had already taught. Some scholars propose that John may have wanted to supplement and edit portions of the Synoptic accounts; yet others believe he wrote with no knowledge of them (Gundry 1994, 254). In any case, false teachers had begun attacking the gospel, denying that Jesus was the Son of God who came in the flesh. Matthew emphasized that Jesus was the Son of David; Luke, that He was the Son of Man. John, however, presented Jesus as the Son of God. In John, Jesus not only refers to God as *My Father* thirty-five times (Mears 1983, 397) but also claims to be equal with God (John 5:18; 8:58). Recording no genealogy of Jesus and no birth, John instead stresses that Jesus was with God in the beginning (1:1). He does not record the Lord's boyhood, temptation, or transfiguration. And he says nothing about the Lord's parables, ascension, or Great Commission. These were all well known when John wrote. Rather, John repeatedly emphasized Jesus' deity. He presented God's Son for unbelievers to receive and believers to follow.

Analyze the words signs, believe, and life in relation to John's purpose.

Having emphasized Jesus' relationship with His Father, John clearly states his purpose for writing his Gospel in John 20:30–31. John wanted people to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and thus receive eternal life by following Him. He wanted to bring his readers face-to-face with the Person who called himself “God” (1:1; 20:28). To clarify this statement of purpose, John included three important words: **signs**, **believe**, and **life**^{kw}. Read John 20:30–31 again, and notice how John uses these three words.

Signs

Why did John choose to highlight seven signs?

John uses the word *signs* to indicate Christ's miracles. The purpose of the signs was to help people know that Jesus was “the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31). Although Jesus performed numerous signs, John chose to highlight seven in his focus on Christ's deity:

1. Changing water into wine (2:1–11)
2. Healing the official's son (4:43–54)
3. Healing the man at the pool (5:1–15)
4. Feeding the five thousand (6:1–15)
5. Walking on water (6:16–21)
6. Healing the blind man (9:1–34)
7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1–44)

Jesus' feeding the five thousand and walking on the water are also mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels. The other five signs are found only in the book of John. Later in this lesson, we will study more about the spiritual truth related to each of the seven signs.

Believe

Define the word *believe*.

John used the word *believe* at least ninety-eight times in his Gospel to show an individual's response to Jesus. John stressed the action of believing as showing obedience. If people believed in Christ, they became His followers; if they did not believe, they often became His enemies. John taught what it means to believe in Jesus through examples:

- When Jesus turned the water to wine, His disciples believed in Him and followed Him (2:11).
- The woman at the well believed in Jesus, compelling her to tell others about Him (4:28–30, 39–42).
- The circumstances of his son's healing caused an official and his household to believe in Jesus (4:53).
- While many Jews began the journey of believing in Jesus, He told them they were truly His followers if they continued and obeyed His teachings (8:31–32; compare 6:66).
- After being healed, the man born blind believed in Jesus and expressed his belief in Jesus by boldly testifying for and worshipping Him (9:30–38).

All who met Jesus faced the decision to believe or not to believe. They could not avoid the choice.

The following chart summarizes some terms John used to explain what it means to believe. All of these are common in daily life, but they take on a richer meaning when we apply them to our relationship with Jesus.

John used many words to explain what it means to believe in Jesus.

Term	Believing in Jesus is like	John
	...	
<i>receive</i>	Receiving a person to live in one's home	1:12
<i>drink</i>	Drinking refreshing water	4:14
<i>come to</i>	Coming to the source of food and water	6:35
<i>eat</i>	Daily eating food that satisfies	6:51
<i>follow</i>	Daily following Him on a path	8:12

<i>hold to; continue in</i>	A student's submitting to a teacher	8:31–32; 6:66
<i>enter through</i>	Entering through a door into safety	10:7–9
<i>listen to</i>	Listening to and obeying a shepherd	10:26–27
<i>obey</i>	Obeying a parent or a person in authority	14:15, 23; 15:14
<i>remain in</i>	Remaining in a bus until the end of a trip	15:1–8

To believe in Jesus means to receive and come to Him. It means to eat, drink, follow, hold to, enter through, listen to, obey, and remain in Jesus.

Life

What is life in John, and how do we get it?

Life results from believing in Christ. In both his Gospel and his first epistle, John wrote that people receive life when they receive Christ. “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12). In other words, Jesus is life.

Since a person's reception and belief in Jesus is a life or death matter, how concerned should we be with presenting an accurate and effective witness of who He is?

Eternal life is free, but it is not a gift that comes alone (Morris 1971, 226). Rather, eternal life is the result of our relationship with Jesus. A hand is alive if it is connected to a living person; a fruit is alive if it is connected to a living tree or plant. In the same way, those who are connected

to Jesus have eternal life (John 1:4; 14:6), while those who are separated from Him will experience eternal death and punishment.

Jesus said to Nicodemus, “You must be born again” (John 3:7). Individuals who receive Jesus are born into the family of God and become God’s spiritual sons and daughters (1:12–13). Before our salvation, we are spiritually dead in our sins. Beginning with Adam, sin killed our relationship with the heavenly Father. However, though sin produces death, God gives us eternal life through Jesus Christ (3:15–16) when we receive Jesus as our Savior and Lord. Our spiritual life continues and grows as we follow, obey, and remain in Him (Morris 1971, 248). “Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects (disobeys) the Son will not see life, for God’s wrath remains on him” (John 3:36). When Jesus returns, we will be united with Him and will live with Him forever.

Lesson 3.2 The Structure of John

The structure or outline of John’s Gospel includes a **prologue**, or introduction, and an **epilogue**^{kw}, or conclusion. We will look a little more closely at each of these.

Outline of John

- I. Introduction (Prologue): The Presentation of the Son of God, 1:1–18
- II. The Public Ministry of the Son of God, 1:19–12:50
 - A. Meeting people (1:19–4:54)
 - B. Meeting the crowds (5:1–6:71)
 - C. Problems with the crowds (7:1–11:53)
 - D. The greatness of His public ministry (11:54–12:50)
- III. The Private Ministry of the Son of God, 13:1–17:26
 - A. The Last Supper (13:1–30)
 - B. The last sermon (13:31–16:33)
 - C. The high priestly prayer (17:1–26)
- IV. The Ministry in Death of the Son of God, 18:1–20:31
 - A. His betrayal and trials (18:1–19:16)
 - B. His crucifixion and burial (19:17–42)
 - C. His resurrection (20:1–31)
- V. Conclusion (Epilogue): The Final Call of the Son of God, 21:1–25

Introduction

Analyze the introduction and conclusion of John.

John's introduction (John 1:1–18) contains the message of the entire Gospel. In it, John introduces three main characteristics of his Gospel:

Summarize the three main characteristics of John found in the introduction.

Give four examples of contrast in John's Gospel.

1. Main Person: *the Word*. The Word is God, the Creator, the Giver of Life, and the One who came in the flesh. Jesus is the Word who tells us about the Father (1:18).
2. Main words: *life, light, darkness, witness, believe, and truth*
3. Main action: *conflict*. John used common words to show great contrasts and spiritual conflict:
 - Light vs. darkness
 - Physical birth vs. spiritual birth
 - Grace vs. law
 - Jesus as friend to those who receive Him and walk in the light vs. Jesus as judge and enemy to those who refuse Him and remain in darkness

These great conflicts continue throughout John until the final conflict. Then we see the conflict between the cross (death) and the resurrection (life). Hallelujah! Jesus arose as the conqueror of death.

Conclusion

In the last chapter of John, Peter learned that believing in Jesus required giving himself completely to Christ's service (John 21:15–19). Thus, John's conclusion emphasizes the result of

the gospel: Those who truly believe, like Peter, follow Jesus and are guided to serve Him in some way.

Lesson 3.3 The Teachings of Jesus in John

We have discussed the purpose, key words, and structure of John. Now, we will look at the teachings of Jesus in this fourth Gospel. What did He teach, and how did He teach it?

The Relationship between the Signs and Teachings of Jesus

Analyze the relationship between the signs and teachings in John 5, 6, 9, and 11.

As noted previously, John chose to highlight seven signs or miracles in Jesus' ministry to emphasize His deity:

Identify the seven signs in John, and explain the spiritual truth linked to each sign.

1. Changing water into wine (2:1–11)
2. Healing the official's son (4:43–54)
3. Healing the man at the pool (5:1–15)
4. Feeding the five thousand (6:1–15)
5. Walking on water (6:16–21)
6. Healing the blind man (9:1–34)
7. Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1–44)

Jesus used these signs as an opportunity to teach. By including these signs and teachings, John's Gospel enriches our lives and helps us to see the relationships between Jesus' miracles and spiritual truth.

**The seven signs in John help us believe and are related to spiritual truths
(Tenney 1961, 190).**

John	Sign	Truth Related to the Sign	Jesus Is Lord Over
2:1–11	Changing water into wine	This first miracle revealed His glory (showed that He was God in flesh). It inspired His disciples to believe in Him.	Quality
4:43–54	Healing the official's son	Those who reject Jesus miss God's blessings (4:44), but those who welcome Him receive good things (4:45, 47, 54).	Distance
5:1–15	Healing the man at the pool	Jesus is equal with God in nature, power, and authority.	Time
6:1–15	Feeding the five thousand people	"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty" (6:35).	Quantity
6:16–21	Walking on water	Jesus has power over circumstances. When He is with us, we have nothing to fear.	Nature
9:1–34	Healing the blind man	"I am the light of the world.... For	Fate

judgment I have come
into this world, so that
the blind will see and
those who see will
become blind” (9:5,
39).

11:1–44 Raising Lazarus from “I am the resurrection Death
the dead and the life. He who
believes in me will
live, even though he
dies” (11:25).

For example, after Jesus healed the man beside the pool (John 5:1–9), the Jews questioned His right to heal on the Sabbath (5:16). This allowed Jesus to teach about His deity and equality with God (5:17–18). Jesus claimed to be the One who would raise the dead and judge them (5:21–30).

Explain the error of the multitude following Jesus.

In John 6, Jesus faced the problem of feeding more than five thousand hungry people. Jesus miraculously multiplied a boy’s five loaves and two fish to feed the people and to meet their physical needs (6:5–12). However, the next day the large crowd returned, looking for another meal. The Lord admonished them not to work “for food that spoils” (6:27). Instead, He taught them about their spiritual need, stating, “I am the bread of life” (6:35). Thus we see the meaning of the sign in the teaching and sermon that followed it.

The people did not understand spiritual truth, coming to Jesus only for physical bread. They missed the true meaning of the sign altogether. Knowing this, in His sermon Jesus showed the difference between “the flesh” and “the spirit” (6:63) and explained what it meant to eat “living bread” (6:51). However, the people complained against this spiritual saying and argued about what Jesus meant (6:52). Finally, many who were following Him turned away (6:66). Those who follow Jesus only for earthly blessings will be disappointed.

Jesus healed a blind man and taught about spiritual blindness (John 9:1–41). Consider the relationship that must always exist between spiritual sight and humility. Evaluate your own life in relation to this truth.

Later, in John 9, Jesus healed a blind man and illustrated His claim, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (8:12; 9:5). This miracle proved that Jesus could enable people to walk in the light. Notice the teachings that followed this sign: “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind” (9:39). This proverb means that those who realize they are blind may ask Jesus for sight; then He will enable them to see the light. In contrast, some are like the Pharisees and claim the ability to see without any help from Jesus. Therefore, they remain guilty of sin and unable to see spiritual truth (9:40–41). Only the Savior can take away our sins. Only He can enable us to find our way back to God.

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead (John 11), He emphasized His claim, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies” (11:25). Jesus triumphed over death and offers that same victory to us in the form of eternal life with Him.

The Seven “I Am” Statements of Jesus

Identify the seven “I am” statements in John.

Jesus used the words *I am* to show people who He was. John’s Gospel includes seven of Jesus’ “I am” statements:

Re-create the “I am” list from memory.

1. “I am the bread of life” (6:35).
2. “I am the light of the world” (8:12; 9:5).
3. “I am the gate” (10:7, 9).
4. “I am the good shepherd” (10:11).
5. “I am the resurrection and the life” (11:25).

6. “I am the way and the truth and the life” (14:6).
7. “I am the true vine” (15:1).

Christ’s claims are unique. No other religious leader has proclaimed anything like them. Some have tried to help the hungry find bread, but Jesus said, “I am the bread of life!” The sun gives physical light to the world, but the Son of God stated, “I am the light”—the only source of the world’s spiritual light. He claimed to be the only gate or door to the heavenly Father. What a huge, incomparable claim! Moreover, Jesus declared that all who believe in Him would live forever. Has any other spiritual leader dared to claim such a thing? Many have searched for truth, but Jesus said, “I am the truth!” He alone is the spiritual standard that shows what is true and false. While many types of vines produce a variety of fruit, Jesus claimed to be the true vine. He said that spiritual life comes only from abiding in Him and that all who do not relate to Him as the vine will be cast into the fire.

Indeed, Jesus’ claims are unique, placing Him at the level of God alone. His seven “I am” statements in John’s Gospel provide important evidence to support Christ’s deity. They lay the groundwork for the truth that Jesus is God in the flesh—a truth on which the rest of the New Testament is based.

Aside from these seven statements, Jesus also used the words “I am” in John 8:58. In Exodus 3:14, when Moses asked God for His name, God replied, “I am.” This was related to *Yahweh*, the Old Testament name of God. Most Bible translations use the name Lord (all uppercase letters) to show where this special covenant name of God is used in the Old Testament. To guard against breaking the third commandment, “You shall not misuse the name of the Lord your God” (Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 24:16), most Jews began to avoid pronouncing this name. Only the high priest on the Day of Atonement was permitted to use it. Instead, they substituted such Hebrew words as *Adonai*, meaning “Lord” (Lohse 1987, 180–181). In John 8, however, Jesus claimed, “I tell you the truth ... before Abraham was born, I am!” (John 8:58). He gave himself the title of God—“I am”—from the Old Testament Scriptures; that is, He claimed to be God! This so horrified and incensed the Jews that they wanted to stone Him (John 8:59). Yet Jesus spoke the truth. Those who believe this believe that He is God. (Consider also John 18:5–6, where Jesus’ statement, “I am he,” caused his arresters to draw back and fall to the ground.)

Conversations with Jesus

Explain three lessons from people who talked with Jesus.

John taught lessons about believing through the lives and conversations of various individuals, such as those listed in the following chart.

The people who interacted with Jesus teach us much about believing.

Person	Lesson Related to Belief	John
Andrew	He helped others believe in Jesus.	1:35–42; 6:8–9; 12:20–22
Simon Peter	Jesus changes our character as we believe in Him.	1:42; 6:68–69; 13:36–38; 18:15–18, 25–27; 21:15–22
Nicodemus	We must be born again by believing in Jesus.	3:1–21; 7:50–51; 19:39–42
Philip	We learn more as we believe in and follow Jesus.	1:43–46; 6:5–7; 14:8–14
The woman of Samaria	Jesus satisfies all who believe in Him.	4:1–42
The blind man	Jesus gives sight to those who receive Him.	9:1–39
Martha and Mary	Life’s greatest priority is sitting at the feet of Jesus.	11:1–46
Thomas	Jesus will perfect our faith in Him.	11:16; 14:5–7; 20:24–28
Pilate	The governor of Judea is an example of unbelief.	18:28–19:16
Judas Iscariot	He is one who started believing but turned away.	6:70–71; 13:21–30; 18:1–5

Through Andrew, we learn that we should share our belief with others. Although Andrew is not mentioned as frequently as his brother, Simon Peter, he had an important role as a spiritual worker, sharing his belief in Jesus with others and bringing them to Christ. At the beginning of

Jesus' ministry, Andrew brought Simon Peter to Him, saying, "We have found the Messiah" (John 1:40–42). Later, in John 6:8–9, he brought the boy with his lunch to Jesus, who used the boy's offering to feed more than five thousand people. Finally, when some Greek visitors in Jerusalem wanted to meet Jesus, they approached Philip who, in turn, sought out Andrew. Together, Andrew and Philip presented their request to Jesus (12:20–22). Thus, Andrew was both approachable and instrumental in helping fellow seekers to find Christ.

What lessons about believing can be learned from Andrew, Peter, and Nicodemus?

Simon Peter's life teaches us that Jesus molds the character of those who believe. When Simon met Jesus, the Lord prophesied that he would become known as Peter (or Cephas), meaning "rock" (John 1:42). The name change signified a change in Simon's character. As Simon, he was unstable and undependable. However, after spending several years with Jesus, watching, listening, and learning (even from his mistakes), he developed into a steady, dependable, strong, and godly leader of the early church. He indeed became a "rock."

Through Nicodemus, we learn that believing is linked with being born again (John 3:1–21). As a Pharisee, Nicodemus had been trained to know the Old Testament truths, yet he had not experienced the new birth. Notice that Jesus referenced the Old Testament in teaching Nicodemus; that is, He built on what Nicodemus already knew. Jesus compared himself with the bronze serpent that Moses lifted up in the wilderness. He described himself as the Savior who would bring eternal life to all who believe in Him. Later events suggest that Nicodemus became a believer (7:50–51; 19:39–42).

Final Teachings and Instructions in the Upper Room

Reflect on at least three ways your ministry is dependent on the work of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus gave an unusual farewell address to His disciples near the end of His life (John 13–16). The details of these last words of Jesus are found only in John. After finishing His public ministry, Jesus met privately with His disciples, foretelling two important truths: (1) He would be leaving them soon. Although they could not go with Him, He promised to return and take them to His Father's house (14:1–4). (2) He would not leave them alone (14:18). He promised to send another Counselor—the Holy Spirit—to be with them. The Holy Spirit would live in them

(14:17), teach them (14:26), and give them power to witness (15:26–27). The Spirit would also guide them into all truth (16:13).

Christ also promised that believers would continue to see and perform signs and miracles in His name. Jesus heals today through the faith and prayers of His followers (John 14:12–14).

Jesus ended His encouragement and instructions to His disciples with a moving prayer in John 17. After praying for himself and the upcoming events, He interceded not only for His disciples but also for all believers “who will believe in me through their message” (17:20). Jesus prayed for those who would believe in His name to know unity with God and among themselves. Thus, we call this Jesus’ high priestly prayer because He advocated and interceded for us before the Father.

Chapter 4 The Book of Acts

Acts records the fulfillment of Jesus’ promise to send the Holy Spirit. The early church would need the Spirit’s help and power to share the truth of Jesus and endure persecution. In fact, in Acts persecution was a key to the spread of the gospel. Through it, God scattered the believers and sent His message of salvation from Jerusalem to Judea, Samaria, and the entire known world.

Among the many other persons described in Acts, the book highlights the ministries of Peter and Paul—two men who were radically changed by the power of the Spirit and the truth of Jesus’ salvation. As you read through the book of Acts, may the Spirit’s power enrich your life in a new way and may it strengthen you to fulfill the purpose He has given you to complete, just as it did for the believers of the early church.

Lesson 4.1 Understanding the Book of Acts

Objectives

4.1.1 *Identify the title, author, and date of Acts.*

4.1.2 *Summarize five purposes that Acts serves.*

Lesson 4.2 Outlining the Book of Acts

Objective

4.2.1 *Divide Acts into three parts, giving the chapters for each part.*

Lesson 4.3 Witnessing about Jesus

Objective

4.3.1 *Indicate three steps in which believers witnessed for Jesus from Jerusalem to Rome.*

Lesson 4.1 Understanding the Book of Acts

The Title of Acts

Identify the title, author, and date of Acts.

When Luke first wrote Acts as the second part of his Gospel, it had no title. About AD 150, believers began to call Luke's book *The Acts of the Apostles*, most likely because Acts 1 gives the names of the apostles (Acts 1:13). However, as we read through the book, the names of most apostles never reappear. After Acts 1, the only apostles called by name are Peter, John, James, and Paul (Gibbs 1999, 33). Acts 1–12 focuses primarily on Peter, while Acts 13–28 features Paul as the main character.

What is the best title for Acts, according to some scholars?

In truth, the Holy Spirit is emphasized more than any of the apostles. Luke introduces the Holy Spirit in the first few verses of Acts. He reminds us that Jesus taught through the power of the Spirit (Acts 1:2) and that the apostles did not continue Jesus' ministry without the Holy Spirit's power. Jesus commanded them not to leave Jerusalem until the Spirit filled them (1:4–5). After His ascension to heaven, Jesus sent the Spirit to live in and empower each believer. Thus, from the beginning of Acts, Luke stresses that the Holy Spirit is the key to ministry. He refers to the Spirit more than fifty times throughout the book. Therefore, many agree that the best title for Acts is *The Acts of the Holy Spirit* (Horton 1994, 9).

The Author of Acts

As with the other Gospel writers, Luke does not place his name at the beginning of his books. However, most conservative Bible teachers agree that Luke is the author of Acts for at least four reasons:

Summarize any three of the four reasons why we believe Luke wrote Acts.

1. The writer of Acts traveled with Paul on some of his missionary trips, as noted in passages such as Acts 16:10: “After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once.” The word *we* indicates that the writer was with Paul. Similar passages include Acts 20:5; 21:18; 27:1; and 28:16. According to Colossians 4:14, Luke was a Gentile doctor who traveled with Paul. Thus, Luke seems a likely candidate for the authorship of Acts (Horton 1994, 11).
2. The author of Acts also wrote an earlier book: “In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach” (Acts 1:1). The phrase *former book* refers to Luke’s Gospel. Both Luke and Acts are written to the same person, **Theophilus**, as a historical set. Luke’s Gospel recorded “all that Jesus began to do and teach.” In the same way, Acts reveals what Jesus “continued to do and teach through the Holy Spirit in the lives of the apostles” (Gromacki 1974, 149). We understand these two books best when studied together as a single work.
3. The writer of the Gospel of Luke was *not* an apostle. In Luke 1:1–3, Luke says that others “handed down” the things he wrote; that is, he was not an eyewitness. Likewise, it appears that the writer of Acts was not an apostle. Luke fits this description.
4. Believers from the early church to the present have accepted Luke as the author of the third Gospel and Acts. Early church fathers such as Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria recognized Luke as the author. Likewise, the Muratorian Canon (AD 175) names Luke as the author of Luke-Acts, viewing it as one volume. The Canon states, “However, the Acts of all the Apostles were written in one volume. Luke addresses it to the most excellent Theophilus” (Kistemaker 1990, 20). The tendency to view Acts as a separate work may have resulted from the early compilation of the four Gospels into a single collection. This became known as the fourfold Gospel, leaving Acts to appear as a stand-alone volume (Bruce 1983, 15).

For these reasons, Luke is well established as the author of Acts as well as his Gospel. Although he was not an apostle like Paul, Luke wrote more words in the New Testament than Paul wrote (Wood 1987).

The Date of Acts

Acts was probably written between which two events? (Give dates.)

Determining the time in which Acts was written involves examining the events the book does and does not record. Since Acts describes Paul’s first prison experience in Rome about AD 60–62, Luke had to have written the book after this. Then, in AD 64, a Caesar named Nero blamed Christians for a fire that burned much of Rome, and he began to persecute them. The fact that Acts portrays a good relationship between Paul and the Roman government suggests that the book was written before the persecution under Nero. Moreover, Luke does not appear to mention the destruction of Jerusalem, which took place in AD 70. This leads us to believe that Acts was written before Jerusalem was destroyed. Most Bible teachers believe that Luke wrote Acts about AD 63.

Various Dates Related to Acts

Date (AD)	Event	Acts	Letters Paul Wrote
30	The ascension of Christ	1:9	—
31–32	The conversion of Paul	9:1–19	—
35	Paul's first visit to Jerusalem	9:26	—
44	Paul's second visit to Jerusalem	11:30	—
46–47	Paul's first missionary trip	13:4–14:28	Galatians (after first trip)
49	The first great Church Council	15:1–29	—
49–53	Paul's second missionary trip	15:36–18:22	1 and 2 Thessalonians
53–57	Paul's third missionary trip	18:23–21:17	1 and 2 Corinthians, Romans
58	Paul's arrest in Jerusalem	21:17–23:35	—
58–60	Paul's prison term in Caesarea	24–26	—
60	Paul's trip to Rome	27:1–28:15	—
60–62	Paul's first prison term in Rome	28:16–31	Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon
63	The writing of Acts by Luke	—	—
64	Rome burns	—	—

63–65	Paul's ministry between prison terms in Rome	(After Acts)	1 Timothy, Titus
65–67	Paul's second prison term and death in Rome	(After Acts)	2 Timothy
70	Destruction of Jerusalem	(After Acts)	—

The Purposes of Acts

Summarize five purposes that Acts serves.

The danger in studying Acts is that we can focus too much on all the action and miss the larger picture. Luke selected the stories he included for specific reasons. While it is true that Acts provides a history of the first thirty years of the church (Wood 1996, 7), Luke did not tell everything he knew. For example, he states in Acts 20:7 that Paul taught until midnight at Troas (Horton 1994, 10), but he does not describe anything Paul taught there. All the subjects Paul taught at Troas that night would likely compile a book much longer than Acts itself! Imagine how many books it would take to tell all that happened in the church during the first thirty years. In fact, Acts records only a very small percentage of all that happened in the early church. (Compare with John 20:30; 21:25.) Why did Luke leave most things out but include only a few stories and events? Why did the Holy Spirit guide Luke to write about certain things? We can identify at least five purposes for which Luke wrote Acts.

To Serve as a Bridge between the Gospels and Paul's Letters

How does Acts serve as a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles?

During the first century, many churches throughout the Mediterranean world depended on the oral teaching of the Apostles or personal students of the Apostles. In addition, the written Gospels and some epistles were beginning to circulate individually and in various collected editions. This left some churches without a comprehensive understanding of the development and spread of Christianity and the events that confirmed its validity. Acts helped to fill those gaps

in understanding and therefore validate the gospel and provide a bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles.

Review the chart outlining dates related to Acts. Notice that Luke wrote Acts after Paul wrote most of his epistles. Acts 13–28 records Paul’s travels and his founding of churches in **Galatia**, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, and Philippi. Acts also introduces us to Timothy and Titus as well as other individuals mentioned in Paul’s letters, such as Aquila and Priscilla. Thus, Acts may have provided a background to better understand Paul’s writings.

To Trace the Growth of the Church

Acts describes what four types of church growth?

Another reason Luke wrote Acts was to reveal how the church grew in at least four ways:

- First, the church grew *numerically*. On the Day of Pentecost, the church fit into one upper room. Then thousands of Jews were saved in Jerusalem (2:41, 47; 4:4). Acts 6:7 reveals that many more people, including many priests, accepted Christ. Persecution scattered the believers, who witnessed and instructed new believers everywhere they went (8:1, 4). Throughout Acts, we see the number of believers increase.
- Second, the church grew *geographically*. While the church started in Jerusalem, Acts explains how persecution scattered believers to new locations (8:1). It also describes how Paul’s journeys helped expand the church. Still, the church was in Rome before Paul arrived there (28:14–15). Acts 1 begins in Jerusalem, and Acts 28 ends in Rome. Luke arranged his stories to show the growth of the church into different regions.

How has your church grown in the four areas mentioned in Acts? Explain.

- Third, the church grew *socially*. The early church was a Jewish church (1:1–7:60), but it soon expanded to other ethnic groups. According to Acts 2, Jews and Jewish converts from fifteen different locations heard the gospel. Acts 6:1 reveals that the church included two Jewish groups: one that spoke Greek (Grecian or Hellenistic Jews) and one that spoke Hebrew or Aramaic. In Acts 8, Philip preached to Samaritans and, later, to an Ethiopian. Acts 10 tells about Peter’s vision related to Cornelius, a Roman centurion, that led to a change of attitude toward Gentiles. The apostles now understood that even the Gentiles could be saved (11:18), a fact that amazed the Jewish believers. Thus the walls of **prejudice** began to fall, although not without some initial caution. In Acts 11:19–23, when a few Jews began to witness to Greeks, the apostles sent Barnabas to evaluate the situation. He sent back an encouraging report. By Acts 13, Paul was beginning to preach to the Gentiles after the Jews of the region rejected the good news (13:43–48). Thus the church grew to include those from all tribes, nations, languages, and cultures.

- Fourth, the church grew *theologically*. In the early days, the mostly Jewish believers needed time to fully understand the relationship between law and grace. Acts 15 focuses on an important question: Do Gentile believers need to be circumcised and follow the law of Moses (15:5)? Peter's answer was, "No!" (15:11). Still, the Jewish church leaders asked Gentile believers to follow some fair guidelines (15:19–21) to promote unity between Jewish and Gentile believers (Horton 1994, 184). Thus, Acts describes how the church's theology grew to include all people.

To Explain and Defend the Church

In Acts, Luke presents the Christian faith to all. He explains the background, growth, and beliefs of the church in a way that invites people to receive and follow Jesus.

As you read Acts 4:8–12, notice how it defends Christianity to Jews. On the other hand, Acts 25:8–11 defends the faith to Gentiles. The Spirit guides Luke to answer the religious questions of both religious groups.

Acts also answers questions that government leaders asked about Christianity. According to the accounts in Acts, the church is peaceful, and believers respect government leaders. The riots and civil problems recorded in Acts were always caused by the church's enemies. Acts gives seven examples to show that Christianity had a good relationship with the Roman government:

1. The governor (proconsul) of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, believed when Paul and Barnabas came before him (13:12).
2. In Philippi, the Roman jailer was saved, and the city rulers apologized for beating Paul, a Roman citizen (16:11–40).
3. Gallio, the governor of **Achaia**, refused to judge Paul because he had no interest in problems of Jewish law (18:12–16).
4. Officials of Asia Minor were friends of Paul. The town clerk of Ephesus restored order and rescued Paul from harm (19:31).
5. Claudius Lysias, a captain in the Roman army, guarded Paul when the Jews attacked the apostle in Jerusalem (21–22).
6. Governor Felix in Caesarea listened to Paul talk to him about the gospel (24:1–27).
7. Governor Festus in Caesarea believed that Paul was innocent of charges brought by the Jews (25:1–27).

Luke probably wrote Acts while Paul was imprisoned in Rome so that, when Paul went to trial, Acts would support his defense. Likewise, Acts would help defend believers in other places. Thus, a third reason Luke wrote Acts was to explain and defend the faith.

To Guide Faith and Practice

Acts offers guidance for Christian belief and actions. Some argue that we should not use Acts as a guide for doctrine because it records history. Yet remember that Luke wrote a selective history, not a complete history. Moreover, Paul was known to use history for the purpose of teaching (Menzies and Menzies 2000, 41). Among other examples, Paul reviewed Abraham's story from the historical book of Genesis to teach that we are justified by faith (Romans 4). Likewise, Luke used history to teach certain themes (Stronstad 1995, 42). He chose a few stories and events for special purposes, one of which was to emphasize what the early church believed. Luke realized that knowing the early church's beliefs would help other believers because the

same covenant—the new covenant—covers all. The church in Acts teaches us to believe in several things:

Do you think that Acts should or should not be used as a basis for doctrine? Why or why not?

- The Scriptures, prayer, sharing, and fellowship;
- The work of the Holy Spirit in glorifying Christ;
- Knowing and worshipping God;
- Witnessing, signs and wonders, being **filled with the Spirit**;
- Speaking in tongues, prophesying, and other spiritual gifts;
- Solving church growth problems, evangelizing, and teaching new believers;
- God’s power—He is working during persecution; He loves those in all nations.

Luke did not know how long the church would remain on earth, but one of his purposes was to teach future believers. Believers today still need the book of Acts to guide and empower them for life and service.

To Emphasize In-filling of the Spirit as Key to Witnessing

What is Luke’s greatest purpose in Acts?

Identify five chapters where believers were first filled with the Holy Spirit.

All of Luke’s purposes for writing Acts are important, but perhaps his greatest purpose was to emphasize the ministry of the Holy Spirit through believers. Luke’s Gospel showed that Jesus worked through the power of the Spirit (Luke 4:1, 14, 18). Luke’s Gospel also recorded Jesus’ promises that the Spirit would come to believers (11:13; 24:49). However, in Acts, Luke mentions the Spirit fifty-five times. Use a concordance to review these verses in Acts. Throughout his second book, Luke emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is the source of all we do for Christ.

Just before His ascension, Jesus’ final promise to His disciples was, “You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you” (Acts 1:8). We see that promise fulfilled throughout Acts where the Holy Spirit gave believers the power to witness and work for Christ. Acts records five times in which various believers were filled with the Holy Spirit and explains the outward evidence that this had occurred:

- *The Day of Pentecost* (2:1–4): All 120 people spoke in new languages as soon as they were filled with the Holy Spirit.
- *Believers at Samaria* (8:14–19): When he saw the evidence of the Spirit, Simon the sorcerer offered money in the hope of experiencing it himself.
- *Saul's conversion and filling* (9:17–19): We know that Paul often spoke privately in unknown languages (1 Corinthians 14:18).
- *At Cornelius' home* (10:44–46): They spoke in new languages.
- *Believers at Ephesus* (19:1–7): They spoke in new languages and prophesied.

This list leads to at least two observations. First, notice that those who were filled with the Spirit were already believers. All Christians receive the Spirit at conversion (Romans 8:9). But these followers of Jesus needed to be filled with the Spirit so they could be powerful servants of the Lord they loved. The same is true for us today. Second, Acts often records that believers spoke in new languages as they were filled with the Spirit, indicating that speaking in tongues was an outward evidence of an inward filling. Keep in mind, however, that the purpose of being filled with the Spirit is *not* speaking in tongues. Rather, the Spirit fills us so we can witness about Jesus. We value speaking in tongues because the Bible teaches that the early church valued it. Today, of the more than 520 million Pentecostal and charismatic believers in the world, many value speaking in tongues because the Bible teaches it (Barrett 2001, 382).

In our survey of the New Testament, it is helpful to realize that the New Testament writers often had similar but varying emphases. For example, Luke, John, and Paul all emphasize aspects of the Holy Spirit in their writings. All three stress that the Holy Spirit empowers believers to serve, but Luke stresses this purpose of the Holy Spirit more in his two books. However, John adds the Spirit's role as evangelist, teaching us that the Spirit is the one who draws sinners to the Savior. Paul includes both of these aspects and adds a third: the Spirit's role in helping us live a holy life. (See the following chart.)

The Spirit's Ministry According to Luke, John, and Paul

Writer	Ministry of the Holy Spirit	Selected Scriptures
Luke	Service (The Spirit enables us to witness to the lost and help believers.)	Luke 1:15–17, 39–56, 67–80; 2:25–38; 3:21–22; 4:18–19; 11:5–13; 24:45–49; all references to the Spirit in Acts
John	Service Salvation (The Spirit draws us to Christ and then helps us journey to heaven.)	John 1:32; 7:37–39; 14:12–31; 15:26; 20:21–22 John 3:5–8; 16:8–11; 1 John 2:20
Paul	Service Salvation	Rom. 15:19 Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 6:11; 12:13; 2 Cor. 1:22; Titus 3:5

Sanctification (The Spirit enables us to live a holy life that pleases God.) Rom. 8:1–17; Gal. 5:22–23; 2 Thess. 2:13

Luke's emphasis on Spirit-empowered service in the book of Acts focuses specifically on being a witness of Christ (Acts 1:8). We will note the emphases of other New Testament writers as we continue to survey the New Testament.

What would be missing in your life and church without the ministry of the Spirit?

The Holy Spirit wants to work through all believers today. His fullness gives us, whether clergy or laity, the boldness to serve and witness for Jesus. Many of today's fastest-growing churches emphasize the ministry of laypeople. In some churches, laypeople direct more than one hundred different ministries. They visit the sick, feed the poor, teach people to read, tutor students, help widows, adopt orphans, and counsel troubled youth. They paint schools in the community and build buildings for young churches. They have Bible studies in their homes and find numerous ways to minister to those who are hurting or in need. These are but a few of the lay ministries that pastors can encourage. As we are filled with the Spirit, He can lead us into a variety of ministry areas. Every member of the body of Christ should have a ministry; every believer should be actively serving God and others. The Holy Spirit will help and empower believers in each endeavor He guides them into.

The early church had few of the things we value today, yet the church spread like a fire across the world. Many events and stories would be missing from Acts without the ministry of the Spirit. The Spirit is the key to helping each believer become an effective worker.

Lesson 4.2 Outlining the Book of Acts

Divide Acts into three parts, giving the chapters for each part.

Although outlining Acts reveals that it is organized mainly around the ministries of Peter and Paul, Luke also includes the ministries of many others. Acts teaches that the Spirit uses both apostles and others (Acts 2:17–18). For every apostle in the upper room, there were nine laypeople. This chart shows that the Holy Spirit worked through many believers.

People in Acts who were not apostles but were used by the Holy Spirit

Person(s)	Ministry	Acts
108 of the 120	Prayed and witnessed for Christ	1–2
Barnabas	Was generous; became a friend to Paul; ministered to and with Paul	4, 9, 11–15
The seven deacons	Collected money and gave it to widows	6
Stephen	Served as a deacon; prayed for the sick; witnessed and taught for Jesus	6–7
Philip	Served as a deacon; took the gospel to Samaria	8, 21
Ananias	Prayed for and baptized Paul	9
Tabitha	Sewed clothes for widows	9
Simon the tanner	Provided housing for Peter	10
Cornelius	Gave alms; invited others to his home	10
Scattered believers	Told the gospel to Jews and Greeks	11
Mary, Mark's mother	Had a prayer meeting in her home	12
Unnamed believers	Prayed for Peter's release from prison	12
John Mark	Traveled with and helped Paul and Barnabas	12–13, 15
Simeon, Lucius, Manaen	Prophesied and taught	13
Silas	Traveled and ministered with Paul	15–18

Lydia	Provided housing for preachers	16
Philippian jailer	Fed Paul and Silas and washed their wounds	16
Timothy	Traveled with Paul and helped him	16–21
Jason	Provided housing for ministers	17
Unnamed believers	Escorted Paul to Athens	17
Priscilla and Aquila	Gave housing and support to Paul	18
Apollos	Testified for Jesus at Ephesus and Corinth	18–19
Unnamed brothers	Encouraged and recommended Apollos	18
Sopater, Aristarchus, Secundus, Gaius, Tychicus, Trophimus	Traveled with Paul; sometimes carried messages for him or other believers	20–21
Unnamed disciples	Gave seven days' lodging to ministers	21
Unnamed disciples	Prophesied of trouble in Jerusalem	21
Philip's four daughters	Had the gift of prophecy	21
Agabus	Prophesied of trouble in Jerusalem	21
Mnason	Provided housing for ministers	21
Paul's nephew	Warned Paul of a plot to kill him	23

Aristarchus	Sailed with Paul from Caesarea toward Rome	27
Luke	Wrote Acts and traveled with 1, 20, 21, 27–28 Paul	
Some brothers	Invited Paul and others to stay a week	28
The brothers	Walked out to meet Paul near Rome	28

Two Outlines of Acts

Acts 1:8 progressively moved the followers of Jesus to witness beyond their comfort zones and across cultural and geographical barriers. How might your calling to witness for Christ lead you beyond your comfort zones?

The first outline of Acts is based on Acts 1:8. In this verse, the Lord Jesus described *who* would witness—His followers—and *where* they would witness—“in Jerusalem, and in all **Judea** and **Samaria**^{kw}, and to the ends of the earth.” This ministry would begin after the coming of the Holy Spirit. Thus, Acts 1:8 divides Acts into three parts:

- I. Witnessing in Jerusalem (1–7)
- II. Witnessing in Judea and Samaria (8–12)
- III. Witnessing to the ends of the earth (13–28)

A second, more detailed outline of Acts follows. It includes several people and their places of ministry (Dunnet 1963, 29).

- I. Witnessing in Jerusalem, 1–7
 - A. Peter’s ministry begins (1:12–5:42)
 - B. Stephen’s ministry (6:1–8:3)
- II. Witnessing in Judea and Samaria, 8–12
 - A. Philip’s ministry (8:4–40)
 - B. Paul’s conversion (9:1–31)
 - C. Peter’s ministry continues (9:32–12:19)
 - D. Barnabas’ ministry (11:19–12:25)
- III. Witnessing to the Ends of the Earth, 13–28
 - A. Paul’s three missionary trips (13:1–21:14)
 - 1. The first missionary journey (13:1–14:28)
 - 2. The Jerusalem Council (15:1–35)
 - 3. The second missionary journey (15:36–18:22)

4. The third missionary journey (18:23–21:14)
- B. Paul's imprisonments and trip to Rome (21:15–28:31)
 1. Paul taken prisoner in Jerusalem (21:15–23:10)
 2. Paul as a prisoner in Caesarea (23:11–26:32)
 3. Paul as a prisoner in Rome (27:1–28:31)

Lesson 4.3 Witnessing about Jesus

Witnessing in Jerusalem (Acts 1–7)

Indicate three steps in which believers witnessed for Jesus from Jerusalem to Rome.

The first part of Acts describes Peter's ministry in many different situations. After Jesus' ascension, Peter became the church's leader, just as Christ had prophesied. Peter led the disciples to elect Matthias to replace Judas (Acts 1). Peter then preached on the Day of Pentecost, and three thousand people were added to the church (Acts 2). Peter and John prayed, and God healed the lame man at the temple gate (Acts 3). Afterward, when the two apostles stood before the Sanhedrin, Peter spoke with the Holy Spirit's leading and defended their ministry (Acts 4). Later, Peter condemned Ananias and Sapphira for lying to God and the church (Acts 5). He also led the church in choosing seven deacons to assist with offerings and food for the widows (Acts 6).

One outstanding characteristic of the early church was their unity. Acts 1–5 gives many examples:

- They often prayed together (1:14; 2:1–2; 4:23–31).
- They believed the same teachings (2:42–47; 4:23–35).
- "All the believers were together and had everything in common" (2:44).
- They shared their possessions with those in need (2:45; 4:32–35).
- They ate together and worshipped together (2:46–47).
- "All the believers were one in heart and mind" (4:32).

What happened in Jerusalem after Stephen's death?

The main person in Acts 6–7 is Stephen. He was one of the first deacons and a great, fearless defender of the faith. Filled with the Spirit, he performed miracles and spoke with much wisdom (6:8–10). After an intense trial and Stephen’s Spirit-inspired sermon, unbelieving, furious Jews mobbed and stoned him (6–7). It is here at Stephen’s stoning that we get a first glimpse of the later apostle Paul: “The witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul.... And Saul was there, giving approval to his death” (7:58; 8:1).

With Stephen’s martyrdom, a great persecution began against believers, forcing them to flee from Jerusalem. “Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went” (8:4).

Witnessing in Judea and Samaria (Acts 8–12)

What caused the gospel to spread to Samaria?

The second part of Acts describes believers’ witnessing in Judea and Samaria. Philip, an evangelist, was one of the seven men chosen to serve as deacons (Acts 6). Persecution drove him to Samaria, where he preached and performed miracles (8:5–8). Many believed his message about Christ. When the church in Jerusalem heard the good report of Philip’s ministry, the apostles sent Peter and John to Samaria to help (8:14). These two apostles prayed for the new believers to be filled with the Holy Spirit; they knew it was important for the new believers to have the Spirit’s power to serve Jesus. After the Samaritan believers were filled with the Spirit, Peter and John left, preaching in other Samaritan villages. At the Lord’s prompting, Philip also left Samaria and went south, leading an Ethiopian official to Christ near Gaza (8:26–40).

How did miracles help spread the gospel in Judea?

During this time, on his way to mete out more persecution, Saul met Christ on the road to Damascus (Acts 9). Luke placed so much importance on Saul’s conversion that he recounted it three times (Acts 9, 22, 26). Thus Saul, the great persecutor of the church, became Paul, the most well-known preacher in the church. Although we do not read of his name change, Luke uses his Greek name, Paul, throughout most of Acts. This may reflect the fact that Paul’s ministry became focused primarily on the Gentiles, even though he continued to witness to all who would listen.

Meanwhile, Peter traveled south to Judea and preached in Lydda, Sharon, and Joppa (Acts 9:27–43). Through Peter’s ministry, a lame man in Lydda was healed, and Dorcas was raised from the dead in Joppa. Many people accepted the Lord because of these two miracles. Miracles are still an effective instrument in spreading the gospel today.

Later, Peter went to the home of Cornelius, a Gentile and a Roman centurion in Caesarea (Acts 10). Peter had the joy of seeing Cornelius saved and baptized in water. After believing, the Gentiles in his house immediately received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Peter and the others

with him knew the Gentiles had been filled with the Spirit, “for they heard them speaking in tongues” (10:46). When Peter returned to Jerusalem, some Jewish believers demanded an explanation. Peter told the whole story, and the Jewish believers praised God for granting salvation to the Gentiles (11:1–18).

This section of Acts concludes with Peter’s miraculous escape from prison (Acts 12). After killing John’s brother James, Herod Agrippa I imprisoned Peter. On the eve of Peter’s public trial, while the church in Jerusalem prayed earnestly, an angel released Peter’s chains and led him out of the prison and through the city gate. The believers “were astonished” when he came to the door of the house where they were meeting (12:16); God had answered their prayers in a way they never expected. Peter then left for a safer place.

Witnessing in All the World (Acts 13–28)

From witnessing to Jews in Jerusalem (Acts 1–7) and to Samaritans and Gentiles in Judea (8–12), Acts moves to witnessing among the Gentiles in other parts of the known world (13–28). Luke devotes the major portion of Acts to this ministry, which Paul and many coworkers led.

Barnabas’ Ministry in Antioch

Acts 11:19 explains that persecution helped spread the gospel from Jerusalem to Phoenicia, Cyprus, and **Antioch** in Syria. Although Acts does not specify the names of those who witnessed in Antioch, we know that believers who are filled with the Spirit testify for Jesus. Such was the case in Antioch, resulting in the conversion of many Greeks. The church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to oversee the situation and to teach the new believers in Antioch. With Barnabas’ encouragement, this city later became the center for sending missionaries to the Gentiles. It was in Antioch that believers were first called Christians (11:26).

After a time, Barnabas traveled from Antioch to Tarsus, seeking Paul. Together, Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch and taught the believers there for a year, strengthening the church. When the Gentile Christians in Antioch learned that Jewish believers were suffering from a severe famine, they sent Barnabas and Paul to the Jerusalem elders with a gift to help (11:27–30). The two teachers then returned to Antioch.

Paul’s Three Missionary Journeys

Later, the Holy Spirit called Barnabas and Paul to a new missions ministry (Acts 13). It is noteworthy that these two missionaries are first referred to as “Barnabas and Saul,” with Barnabas taking the lead. However, from Acts 13:13 on, Paul appears to take the lead and is generally named first. Thus began Paul’s three missionary journeys:

- Paul’s first missionary journey centered mainly on the province of Galatia (13–14).
- Paul’s second journey took him through Galatia to the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia (15:36–18:22). Notice that on the second trip, Paul visited most of the places he had visited on the first journey.
- Paul’s third missionary journey involved many places (18:23–21:17). He visited the larger cities of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Corinth, then spent over two years in the city of Ephesus.

How did Paul's ministry to Gentiles differ from his ministry to Jews?

Throughout his travels, Paul ministered in many situations. Normally, he preached first to the Jews, often in their synagogues, and then to the Gentiles. For the Jews, he based his message on the Old Testament Scriptures. With their knowledge of the one God of the Old Testament, Paul could make direct connections to Jesus the Messiah. Thus, his speeches to Jews were **christocentric**. At other times, Paul preached to Gentiles who did not know the Jewish Scriptures or the God of Israel. For them, Paul often began his message with descriptions of God's nature and character. These messages are considered **theocentric** (Schweizer 1966, 214). After making the one true God known, Paul could then introduce them to God's Son, Jesus. His sermons at times described an object or situation to which his listeners could readily relate (Acts 17:22–34). It is always wise to begin talking with people about something they know. Relating new truth to old ideas is key in changing a person's beliefs.

During the ten-year period of Paul's three missionary journeys, he started many churches as he traveled. Later, Paul told the Roman Christians, "From Jerusalem all the way around to Illyricum, I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ" (Romans 15:19). The following chart gives highlights of Paul's three missionary trips. All of his journeys began in Antioch, Syria.

Highlights of Paul's Three Missionary Journeys (Adapted from Gundry 1994, 313–314)

Acts	Place	First Missionary Journey
13:4–12	Cyprus	Elymas was blinded; Sergius Paulus, the proconsul, believed in Jesus.
13:13	Perga in Pamphylia	John (also called Mark) left.
13:14–52	Antioch of Pisidia	Paul preached to the Jews in the synagogue.
14:8–20	Lystra	Paul healed a cripple; Barnabas and Paul were worshipped; Paul was stoned.
Second Missionary Journey		
16:8–10	Troas	Paul saw the man of Macedonia in a vision.

16:11–40	Philippi	Lydia and a jailer were saved. Paul and Silas delivered a demon-possessed girl and were imprisoned; an earthquake occurred at midnight.
17:1–9	Thessalonica	A mob assaulted the house of Jason, where Paul was staying.
17:10–15	Berea	The Bereans searched the Scriptures to verify Paul’s message.
17:16–34	Athens	Paul preached on Mars’ Hill. Timothy and Silas rejoined Paul. Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica and Silas elsewhere.
18:1–18	Corinth	Paul made tents with Priscilla and Aquila. Paul moved from the synagogue. Crispus, the synagogue ruler, was converted. In a vision Jesus told Paul to stay. Gallio refused to condemn Paul. Paul spent eighteen months in Corinth.
18:18	Cenchrea	Paul shaved his head because of a vow.
18:19–21	Ephesus	Priscilla and Aquila accompanied Paul to Ephesus and stayed there.
Third Missionary Journey		
19:1–41	Ephesus	Twelve men received the Spirit. Paul preached in the hall of Tyrannus. Seven sons of Sceva tried to cast out demons. Converts burned

		their magic books; Demetrius led a riot. Paul spent two years and three months in Ephesus.
20:1–6	Greece/Achaia	Jews plotted to kill Paul.
20:7–12	Troas	Eutychus fell out of a window during Paul’s sermon.
20:13–38	Miletus	Paul said goodbye to the Ephesian elders.
21:3–6	Tyre	Paul was warned not to go to Jerusalem.
21:8–14	Caesarea	Paul stayed with Philip; Agabus warned Paul about going to Jerusalem.
21:17–23:30	Jerusalem	Paul reported to the church; took a Jewish vow; was rescued by Roman soldiers; spoke to the Jews and the Sanhedrin; was escorted to Caesarea.
23:33–26:32	Caesarea	Paul stood trial before Felix, Festus, and Agrippa and appealed to Caesar.

Paul’s third missionary journey ended with his last visit to Jerusalem. There the Jews tried to kill him, but his life was saved when the Romans arrested and guarded him. As a result, Paul spent years in prison, both in Caesarea and Rome.

Paul’s Incarceration

The final portion of Acts deals with Paul’s experience as a prisoner. He first faced the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 22–23) and later was tried in Caesarea. At Caesarea, he stood before Felix, Festus, and Herod Agrippa II (24–26) before finally being taken to Rome.

Paul faced many dangers while traveling to Rome, including a shipwreck (27–28). In Rome, still under arrest, he rented a house but was supervised by a guard. Yet Paul was free to preach and teach. Even some from the household of Caesar heard and received the good news of salvation (Philippians 4:22).

Thus, Luke provides some of the history of the first thirty years of the church. From the first few Jewish believers in an upper room in Jerusalem, the power of the Spirit enabled the church to grow and spread “to the ends of the earth.” Acts closes when the gospel reaches Rome. By then, the church had thousands of members including believers from many races and nations.

The spread of the gospel through the Holy Spirit’s power continues today. On the Day of Pentecost, three thousand joined the church. Today, more than ten thousand come to Christ each day (Barrett 2000, 25) due to revivals in Africa, Northeast **Asia**, Latin America, and many other places. Each region of the world could add to the story as the acts of the Holy Spirit continue.

Unit 2 Thirteen Letters of Paul

Whether traveling or coping with imprisonment, Paul yearned to strengthen and teach the churches he founded and the friends he disciplined. Writing letters provided an effective method for accomplishing both goals.

Paul’s epistles deal with a variety of issues. To the Romans, Corinthians, and Galatians, he emphasized that we receive salvation, that is, God’s righteousness, through His grace. In the epistles he wrote from prison—Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon—Paul expressed his concern and passion for practical Christian living. Since he could not visit these churches personally while imprisoned, he spoke through his letters with apostolic authority, clarifying some theology and offering instruction. In 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Paul spoke about the future. Most believers want to learn all they can about the events that lie ahead. Finally, Paul’s letters for pastors, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus, were both personal and practical. The principles and exhortations they contain will help you in your ministry.

Although Paul addressed his epistles to specific churches and individuals, the truth he presents unquestionably applied to all churches and applies to us today. As we face similar questions and situations, the Holy Spirit uses Paul’s words of encouragement and instruction to guide us.

Chapter 5 Letters about Law and Grace: Romans and Galatians

Lessons

C5.1 Paul

C5.2 Romans

C5.3 Galatians

Chapter 6 Letters about Church Problems: 1 and 2 Corinthians

Lessons

C6.1 First Corinthians

C6.2 Second Corinthians

Chapter 7 Letters from Prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon

Lessons

- C7.1 Ephesians
- C7.2 Philippians
- C7.3 Colossians
- C7.4 Philemon

Chapter 8 Letters about the Future: 1 and 2 Thessalonians

Lessons

- C8.1 First Thessalonians
- C8.2 Second Thessalonians

Chapter 9 Letters for Pastors: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus

Lessons

- C9.1 First Timothy
- C9.2 Titus
- C9.3 Second Timothy

Chapter 5 Letters about Law and Grace: Romans and Galatians

The epistles of Romans and Galatians firmly declare that true righteousness, or salvation, comes only through faith in Jesus Christ. Such faith brings freedom from the slavery and condemnation of sin, introducing a new way of life.

Paul knew this truth firsthand. Having zealously persecuted believers before his conversion, Paul had experienced the life-changing grace of God's gift of righteousness to all who believe. Now his zeal turned to serving the Christ who had saved him and freed him from sin. Paul wanted to strengthen and renew the Romans' and Galatians' faith. He wanted them to remember what God had delivered them from and what He was leading them to with His gift.

Lesson 5.1 Paul

Objectives

- 5.1.1 *Summarize Paul's background, conversion, and public ministry.*
- 5.1.2 *Identify the four groups of Paul's letters and the books in each.*

Lesson 5.2 Romans

Objectives

- 5.2.1 *Describe the setting for the book of Romans.*

5.2.2 *Relate righteousness to the five parts of Romans.*

Lesson 5.3 Galatians

Objectives

5.3.1 *Explain why Paul wrote to the Galatian churches.*

5.3.2 *Summarize three reasons Paul gave the Galatians for believing the gospel.*

Lesson 5.1 Paul

Summarize Paul's background, conversion, and public ministry.

Paul was one of the greatest men in the history of the church. His story is one of the most amazing accounts of humankind. The richest details about Paul's life and conversion come from Acts and his letters to the Corinthians, Galatians, and Philippians.

Paul's Background

A highly educated Jew from the city of Tarsus, Paul was known for many years as Saul of Tarsus. As a youth, Saul learned to make tents and later used this skill to support his ministry (Acts 18:3). He spoke Aramaic (the common language in Palestine at the time of Jesus), Greek, and Hebrew.

Is it important to speak the language of those to whom you witness? Explain.

Saul studied the Law in Jerusalem under the great teacher Gamaliel (Acts 22:3) and, according to Galatians 1:14, was becoming a leader in the Jewish religion. In fact, he was more zealous for God and the Law than most other Jews. Becoming a Pharisee like his father (Acts 23:6), Saul tried hard to follow the traditions of the Jewish leaders.

Describe Saul's teacher, religion, and tribe.

Saul's family descended from the tribe of Benjamin (Philippians 3:5), who were fighters in Israel's history. Saul showed this fighting character, especially when he persecuted the church (Galatians 1:13). Scripture describes his intense effort to destroy the church after Stephen was murdered (Acts 7:57–8:3), persecuting both men and women in Jerusalem. Letters from the high priest authorized him to arrest Christians outside of Jerusalem as well. Believing he was helping God to get rid of false worshippers, Saul continued his quest against the church in many other cities (Acts 26:10–11). Then, on one of his trips to persecute believers, Saul met Jesus, and his life would never be the same.

In supplement to his Jewish heritage, Paul grew up in the Greek culture. He understood Greek philosophy, was familiar with Greek customs, and knew many of the Greek writings (Acts 17:28; Titus 1:12).

He was also a Roman citizen. To a Roman army captain in Jerusalem, Paul stated, "I was born a citizen" (Acts 22:28), meaning that somehow his father had attained this prestigious status. Being a Roman citizen gave Paul some important rights that he exerted during his ministry. For instance, Paul and Silas were condemned, beaten, and jailed in Philippi without benefit of a proper trial (to which Romans were entitled). When Paul criticized this oversight and declared that he and Silas were Roman citizens, the Philippian officials "were alarmed" and went out of their way to show the men respect (16:37–39). Later, in Acts 25:11–12, Paul asserted the right of a Roman citizen to appeal to Caesar for justice. Roman citizens also had the right to be beheaded—not crucified—if sentenced to die.

Paul's Conversion

As a rising Jewish leader, Saul vehemently denied that Jesus was the Messiah, the Son of God. He did not believe that Jesus rose from the dead, as Stephen said. It is likely that Saul heard Stephen say, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (Acts 7:56). As the mob began yelling and stoning Stephen, Saul stood by and agreed to his death (7:58; 8:1).

Then, one day something Saul never imagined suddenly occurred. The Lord Jesus himself spoke to him on the road to **Damascus**. Thus, Saul knew without doubt that Jesus was alive. He could no longer deny that Jesus was the Son of God. After his encounter with Jesus, Saul's life changed completely. Soon Saul—the great persecutor of the church—began to preach Christ as Savior! What he used to hate, he now loved. Later, Paul described his new relationship with Christ by saying, "Whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ" (Philippians 3:7; also consider 2 Corinthians 5:14–19; Galatians 2:20). Following his conversion, he stayed in Arabia for a time before his first visit to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:16–19), then returned to his home in Tarsus for eight to ten years. The Bible says very little about his life during this time, but throughout the years, God was preparing and molding Saul for a life of service.

Describe how Paul's conversion demonstrates the principle that salvation produces service.

This service would be performed in the office of an apostle and through the responsibilities of a missionary. In Galatians 1:1–17, Paul clearly says that Jesus appointed him to be an apostle and revealed the gospel to him so he could preach it to the Gentiles. In fact, when the Lord prompted Ananias to visit the newly converted Saul, He stated, “This man is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel” (Acts 9:15).

Twelve Qualifications That Enabled Paul to Be an Effective Missionary

1. He learned the Jewish language and culture well.
Acts 21:40; Phil. 3:5
2. He learned the Greek language and culture well.
Acts 17:22–31; Titus 1:12
3. He was a Roman citizen.
Acts 16:37; 22:23–29; 25:10–12
4. He was trained in Jewish theology.
Gal. 1:14
5. He supported himself so as not to be a burden.
Acts 18:3; 1 Cor. 9:14–18; 2 Cor. 11:7–11; 1 Thess. 2:9; 2 Thess. 3:8
6. He was called by God.
Acts 9:15–16; 22:14–15; 26:12–18; Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1 (and others)
7. He was filled with the Spirit.
Acts 9:17
8. He was given great grace.
1 Cor. 3:10; 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:9
9. He was given a thorn in the flesh that kept him humble and dependent on Jesus.
2 Cor. 12:7–9
10. He had a great love for people.
Rom. 9:1–4; 2 Cor. 11:28–29; Philemon 12–19
11. He had the heart of a servant.
Acts 21:17–26; 1 Cor. 9:19–23; 2 Cor. 6:3–10
12. He was diligent and persevered to run his race.
1 Cor. 9:24–27; 2 Cor. 11:23–33; Phil. 3:13–14

Paul's Public Ministry

To help in teaching the believers of Syrian Antioch, Barnabas sought out Saul in Tarsus, and they taught together in Antioch for an entire year (Acts 11:25–26). Later, as Saul, Barnabas, and others were worshipping and fasting, the Holy Spirit spoke: “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them” (13:2). The group continued to fast and pray, laying their hands on Barnabas and Saul in prayer. Then they sent the two men off as the first missionaries from the Antioch church. From the earliest days of the church to the present, the Holy Spirit has continued to direct believers as they take time to worship, fast, and pray.

That first missionary journey (Acts 13–14) occurred around AD 46–48, about sixteen to eighteen years after the Resurrection. Paul had probably been a believer for at least ten years. Consider this: Although he was called to be an apostle from his mother’s womb (Galatians 1:15), he was probably over forty years old when he made his first missionary trip. It takes time for believers to mature. Paul spent a number of years studying the Scriptures and growing in knowledge and in relation to others. He spent time in Tarsus and in Antioch. Step by step he became the apostle God called him to be. Even apostles grow slowly (Wood 2001, 201).

During the next twenty years, Paul had a great ministry to Jews and Gentiles alike. He evangelized and started churches in the provinces of Galatia, Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia, returning later to strengthen many of the churches. When problems developed between the Jews and Gentiles, Paul worked with Barnabas, Peter, James, and other church leaders to correct them (Acts 15:1–35; Galatians 2:1–10). His desire for the gospel to reach the entire world helped him see beyond the traditions of people. Paul believed his Lord, who said the gospel should reach all nations.

Paul's Letters

Identify the four groups of Paul's letters and the books in each.

Throughout his ministry, Paul wrote many letters to individuals and churches. At least thirteen of these epistles are in the Bible. Although some believe that Paul also wrote Hebrews, most Bible scholars conclude that he did not (see chapter 10). We know that Paul wrote other letters to the church at Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:9; 7:1; 2 Corinthians 2:3; 7:8) and one to Laodicea (Colossians 4:16), but for reasons known only to Him, the Holy Spirit did not allow these letters to be preserved as part of Scripture.

While Paul's writings vary in content and style, we can group them according to their main thoughts or themes. We will look briefly at each of the four groups.

Paul's thirteen letters are divided into four groups.

Group	Letters	Date
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Four letters about salvation (soteriology)	Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians	49–57
Four letters from prison (Prison Epistles)	Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon	60–62
Two letters about the future (eschatology)	1 and 2 Thessalonians	51–52
Three letters to pastors (Pastoral Epistles)	1 and 2 Timothy, Titus	62–67

Group 1: Letters about Salvation

Give an example from Romans and Galatians showing why these letters are considered salvation letters.

In Romans, Galatians, and 1 and 2 Corinthians, written between AD 49 and 57, Paul includes many teachings about salvation. The study of salvation is called *soteriology* (from *soteria*, the Greek word for salvation). While the Corinthian letters apply salvation to daily living, Romans and Galatians teach about **justification**. Together, the four letters explain how believers relate to God, one another, and the world.

Group 2: Letters from Prison

Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon about AD 62 from prison, probably in Rome (Acts 28:30–31). Thus, these four letters are termed the Prison Epistles. They teach about Jesus and His ministry (Ephesians 1:7–12; Philippians 2:5–11; Colossians 1:14–22; 2:3, 9–15; Philemon 15–20).

Group 3: Letters about the Future

The epistles of 1 and 2 Thessalonians are dated about AD 51–52. In them, Paul discusses concepts of eschatology (from the Greek word *eschatos*, meaning “last”), the study of the end-time. He especially describes the second coming of Christ.

Group 4: Letters to Pastors

In 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, penned about AD 65–67, Paul teaches about relationships in local churches. Written to two young pastors, these letters also present the responsibilities of church leaders. Therefore, they are often called Paul’s Pastoral Epistles. The closing chapter of 2 Timothy indicates that the book was written during the last days of Paul’s life.

Lesson 5.2 Romans

Describe the setting for the book of Romans.

The largest city of Paul's day, Rome was the capital and symbol of the Roman Empire. It was famous for its buildings such as the Colosseum, completed by AD 80, and the Pantheon. To a Roman, Rome was the center of the world as its roads and government went out into the entire Mediterranean and European world (Stott 1994, 383). Yet Rome was also famous for its sin. Seneca said Rome was a sewer of sin. Theologians, also, believe that John's depiction of the prostitute and mother of all harlots (Revelation 17:1–18) refers to Rome.

Many think Paul wrote his epistle to the Roman believers in AD 57 from Corinth while on his third missionary journey. In the letter, Paul repeatedly expressed his desire to visit Rome (see the following chart). After three years and an appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:11), he finally arrived in Rome in AD 60 (Bruce 1987, 18–19).

Verses in Romans Describing Paul's Desire to Visit Rome

Romans	Scripture
1:10	I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.
1:11–12	I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong—that is, that you and I may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith.
1:13	I planned many times to come to you (but have been prevented from doing so until now) in order that I might have a harvest among you, just as I have had among the other Gentiles.
1:15	That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome.
15:20–22	It has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known, ... This is why I have often been hindered from coming to you.

15:23–24	But now that there is no more place for me to work in these regions, and since I have been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain. I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there, after I have enjoyed your company for a while.
15:28–29	I will go to Spain and visit you on the way. I know that when I come to you, I will come in the full measure of the blessing of Christ.
15:31–32	Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea and that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and together with you be refreshed.

Describe the circumstances surrounding the church at Rome when Paul wrote in AD 57.

As recorded in Acts 28, Paul finally reached Rome, but as a prisoner. When the Roman Christians heard that Paul was nearing the city, many of them walked thirty to forty miles to meet him (Acts 28:15). Although he was under guard, these believers “gave him something like a triumphal escort for the remainder of his journey” (Bruce 1987, 19). This must have been a rewarding experience for Paul as the recipients of his letter honored him with this warm welcome.

What is the main theme of Romans?

The church at Rome consisted of both Jews and Gentiles. Although Jewish Christians likely founded the church in Rome (Acts 2:10), it became an all-Gentile church sometime in the AD 40s when the emperor Claudius expelled all Jews from Rome (18:2). The Jews were able to return after Claudius' death around AD 54. As a result, three years later Paul wrote to a church that was facing cultural tension over Jewish and Gentile expressions of faith in Christ (Keener 1993, 412). Neither approach was wrong, but the cultural differences required a willingness from

both Jew and Gentile to find common ground in Christ. Paul's letter helps accomplish this as the Holy Spirit inspires him to write.

One of Paul's epistles about salvation, Romans contains the most complete teaching on **righteousness** in the New Testament. Paul explains that the Savior came to bring us into a right relationship with God. The main theme of Romans is that righteousness comes through an active faith in Jesus (Romans 4:13; 10:3).

Outline of Romans

Relate righteousness to the five parts of Romans.

Paul explained five aspects of righteousness that are clearly seen in the book's outline:

- I. Sin: The need for righteousness (1–3)
- II. Justification: The provision of righteousness (3–5)
- III. Sanctification: The result of righteousness (6–8)
- IV. Rejection: The width of righteousness (9–11)
- V. Service: The fruit of righteousness (12–15)

Introduction, 1:1–17

- I. Sin: The Need for Righteousness, 1:18–3:20
 - A. Gentile sin (1:18–2:16)
 - B. Jewish sin (2:17–3:8)
 - C. Everyone's sin (3:9–20)
- II. Justification: The Provision of Righteousness, 3:21–5:21
 - A. A summary of justification by faith (3:21–31)
 - B. Abraham, an illustration of justification by faith (4:1–25)
 - C. Blessings that come with justification by faith (5:1–11)
 - D. Adam and Christ contrasted (5:12–21)
- III. Sanctification: The Result of Righteousness, 6–8
 - A. Our union with Christ (6:1–23)
 - B. The conflict of our fleshly and spiritual natures (7:1–25)
 - C. Our victory through walking in the Spirit (8:1–39)
- IV. Rejection: The Width of Righteousness Includes Jews and Gentiles, 9–11
 - A. Israel's past: God's judgment for sin (9:1–33)
 - B. Israel's present: God's offer of salvation (10:1–21)
 - C. Israel's future: God's promise of restoration (11:1–36)
- V. Service: The Fruit of Righteousness, 12–15
 - A. The believer: a living sacrifice (12:1–2)
 - B. The believer and others in the body (12:3–15)
 - C. The believer and the government (13:1–7)

D. The believer and the law of love (13:8–15:13)

Conclusion and Greetings, 15:14–16:27

Explanations of the Outline

Introduction (Romans 1:1–17)

Part of Paul’s purpose in Romans is to teach about righteousness. The key verses in this book are Romans 1:16–17:

I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

This passage emphasizes that we become righteous by believing the good news of Jesus Christ. Notice what verse 17 says about faith: Faith is the key to our relationship with God, from the beginning to the end of our journey to heaven. This faith expresses itself through trust in and submission to Jesus as Savior and Lord. Righteousness from God results from relating faithfully to Jesus.

Sin: The Need for Righteousness (Romans 1:18–3:20)

Identify at least two Scriptures in Romans where Paul refers to Jews and Gentiles, and explain how this reference may have helped ease the tension between the two groups in the Roman church.

Romans provides a thorough discussion of the concept of righteousness, beginning with our need for it. The first major section of Romans describes our sinful condition (1:18–3:20) and shows that everyone needs righteousness. That is, all people have sinned and need salvation:

- People have turned away from God to follow other gods (1:21–23).
- God allowed humankind to go their own way (1:24–28).
- Those who judge others actually judge themselves because they “do the same things” (2:1–3).
- God is the ultimate Judge who will reward or punish each person for what he or she has done (2:6).
- Even without the written law of the Jews, Gentiles know in their hearts what is right and wrong (2:14–15).
- Jews have the Law but do not obey all of it. Therefore, the Jews are also guilty of sin (2:27).
- No one can be counted as righteous by following the Law (3:20).
- All have sinned and fall short of the righteousness that God demands (3:23).

Justification: The Provision of Righteousness (Romans 3:21–5:21)

Our salvation is based on the great truth of *substitution*. A substitute is one who exchanges places with another. Because of sin, we stood in the place of judgment; that is, we deserved to be punished and separated from God. Yet Jesus came to be our substitute. We deserved to be crucified, but Jesus took our place on the Cross and “bore our sins in his body” (1 Peter 2:24). In exchange for our sins, He offers us His righteousness. God justifies (counts righteous) those who agree to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Under the old covenant, the Israelites substituted animals for people. Once each year, the high priest chose two goats to substitute for the people in two ways: One goat was killed, showing that the people deserved to die for their sins. Its blood was shed for the people. The other goat, the scapegoat, was sent to wander in the desert, illustrating that sin separates us from God (Leviticus 16:7–10, 15–16, 20–22).

However, since the value of goats could not equal the value of humans, the death or exile of a goat could never fully take away the people’s sins (Hebrews 10:4, 11). Each year, the death and punishment of these animals reminded the Jews that their sins remained (10:3). God accepted animal sacrifices because this was a picture of what Jesus would do for us. He allowed the people to sacrifice animals each year until Jesus came to be our substitute. Jesus gave His life and blood to free us—forever—from sin.

Thus, salvation “comes through faith in Jesus Christ” (Romans 3:22). God justifies those who relate to Jesus by faith. Romans 3:21–5:21 contains several truths related to substitution, justification, and righteousness and shows that faith in Jesus solves the problem of sin:

- God remains righteous yet makes sinners righteous through the substitution of Christ (3:24–26).
- Abraham illustrates justification by faith. Because Abraham lived long before the Law came, he did not seek to be righteous by keeping the Law. Instead, God counted him righteous because of his faith, his trust in God (4:1–13).
- When a sinner is justified, he or she receives blessings that include peace with God, joy, and hope (5:1–11).
- Our righteousness is the result of Christ’s death on Calvary (5:12–21).

Sanctification: The Result of Righteousness (Romans 6–8)

Another word for sanctification is *holiness*. The Greek word *hagios* (“holy”) is often translated as “saints” in the New Testament. The word *holy* is used in relation to believers more than eighty times in the New Testament (Gillespie 1970, 7–8). Despite their continuing temptation to sin, those who have been saved from sin are no longer referred to as sinners. In his letters, Paul never addressed the believers as sinners; rather, he always addressed them as saints, or those who are holy.

We are holy for two reasons: (1) what Jesus did *for* us and (2) what He does *in* us. These two parts of holiness must never be separated. Our faith in what Jesus did *for* us is the basis for what He does *in* us. In other words, because we believe in Jesus’ death and resurrection, we turn from our sins, follow Him, and receive Him into our lives by faith. Then Jesus begins to work in us. We are born again and become God’s children (John 1:12). We partake of, receive, and share the nature of God (2 Peter 1:4).

Eternal life from God flows into each new believer, and God re-creates the person through this spiritual birth. At the new birth we are “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). Therefore, we no longer follow the ways of the world (2 Corinthians

5:17) but follow the leading of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Day by day, we are being changed to be more like God in righteousness and holiness (2 Corinthians 3:18).

God’s children are led by the Spirit, not by the flesh. The Greek word for flesh is *sarx*, often translated as “sinful nature” (Romans 6:19; 7:5, 18, 25; 8:1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12, 13). Each believer still has sinful, fleshly desires, but Christ gives us the freedom to say “No” to the flesh. Since as believers we are no longer slaves of the sinful nature, we have the freedom to choose between following the flesh and obeying the Spirit. Therefore, we daily crucify, deny, and ignore the sinful desires of the flesh (Romans 6:11–14; Galatians 5:24). As we follow the Spirit, we “grow in grace” (2 Peter 3:18) and “purify ourselves ... perfecting holiness out of reverence for God” (2 Corinthians 7:1).

Yet, again, the choice to follow the Spirit or give in to our sinful nature is ours. To illustrate, suppose a certain man had two fighting dogs. As the man traveled from town to town, people came to watch the dogfight, sometimes gambling on the outcome. Since neither dog won consistently, it was impossible for visitors to know which dog would defeat the other. However, the dogs’ owner always knew who the victor would be: For a few days before the fight, he fed only the dog he wanted to win. In the same way, the winner in the struggle between our sinful nature and the Spirit depends on which one we feed.

In Romans 6–8, Paul describes not only the struggle between those under the Law and those under grace but also that between the flesh (sinful nature) and the Spirit. Whether under the Law or under grace, the sinful nature remains the same; its desires do not change. Living under the Law brings only condemnation. The Law gives no power to do what is right. However, under grace we receive the Holy Spirit of grace who gives us power to live a holy life. Therefore, whereas under the Law we were slaves of our fleshly desires, through the new birth we have become slaves of righteousness.

Slaves of sin serve sin, which is their master. As prisoners of the law of sin (Romans 7:23), they are unspiritual and lack the freedom to do what is right. Sin forces them to do evil things they do not want to do, and they cannot do the good they want to do (7:14–15). Slaves of sin cannot please God, for they are controlled by the flesh (8:8). They cannot inherit God’s kingdom (Galatians 5:21). Representing all slaves of sin, Paul cried out, “Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God—through Jesus Christ our Lord!” (Romans 7:24–25). Although we “used to be slaves to sin” (6:17), now through the blood of Jesus Christ we “have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness” (6:18). The following chart highlights the contrast.

No one can serve two masters. We are slaves either of sin or of righteousness (Romans 6–8).

Romans	Slaves of Sin	Slaves of Righteousness	Romans
5:21	Sin reigned in death	Grace reigns through righteousness	5:21
6:1	“Shall we go on sinning?”	“We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Our old self	6:2, 6

		was crucified with him ... that we should no longer be slaves to sin."	
6:12–13	Slaves of sin let sin reign in their bodies and obey its evil desires. They offer themselves to sin as instruments of wickedness.	"Count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.... Offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness. For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace."	6:11–14
6:16	Slavery to sin leads to death.	Slavery to obedience leads to righteousness.	6:16
6:20–21	"You were slaves of sin.... Those things result in death!"	"Now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life."	6:22
7:5	"When we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death."	"But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code (law)."	7:6
7:8	"Sin ... produced in me every kind of covetous desire."	"By dying to what once bound us, we have been released	7:6

from the law so that
we serve in the new
way of the Spirit.”

- 7:14–15 “The law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.... What I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.” “Through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death.” 8:2
- 7:18–20, 23–24 “I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.... The evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.... It is sin living in me that does it. [I am] a prisoner of the law of sin.... Who will rescue me from this body of death?” “Thanks be to God— through Jesus Christ our Lord! For what the law was powerless to do ... God did by sending his own Son to be a sin offering in order that the requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.” 7:25; 8:3–4
- 8:5 “Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires.” “But those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.” 8:5
- 8:8 “Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.” “You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you.” 8:9
- 8:13 “For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die (eternally).” “If by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by 8:13–14

the Spirit of God are
sons of God.”

Some Bible scholars believe that Romans 7:7–24 describes a Christian experience, since it is part of a section of text on sanctification. On the other hand, others believe this passage describes Paul as an unsaved person living under the Law. The Law increases moral awareness but does not enable those under it to resist the evil impulses of the flesh. The flesh causes them to commit many sins (Galatians 5:19–21). However, “through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death” (Romans 8:2). According to Romans 6:1–2, 15–18, God’s children are no longer slaves of sin. If a believer sins, those who are spiritual should seek to restore him or her (Galatians 6:1).

As described in Romans 8:1–17, a born-again person who is led by the Spirit is no longer powerless like a person under the Law (Galatians 5:18). Those who are led by the Spirit do good deeds instead of evil acts (5:22–26). Romans 7 and 8 present a contrast between an unsaved person and a holy person. Once, Paul was an unspiritual person, a sinner living under the Law (Romans 7:14). However, Jesus changed him to a spiritual, holy person living under grace. Led by the Spirit, Paul learned to bring every thought into captivity and obedience to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:5). Once he was born again, Paul was not a slave to the desires of his body. Rather, his body was his slave (1 Corinthians 9:27).

Rejection: The Width of Righteousness Includes Jews and Gentiles (Romans 9–11)

What do you think Paul meant when he said that all of Israel would be saved (Romans 11:26)? Do you believe this refers to national Israel, spiritual Israel, every ethnic Jew, or something else entirely?

The gospel went first to the Jews, but many rejected the Savior and Messiah God had sent. In the next section of Romans, Paul shows that the gospel is for everyone, both Jew and Gentile:

- God is in control, working out His purpose of redemption (9:1–32).
- Now, the gospel is for all. “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (10:13).
- God temporarily set aside His people Israel, but He has not thrown them out (11:1).
- A day of restoration and blessing for Israel will come (11:25–32).

Service: The Fruit of Righteousness (Romans 12–15)

The fifth major section of Romans relates righteousness to service. Those who are right with God

- dedicate themselves to the Lord. This is the way we worship Him (12:1–2).
- humbly serve others (12:3–8).
- enjoy good relationships with others (12:9–21).
- submit to and honor the government (13:1–7).

- have the right attitude toward all other believers (13:8–15:13).

Write the appropriate subtheme beside each reference in Romans in the adjacent chart.

Five Aspects of Righteousness in Romans

Romans	Subtheme
1–3	
4–5	
6–8	
9–11	
12–15	

Lesson 5.3 Galatians

In our Bibles, Paul’s epistles are not in chronological order; rather, they are listed from the longest to the shortest. Romans is the longest, with 7,101 words, and Philemon is the shortest, with 335 words (Gundry 1994, 257–259). Only the Pastoral Epistles, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus, are exceptions to the order according to length.

Chronologically, the first of Paul’s epistles is Galatians. On his first missionary journey (Acts 13:4–14:28), Paul ministered in Southern Galatia in the towns of Pisidian Antioch, Derbe, Lystra, and Iconium. Paul wrote Galatians to the mostly Gentile believers in these areas.

Background

Explain why Paul wrote to the Galatian churches.

Many of the first believers in the early church were Jewish and continued their Jewish way of life. They attended the synagogues to worship and learn, offered sacrifices in the temple, and celebrated the Jewish feasts. Obedient to the rules Moses gave them, they circumcised their sons and, like most Jews, lived socially distant from the Gentiles.

Then the Gentiles began to receive Christ, forcing Jewish believers to face new questions: Should Gentiles be circumcised? Must Gentiles live like Jews to be saved? Although Gentile believers had received the gospel and had been justified by faith in Christ, Jewish teachers known as **Judaizers** were leading some astray. These false teachers said that believers must follow Jesus and Moses, stressing that circumcision was necessary for salvation.

However, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul reminded them of the basic truths of the gospel: We are saved by faith in Jesus, not by keeping the law of Moses. We have only one Savior, not two. Paul declared that the Galatians had deserted Jesus and were following a useless gospel (Galatians 1:6–7) and that those trying to keep the Law were under a curse (3:10). Under the new covenant, circumcision has no religious value (5:6). In fact, Paul said that those who trusted in circumcision or laws had “fallen away from grace” (5:4). Arguing that Gentiles were free from the Mosaic law (Gundry 1994, 346), Paul emphasized that “a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ” (Galatians 2:16).

When the Council at Jerusalem (which Paul attended) convened about AD 49 to discuss these issues, they reached the same conclusion: Gentiles are saved by faith in Christ, and therefore, Jewish believers must not require Gentiles to keep the law of Moses (Acts 15). Since Paul makes no mention of the Jerusalem Council’s discussion or decision, however, many Bible scholars conclude that he wrote Galatians as early as AD 48–49 (Gromacki 1974, 232), before the Council met.

Regardless of the date or recipients, Galatians stands as a solid testimony that salvation comes only through a living faith in Jesus. It is a strong defense of justification by faith.

Purpose

Paul had a greater purpose and a lesser purpose in writing Galatians. After a short greeting, Paul marveled that the Galatians had so quickly deserted the gospel of grace, turning away from Christ to submit to the requirements of Judaism. Paul condemned the false teachers among them (Galatians 1:6–7). In fact, he called down the curse of God upon them (1:8–9). Then Paul focused on the source, message, and power of his gospel. He wanted to turn the Galatians away from the Judaizers and back to the truth. As Paul put it, “I am again in the pains of childbirth until Christ is formed in you” (4:19). Thus, Paul’s main purpose was to emphasize that we are saved by following Jesus, not Moses. We are under grace, not the Law.

Paul’s lesser purpose is closely related. Even though we are not under Law, we must live holy lives. Whereas the basis of our salvation is faith, not works, God requires us to walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh. Paul emphasizes this lesser theme in Galatians 5:16–6:1, where he contrasts the acts of the sinful nature with the fruit of the Spirit. Those who fulfill the flesh’s evil desires will not inherit God’s kingdom (5:19–21). Grace teaches us to live godly, holy lives.

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all

wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (Titus 2:11–14)

Outline of Galatians

Paul started with the problem (Galatians 1:1–10), then defended his belief that justification comes by faith, not by works. The key verse is Galatians 2:16.

We who are Jews by birth and not “Gentile sinners” know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. (Galatians 2:15–16)

The Three Main Parts of Galatians

Galatians	Section
1–2	Personal: Paul’s testimony—The gospel revealed
3–4	Doctrinal: The gospel explained
5–6	Practical: The gospel applied

- I. Introduction, 1:1–10
- II. Personal: Paul’s Testimony—The Gospel Revealed, 1:11–2:21
 - A. God’s revelation of the gospel (1:11–24)
 - B. The other apostles’ agreement with the gospel (2:1–10)
 - C. The personal application of the gospel (2:11–21)
- III. Doctrinal: The Gospel Explained, 3:1–4:31
 - A. The personal appeal (3:1–5)
 - B. The experience of Abraham (3:6–14)
 - C. The promise and the Law (3:15–22)
 - D. The nature of the Son (3:23–4:7)
 - E. The danger of turning away (4:8–20)
 - F. The lesson from history (4:21–31)
- IV. Practical: The Gospel Applied, 5:1–6:10
 - A. Stand firm in freedom (5:1–12)
 - B. Walk in the Spirit, not the flesh (5:13–26)
 - C. Help one another (6:1–10)
- V. Conclusion, 6:11–18

Explanations of the Outline

Summarize three reasons Paul gave the Galatians for believing the gospel.

Paul gives the Galatians three reasons to believe the gospel.

The Personal Section (Galatians 1–2)

Paul received the gospel by revelation from the Lord (Galatians 1:11–12). Other apostles did not give it to him. They only agreed with his message and ministry (1:16–2:10). Although Acts does not mention Paul’s visit to Arabia (Galatians 1:17), there is no reason to doubt Paul’s account. To Luke, Paul’s Arabian visit was not a primary concern in the context of Acts 9 (Fung 1988, 68). However, Paul mentioned it to the Galatians to help establish that Jesus was the source of the gospel he preached. He had not been instructed, briefed, or brainwashed by anyone in Jerusalem regarding the gospel, because he did not even go there for quite some time after his conversion.

The Doctrinal Section (Galatians 3–4)

The gospel message is not completely new. The Old Testament taught the truth of the gospel through Abraham, among others (Galatians 3:8). In a sense, Paul portrays Abraham as similar to a Gentile. That is, Abraham did not have the temple, dietary laws, or even circumcision for most of his life (Cole 1984, 85). He was declared righteous in Genesis 15, but was not circumcised until at least thirteen years later (Genesis 17:10–27). Because Abraham lived long before the Law, the Law did not justify him. In fact, the Law cannot justify *anyone* (Galatians 3:9–14). Paul explained this truth first by showing the difference between a slave and a son (3:23–4:7) and then by using the story of Abraham’s two sons (4:21–31). Paul presents Abraham “as the prototype of the first proselyte and first convert to Jewish monotheism who abandoned idols at the call of God” (Witherington 1998, 225). Abraham’s example lends weight to the gospel, since he was the first to receive God’s justifying grace through faith. If it worked for Abraham before circumcision or the Law ever came about, it would certainly work for the Galatians without the Law, since they had much in common with Abraham (Witherington 1998, 229).

The Practical Section (Galatians 5–6)

Paul gave what three reasons to believe the gospel?

The gospel works in personal experience. Those who accept the gospel receive freedom from the bondage of sin, but believers must stand firm in the truth. Paul warned the Galatians not to turn back to the Law. According to Paul, those who had already transferred their faith in Christ to faith in the Law were separated from Christ. They had “fallen from grace” (Galatians 1:6–7; 5:4). The New Testament often warns believers of the danger of turning away from Jesus and forfeiting their salvation.

Paul urged believers to follow the desires of the Spirit, not the desires of the flesh. Under the Law, people had no inner power to do God’s will. They were slaves to sin, captives to the desires of the sinful nature. However, the Savior makes a difference in our lives, giving us victory over the flesh. Our new life in Christ gives us the ability to do what is right, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to please God. Galatians emphasizes that we are free from the Law and the flesh and are led by the Spirit.

In Galatians 5, Paul contrasts the acts of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit.

The acts of the sinful nature (flesh) The fruit of the Spirit

Sexual immorality, impurity, and
debauchery

Idolatry and witchcraft

Hatred

Discord

Jealousy

Fits of rage

Selfish ambition

Dissensions

Factions

Envy

Drunkenness, orgies, and the like

“I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19–21).

Love

Joy

Peace

Patience

Kindness

Goodness

Faithfulness

Gentleness

Self-control

“Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22–25).

Notice Paul’s teaching about a believer who sins. Paul contrasts a spiritual believer with an unspiritual believer who is caught in sin. “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted” (Galatians 6:1). Spiritual believers should gently and meekly try to restore a sinning believer. Our attitude should always be non-judgmental, saying, “I would have the same problem, except for the grace of God.” Remember, the source of self-control is not self; it is a fruit of the Spirit. The secret of holy living is depending on the Holy Spirit. “Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit” (Galatians 5:25).

Chapter 6 Letters about Church Problems: 1 and 2 Corinthians

Have you ever tried to find a perfect church? Can you imagine a church with no problems? Such a church is impossible to find on earth; it does not exist. Churches consist of people, and people are imperfect.

Paul's letters to the church at Corinth remind us that all people have problems. Although Paul had founded the Corinthian church and it was rich in spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 1:7), the church had many problems. One of the largest problems, and central to all others, was division (1 Corinthians 1–4), but other issues included sexual sins, believers fighting each other in court, and confusion during church services.

Studying Corinthians emphasizes the important truth that no matter how bad a church's problems are, God has a solution. Corinth was one of the darkest, most sinful cities of Paul's day. Yet the gospel light shone brightly there, and those who were saved learned to live at peace with other believers.

Lesson 6.1 First Corinthians

Objectives

- 6.1.1 *Describe the geographical, social, and religious setting of Corinth.*
- 6.1.2 *Identify four problems and four questions of the Corinthians.*

Lesson 6.2 Second Corinthians

Objectives

- 6.2.1 *Trace the flow of 2 Corinthians from Ephesus to Macedonia to Corinth.*
- 6.2.2 *Contrast Paul with the false apostles in at least three ways.*

Lesson 6.1 First Corinthians

Did Paul write Corinthians before or after Romans?

Paul traveled to Corinth at least three times and wrote several letters to this church (Harris 1989, 313). While in Ephesus on his third missionary journey about AD 55–56, Paul wrote the epistle we call 1 Corinthians. However, we know this was not the first missive he sent the church at Corinth (Barrett 1976, 17–19) because 1 Corinthians 5:9 refers to an earlier letter. A few months later, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians while he ministered in Macedonia. These epistles are two

of at least four Pauline letters to the Corinthians. In fact, Paul sent at least two letters that were not preserved in the canon (Hughes 1977, xvi).

Other books analyze Paul's Corinthian trips and letters (Carson 1992, 264–283). For this study, it is enough to note the following dates and events (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 293):

Dates Related to 1 and 2 Corinthians

Date (AD)	Event	Scriptures
52	Paul evangelized Corinth on his second missionary trip.	Acts 18:1–17
Spring, 55–56	Paul traveled from Antioch, Syria, to Ephesus on his third missionary trip. While there, he wrote 1 Corinthians. Timothy carried the letter to the church (Gundry 1994, 285).	Acts 18:23–21:26; 1 Cor. 16:5–8
Fall, 55–56	Paul traveled from Ephesus to Troas after the Feast of Pentecost. Titus had agreed to meet him there, but was late with the report on Corinth (Hughes 1977, xvii). Titus caught up with Paul in Macedonia. Paul then wrote 2 Corinthians and, afterward, went to see the Corinthians for the third time.	2 Cor. 2:13; 7:5–7; 12:14; 13:1

As noted in previous chapters, 1 and 2 Corinthians focus on salvation (soteriology). In them, Paul often uses the phrase *in Christ* to emphasize our relationship with our Savior and Lord.

Corinth: The City and Its People

Describe the geographical, social, and religious setting of Corinth.

In light of 1 Corinthians 6:9–11, what hope does the gospel hold for those who are in such bondage?

A city that catered to the world and the flesh, Greek Corinth was famous for its sin. To “act like a Corinthian” meant to commit sexual sins (Bruce 1974, 367). The Acrocorinth, or hill of Corinth, towered almost 1,500 feet (457 meters) above the city and supposedly housed a temple to Aphrodite. Known as Venus to the Romans, Aphrodite was the goddess of love and sex. In this temple during the second century BC, one thousand female slaves reportedly committed sexual sins with those who came to worship. At night, they walked the streets as prostitutes (Stott 1994, 295–296). While scholars dispute the accuracy of these details, Roman Corinth was rebuilt, and it became a sinful port city, deeply influenced by pagan practices and sexual immorality. Accordingly, Paul reminds the Corinthians of their lives before they met Jesus:

Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Corinthians 6:9–11)

The people at Corinth experienced some major lifestyle changes when they accepted the gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet their background fostered the misperceptions that prompted Paul to write.

Map of the Mediterranean World

Famous for Business

The huge city of Corinth was 50 miles (80 km) west of Athens (see map above). A short, four-mile neck of land (called an isthmus) between Athens and Corinth separated the Aegean and Adriatic Seas. Sailors dragged smaller ships over this isthmus to save days of sailing around the southern portion of Achaia (Wood 1996, 289). Thus, ships from both the East and the West came to Corinth, bringing sailors who sought pleasure in the Corinthian temple (Wood 1988).

A Big City

Whereas Athens may have had a population of less than ten thousand (Stott 1994, 293), Corinth was much larger, with an estimated 100,000 to several hundred thousand people (Vos 1975, 380). Some think Corinth may have had 250,000 free people and as many as 400,000 slaves (Barker 1985, 1732). Corinth was a large city in its day, and large cities were Paul’s favorite targets for the gospel.

Paul’s Ministry to the Corinthians

When and how long was Paul's first visit to Corinth?

Paul first visited Corinth about AD 52 during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1–17) while waiting for Silas and Timothy to come from Macedonia. In Corinth, Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, who were fellow tentmakers, and lived with them while preaching in and around the city. They became close friends and ministers.

After Silas and Timothy arrived, Paul turned his complete focus to powerfully preaching to the Jews “that Jesus was the Christ” (Acts 18:5). As usual, some Jews became upset with Paul's preaching, so he began to minister to the Gentiles (18:6). Many people believed, including Crispus, the ruler of the Jewish synagogue. Paul ministered in Corinth for at least eighteen months.

Why did Gallio refuse to judge Paul's case in Corinth?

Antagonistic Jews took Paul to court before Gallio, governor of the major province of Achaia. An important Roman ruler, Gallio was also the younger brother of Seneca, a famous philosopher. Seneca tutored Nero, who became an emperor of Rome (Rea 1993, 651).

Refusing to pass judgment, Gallio threw Paul's case out of the Roman court system in Corinth (18:14–16). This was a huge decision in favor of Christianity. With the Roman government allowing Jews to worship God rather than Caesar, Gallio's decision meant that Christianity was protected under the umbrella of Judaism. Gallio ruled that following Jesus did not break Roman law. He said that followers of Jesus and Jewish leaders needed to settle their own disagreements. This decision turned out to be a great blessing in that it prevented the unbelieving Jews from using Roman law against believers, at least for a decade or two.

After a while, Paul left Corinth, taking Aquila and Priscilla with him. He would later return at least twice to visit the Corinthian church.

Purpose

Identify four problems and four questions of the Corinthians.

While Paul ministered in Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Acts 19:1–41), someone from the house of Chloe reported that things were not well in Corinth (1 Corinthians 1:11). Paul

also received a letter from the Corinthian church elders asking questions about some issues and problems.

How did Paul know about the problems in the Corinthian church?

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to correct the problems and to answer their questions (1 Corinthians 7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 15:12; 16:1). The problems included divisions, lawsuits, and sexual sins (1 Corinthians 1–6). The questions involved issues related to marriage, head coverings, communion, spiritual gifts, the resurrection, and giving (1 Corinthians 7–15).

Outline of 1 Corinthians

- I. Introduction, 1:1–9
- II. Discussion of Problems Paul Knew, 1–6
 - A. The problem of divisions (1:10–4:21)
 - B. The problem of the immoral brother (5:1–13)
 - C. The problem of lawsuits (6:1–11)
 - D. The problem of sexual immorality (6:12–20)
- III. Answers to the Letter from Corinth, 7–16
 - A. Questions about marriage (7:1–40)
 - B. Questions about conscience (8:1–10:33)
 - C. Questions about head coverings (11:1–16)
 - D. Questions about communion (11:17–34)
 - E. Questions about spiritual gifts (12:1–14:40)
 - F. Questions about the resurrection of the dead (15:1–58)
 - G. Questions about giving (16:1–4)
- IV. Conclusion, 16:5–24

Explanations of the Outline

If you were pastoring a church with problems similar to those in Corinth, how would you address the issues without destroying your relationship with those in the body?

Notice that Paul gives spiritual principles to solve each problem (Tenney 1961, 297).

Problems and Solutions in 1 Corinthians 1–6

1 Cor.	Problem	Solution/Principle
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1:10– 4:21	Believers were divided.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live by God’s wisdom, not worldly wisdom (1:18–2:16). • Become spiritually mature rather than fleshly (3:1–9). • Appreciate the ministry of all church leaders (3:5–22).
5:1–13	Sexual sin	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The church must discipline the sinning believer (5:2–7). • The purpose of discipline is to protect the church from sin and restore the sinner to Christ and the church.
6:1–11	Believers were accusing one another in court.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The church must judge and settle such matters outside of the government courts (6:1–5). • Those living sinful lives will not inherit God’s kingdom (6:9–11).
6:12–20	Believers may have been tempted to return to their old sexual sins with temple prostitutes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Believers must not be mastered by anything of the world (6:12). • Our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19). • We are not our own, but were bought with a price. Therefore, we must honor God with our bodies (6:19–20).

In 1 Corinthians 7–16, Paul answers questions from a letter he received from the Corinthian church elders. Again, notice that Paul gives principles that apply to the Corinthians’ questions.

Questions and Answers in 1 Corinthians 7–16

1 Cor.	Topic/Question	Principles/Answers
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7:1–40	<i>Marriage:</i>	Because of our fleshly needs, it is good for each person to have a spouse (7:2). Ideally, the single life is the best for ministry (7:38), but it is better to marry than to live with lust (7:9). Each person should fulfill the role of God's calling (7:17).
8:1– 10:33	<i>Conscience:</i> Should believers eat food sacrificed to idols?	Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up (8:1). Sacrifice your freedom if it will cause a weak believer to stumble (8:9–13). Paul gave up his rights and became all things to all people to win some (9:1–23). Paul made his body his slave (9:24–27). If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you do not fall like the Israelites fell (10:1–12). Nobody should seek his own good, but rather the good of others (10:24). Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks, or the church (10:32).
11:1–16	<i>Head coverings:</i> Should women wear them?	The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God (11:3). In Corinth, women showed submission by wearing a veil.
11:17–34	<i>Communion:</i> Why were death and sickness a problem at Corinth?	The bread and juice represent the body and blood of Jesus. We take them to remember who He is and the new covenant He made with us (11:23–26).

Those who take communion should recognize that it represents the Lord. Taking it shows that we are in the right relationship with Him. Partakers must show love and deference to fellow participants, to keep from dishonoring Christ. The Lord's discipline is to keep us from being condemned with the world (11:27–34).

12:1–
14:40

Spiritual gifts:

How is the purpose of tongues unlike other gifts? Whom does prophecy edify? Why should most praying in tongues be done privately?

There are different kinds of gifts, service, and work, but the same Spirit, Lord, and God. He is the source of all (12:4–6).

The Spirit gives gifts to each believer as He desires (12:11).

There are many parts, but one body (12:12–30).

Eagerly desire the greater gifts (12:31).

Love is the key as we minister our spiritual gifts to others (13:1).

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially prophecy (14:1).

He who prays in tongues edifies himself. Like Paul, we should do this often, in private (14:4, 18).

In church, we should seek to prophesy, or speak in tongues and interpret, so that we edify others. Try to excel in gifts that build up the church (14:1–25).

Be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues, but do all in an orderly manner (14:39–40).

15:1–58

Resurrection:

Is there really a resurrection?

What will the resurrection
body be like?

Will all believers die?

We are saved by the gospel if
we hold firmly to it.

Otherwise, we believed in
vain (15:2).

Jesus was raised from the
dead on the third day. Many
witnesses saw Him (15:3–8).

If there is no resurrection,
Jesus is not raised, and our
faith is useless (15:12–19).

But Christ has indeed been
raised. He was first. Then
when He comes, all who
belong to Him will rise
(15:20–28).

Do not be misled. Bad
company corrupts good
character. Come back to your
senses and stop sinning
(15:33–34).

The body that we put into the
grave is like a seed. It will be
raised as a glorious, spiritual
body. As we have borne the
image of the earthly Adam,
we will be like the heavenly
Adam (15:35–49). We will
not all sleep, but we will all
be changed—in a flash, at the
last trumpet (15:51).

16:1–4

Giving

Paul encouraged weekly
giving in the church (16:1–2).

Lesson 6.2 Second Corinthians

Trace the flow of 2 Corinthians from Ephesus to Macedonia to Corinth.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul called the church to repent, insisting that they discipline the man who was sinning with his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5:1–8). The church did discipline the sinning believer, and some in the church repented because of Paul's letter (2 Corinthians 2:1–11).

Others, however, continued to cause problems. False teachers questioned Paul's character and authority, saying he was not a true apostle. Paul had first planned to sail from Ephesus to Corinth (2 Corinthians 1:15–16) but later decided to travel by land up to Macedonia and then down to Corinth. The false teachers used his change of plans to accuse Paul and declare that he was not trustworthy. They also accused Paul of planning to steal the offering for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Paul wrote 2 Corinthians in response to these attacks.

Describe the main purposes of 1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians.

Thus, Paul's main purpose in writing 2 Corinthians was to defend his ministry. He exposed the false apostles, showing that they were motivated by greed. In contrast, Paul asked the Corinthians to remember his life among them. He urged them to consider the truth of his gospel. Paul reminded them to collect the offering for the poor at Jerusalem and encouraged them to restore the sinner who repented. Finally, he warned that he would punish the rebels soon, when he arrived.

Outline of 2 Corinthians

- I. Ephesus to Macedonia: Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Ministry, 1–7
 - A. Greeting (1:1–2)
 - B. Thanks for God's comfort (1:3–11)
 - C. The reason Paul changed his travel plans (1:12–2:4)
 - D. Forgive the disciplined believer (2:5–11)
 - E. Ministers of the new covenant (2:12–3:6)
 - F. The glory of the new covenant (3:7–18)
 - G. Treasures in clay jars (4)
 - H. Our heavenly dwelling (5:1–10)
 - I. The ministry of reconciling the lost (5:11–6:10)
 - J. A spiritual father's appeal to his children (6:11–7:4)
 - K. The meeting with Titus (7:5–16)
- II. Macedonia's Example: The Collection for Poor Believers at Jerusalem, 8–9
 - A. Paul's encouragement to be generous (8:1–15)
 - B. Titus and others to care for the offering (8:16–9:5)
 - C. The results of sowing generously (9:6–15)
- III. Macedonia to Corinth: Paul's Contrast of Himself with False Apostles, 10–13:10
 - A. Paul's defense of his authority and mission (10)
 - B. Paul forced into foolish boasting (11–12)
 - C. Final warnings (13:1–10)
- IV. Conclusion, 13:11–14

Explanations of the Outline

In light of Paul's suffering, discuss why God allows believers to suffer.

Paul begins 2 Corinthians with a greeting and thanksgiving for God's comfort. He does not explain his sufferings in Asia, but note what he says:

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. (2 Corinthians 1:8–11)

God had delivered Paul from terrible suffering and deadly danger. After this brief introduction, Paul begins to defend himself.

Ephesus to Macedonia: Paul's Defense of His Apostolic Ministry (2 Corinthians 1–7)

Discuss some appropriate ways for ministers to respond to unjust criticism. In what kinds of situations should ministers attempt to defend themselves? When is it best to ignore false accusations?

In these chapters, Paul traces his journey from Ephesus to Macedonia (Hughes 1977, xxii). While Paul did change his travel plans to Corinth as the false teachers accused, he did so for the sake of the Corinthians. In 1 Corinthians, he had told them to discipline the believer who was committing a sexual sin (5:4–5). This sinner was powerful. It appears that he was Paul's greatest enemy in the church at Corinth (Gundry 1994, 286). Before Paul called them to repent and discipline the man, some of the Corinthians had supported this sinner. Therefore, because of this man's power and influence, the church needed some time to correct the problem. As Paul prayed, it seemed best to change his plans and visit Corinth later. It would have been too painful for Paul to visit them when he planned, so he delayed his coming (2 Corinthians 2:1–2) and went to Macedonia first.

All believers should allow the Holy Spirit to change their plans. We should not boast about what we will do tomorrow (James 4:13–17) but should let the Lord lead us step by step according to His will. To accuse the apostle Paul of breaking his word just because he changed his plans was foolish (2 Corinthians 1:12–2:4).

What is the purpose of church discipline?

In explaining his trip from Ephesus to Macedonia, Paul mentions several great truths:

- The purpose of church discipline is to help and restore. Paul told the Corinthians to forgive and show love to the sinner who repented (1 Corinthians 5:4–5; 2 Corinthians 2:5–11). The goal of discipline should always be to help and to reaffirm love.
- The ministry of the new covenant is more glorious than the ministry of the old covenant. After his encounter with God, Moses' face radiated with glory so much that he covered it with a veil, but the glory faded. In contrast, we, with unveiled faces, reflect the Lord's glory. We are being changed into His likeness with an increasing, unfading glory (2 Corinthians 2:12–3:18).
- As ministers of the new covenant, we leave all secret and shameful ways behind us (4:1–6).
- We have this treasure of God's Spirit in "jars of clay." This shows that the power is from God, not us (4:7–12).

Explain the potential benefit of trouble or suffering for believers in light of 2 Corinthians 4:17–18.

- Our light troubles are helping us gain eternal glory that is much weightier. Therefore, we focus our eyes on the invisible and the eternal (4:17–18).
- We make it our goal to please Him. For Christ is our judge and will give us our due, whether good or bad (5:9–10).
- God **reconciled** us to himself through Christ. God made Him who had no sin to become sin for us, so we could become righteous. All ministers, like Paul, are God's **ambassadors**^{kw}. We must be careful not to receive God's grace in vain, but to live to please Him (5:11–6:2). Some of the Corinthian believers needed to be reconciled to God again, lest the grace they once received be in vain (5:20; 6:1–2; 13:5).
- Like Paul, we should avoid blame in every way. Then we will not be stumbling blocks (6:1–13).
- We are to perfect holiness. This means separating ourselves from sinful friends and sinful things (6:14–7:1; 13:11).
- Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation (7:8–13).

Macedonia's Example: The Collection for Poor Believers at Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8–9)

List several principles of giving from 2 Corinthians 8–9.

Next, Paul presents the Macedonian believers as an example of generosity. The Macedonian churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea were very poor but very generous, begging to give all they could. First, they gave themselves to the Lord, then gave money “even beyond their ability” for the poor in Jerusalem. Paul urged the Corinthians to follow their example. He challenged them to excel in the grace of giving as they excelled in the grace of spiritual gifts (8:1–7). Second Corinthians 8–9 contains several great truths:

- Jesus was a model of grace for us. He became poor so that we could become spiritually rich (8:8–9).
- Paul encouraged those who had much to share with those who had little (8:10–15).
- While Paul encouraged Macedonian believers with the giving of those in Achaia, he also encouraged believers in Achaia with the giving of the Macedonians (9:1–5). Giving is contagious. One believer’s giving encourages others to give.
- Those who sow sparingly will reap sparingly. Those who sow generously will reap generously (9:6–14).
- Thanks be to God for His gift, Jesus Christ, that goes beyond our words to thank Him (9:15).

Macedonia to Corinth: Paul’s Contrast of Himself with False Apostles (2 Corinthians 10–13)

Contrast Paul with the false apostles in at least three ways.

Finally, in 2 Corinthians 10–13, Paul focuses on the underlying problem at Corinth: The false apostles were leading some astray. The root of the problem lay in the Corinthians’ ongoing tendency to live by worldly wisdom and standards (11–13), looking only on the surface (10:7). As Paul said earlier, they took pride in what is seen, rather than what is in the heart (5:12). In 1 Corinthians, Paul dealt with divisions among followers of Paul, Apollos, and Peter (1 Corinthians 1–4), but the Corinthian believers were still young and immature. They had not yet learned to base their choices on spiritual principles. Consequently, Paul contrasts himself and other true apostles with the false apostles, as shown in the following chart.

False Apostles and Fleshly Leaders	True Apostles and Spiritual Leaders	2 Corinthians
Act as if they were lords over others	Humbly work with believers	1:24
Rely on humans to recommend them	Produce good fruits and results that speak for them	3:1–3
Depend on themselves	Depend on God	3:4–6; 4:7

Practice secret, shameful ways; deceive people and distort God's Word	Are honest and open before God and others; speak the Word plainly	4:2
Emphasize the seen and the temporal	Focus on the unseen and the eternal	4:18
Take pride in the outward appearance of ministry; look only on the surface	Take pride in what is in the heart	5:13; 10:7
Cause many to stumble	Are careful not to be stumbling blocks	6:3–10
Are known for wickedness, darkness, unbelief, Satan (Belial), idols, and uncleanness	Are known for righteousness, light, Christ, belief, being the temple of God, and holiness	6:14–18
Live by the world's standards; wage war as the world does; look only on the surface of things	Use spiritual weapons to fight, including prayer, the Bible, and the fruit and gifts of the Spirit	10:1–7
Commend themselves; measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with others	Boast in the Lord and are commended by Him	10:8–18
Act like they are super-apostles, boasting about how well they speak; are deceitful workers; act like they are of Christ, but they are of Satan; will one day be judged	Fear that their converts will be deceived like Eve, be led astray; receive a different Jesus, a different gospel, and a different spirit; watch over young believers, often working with no pay	11:1–15 (See 1 Cor. 4:18–21.)
Enslave, exploit, and take advantage of believers; push themselves forward and "slap" believers in the face; live a safe, easy life	May have suffered from prison, beatings, robbers, no sleep, no food, lack of clothes, and church problems; live a hard, dangerous life	11:16–33

Falsify visions and teachings; Have visions and revelations; 12:1–13
make up stories about perform signs, wonders, and
miracles that never happened miracles

Are concerned mainly about themselves Strengthen others in
everything they do 12:19

Sin secretly; slander true Judge sinning believers and 12:19–13:10
apostles and righteous leaders false teachers in the church;
desire to use their authority to
build up the church

As Paul showed the differences between himself and the false apostles, he shared personal thoughts and opened his heart. He described the many times he suffered for Jesus. In contrast, the false apostles lacked persecution, spiritual power, biblical teachings, and godly character.

Chapter 7 Letters from Prison: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon

In 1873, a lawyer named Horatio Spafford planned a trip with his family to Europe. Business delayed him, but he sent his wife and four young daughters on ahead. Their ship, the *Ville Du Havre*, never made it to England but sank into the cold grave of the Atlantic Ocean. Horatio's wife, Anna, was among the few who survived. His four daughters—Maggie, Tanetta, Annie, and Bessie—all drowned. He received the terrible news from his wife with only these two words: "Saved alone." As Spafford traveled to meet his grieving wife, his ship sailed near the place where his daughters had drowned. There, in the midst of his sorrow, the Spirit of God comforted him. Spafford wrote the poem "It Is Well with My Soul," which was later put to music. Today, believers around the world sing this great hymn of the church. It has brought comfort to millions of sad hearts (Christian Research Institute 2004).

Likewise, in a prison, the Holy Spirit encouraged Paul. In chains, he wrote four of his most glorious letters. Spiritual giants of the church like John Bunyan, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Watchman Nee have also written from prison. Jesus promised that He would never leave or forsake us, and it is in our hardest times that this promise becomes the most precious to us.

Lesson 7.1 Ephesians

Objectives

- 7.1.1 *Describe the background of Ephesus. Include its location, business, temple, and church.*
7.1.2 *Analyze four relationships Paul wrote about in Ephesians.*

Lesson 7.2 Philippians

Objectives

- 7.2.1 *Summarize the background of Paul's letter to the Philippians.*
7.2.2 *Summarize what Philippians teaches about joy and unity.*

Lesson 7.3 Colossians

Objectives

- 7.3.1 *Analyze the Colossian heresy and Paul's teachings on it.*
7.3.2 *Explain Paul's teaching about old and new clothes.*

Lesson 7.4 Philemon

Objective

- 7.4.1 *Analyze three people and two lessons in the letter to Philemon.*

Lesson 7.1 Ephesians

Describe the background of Ephesus. Include its location, business, temple, and church.

Should we think of Paul's time in prison as a problem or a blessing? Would it have been better for all if Paul had stayed free? Would the church have grown faster if he continued to travel, or was it God's will for Paul to be in prison?

These are hard questions to answer, but we know that Paul's time in prison was a blessing to many (Acts 28:30–31). It gave Paul time to write his Prison Epistles: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Each of the four epistles states that Paul wrote as a prisoner (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1; 6:20; Philippians 1:12–13; Colossians 4:10, 18; Philemon 9–10). Most Bible teachers believe he was imprisoned in Rome at the time, around AD 60–62.

Background

Explain how a general travel letter to all the churches could have been helpful to Paul's ministry.

Many scholars do not believe the epistle to the Ephesians was written specifically to the believers in Ephesus. Because the phrase *in Ephesus* (1:1) is not found in some of the earliest and best manuscripts (Carson, Moo, and Morris 1992, 309), some believe this was an encyclical letter, intended for a general audience (Simpson 1972, 18). The fact that Paul includes no specific greetings or personal information, unlike his other epistles, supports this view. A plausible theory envisions Tychicus as Paul's courier (Ephesians 6:21–22), reading the letter to all of the churches to which he traveled (Wood 1978, 11–12). If so, Ephesus may have been the last stop and permanent home for this letter, which would account for its name. Still others are convinced that this is the missing letter to the Laodiceans mentioned in Colossians 4:16 (Gundry 1994, 398). Regardless of its intended destination, few can discount the epistle's impact on several first-century churches and many Christian churches since then.

Compare Ephesians to some of Paul's other letters. Comment on how a lack of personal references and information in Ephesians does or does not support the idea that it was a general encyclical letter.

Although Pergamum was the capital of Asia, Ephesus was Asia's most important city (Douglas 1978, 380). Located on the eastern shore of the Aegean Sea, Ephesus was home to an estimated 200,000 to 330,000 or more people (Cooley 1999, 22; Mounce 1977, 85). Others think Ephesus' population numbered closer to half a million people (Stott 1994, 293). The largest ships in the world came to Ephesus, and major roads ended in the city. Archaeologists have discovered that Ephesus' main street was 36 feet (11 m) wide, 1,735 feet (529 m) long, and was made of marble. Businesses lined the street, and it ended at the sea.

Ephesus was also famous for the temple of the Greek goddess Artemis. Called Diana by the Romans (Helmbold 1975, 701), Artemis was considered the goddess of the moon and was linked with childbirth. Local craftsmen formed statues of the goddess to portray the idea of fertility (Douglas 1978, 311). The Ephesians believed that men communicated with Artemis through the prostitutes in the temple (Wood 1988). One of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, the temple was four times larger than the Parthenon at Athens (Douglas 1978, 381). No other Greek temple was so great. It was 425 feet (130 m) long, 220 feet (67 m) wide, and had more than 120 stone pillars that were each 60 feet (18 m) high. People traveled to Ephesus from all over the Roman Empire to worship Artemis.

However, Paul's preaching reduced the sale of idols and led to a great riot (Acts 19:23–41). Businessmen like Demetrius became angry when people began to turn from Artemis to Jesus because it cut into their business. In fact, opposition to the gospel was never greater than at Ephesus. The situations Paul encountered on his first two missionary journeys no doubt prepared him for the spiritual warfare in Ephesus on this third trip.

The Bible contains much information related to the spread of Christianity in Ephesus:

- Paul left Priscilla and Aquila to minister in Ephesus near the end of his second missionary journey (Acts 18:18–19). There they taught Apollos, the great Jewish speaker (18:24–26).

- Paul returned to Ephesus on his third missionary trip and saw his greatest revival there. He ministered three years in Ephesus, longer than in any other city (Acts 20:31). Paul preached the gospel in the synagogue, in the school of Tyrannus, in homes, and in the marketplaces (Acts 19).
- In Ephesus, twelve disciples were baptized in the Holy Spirit (Acts 19:1–7). The anointing on Paul was so great that handkerchiefs from his body brought healing to many, and demons were cast out (19:11–12). Converts burned magic books worth enough money to pay 50 days' wages for 1,000 men (19:19).
- Sometime after Paul was released from his first imprisonment in Rome, he returned to Ephesus with Timothy. When Paul left, Timothy stayed and became the first pastor or overseer of the church in Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3).

Like the hub of a wheel, Ephesus lay in the center of the churches Paul planted. To the east of Ephesus were the Galatian churches of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe. Northwest of Ephesus were the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea. Due west of Ephesus, across the Aegean Sea, were Athens and Corinth. To Ephesus, the churches sent messengers with questions or offerings for Paul. From Ephesus, Paul sent letters to the churches he planted. Therefore, Ephesus became a new center for God's mission to the Gentiles, second only to Syrian Antioch (Bruce 1974, 387).

Ephesus, a strategic center for missions

Ephesus is truly one of the most important cities of the Bible. In Revelation, John wrote first to the Ephesians (Revelation 2:1–7). Paul's letter to the Ephesians is one of his most glorious letters.

Outline of Ephesians

What passages from other Pauline epistles relate to the theme of Ephesians?

The theme of Ephesians is the church as the body of Christ. Paul emphasized this theme throughout the epistle.

- I. Greeting, 1:1–2
- II. Powerful Doctrine: The Believer's Redemption, 1–3
 - A. The glory and greatness of Jesus (1:3–14)
 - B. Prayer for believers to discern God's purpose (1:15–23)
 - C. The results of redemption for Jews and Gentiles (2)
 - D. God's revelation of His wisdom through the church (3:1–13)
 - E. Prayer for believers to fulfill God's purpose (3:14–21)
- III. Practical Teaching: The Believer's Daily Life, 4–6
 - A. Unity (4:1–6)

- B. Maturity (4:7–16)
- C. Children of light (4:17–5:20)
- D. Wives and husbands (5:21–33)
- E. Children and parents (6:1–4)
- F. Slaves and masters (6:5–9)
- G. The armor of God (6:10–20)
- IV. Conclusion, 6:21–24
 - We can also outline Ephesians by relationships:
 - A. Our relationship with God our Father (1)
 - B. The relationship between Jews and Gentiles (2–3)
 - C. Our relationships in the family of God (4–6)
 - D. Our relationship to evil spirits (6)

Explanations of the Outline

Analyze four relationships Paul wrote about in Ephesians.

Paul addresses his letter to the *saints* and the *faithful*. These two terms apply to all believers. They describe our place in Christ and our character.

Our Relationship with God Our Father (Ephesians 1)

Consider the spiritual blessings God has given us in Christ:

In what sense do the blessings of our relationship with our Father God pave the way for our other relationships?

- “He chose us ... to be holy and blameless” (Ephesians 1:4). We are holy because (1) Jesus died for us on the Cross and (2) we faithfully obey the Word and the Spirit. Thus, we walk worthily (Ephesians 4:1). As we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sins (1 John 1:7).
- God planned to adopt us as His children, through Christ (Ephesians 1:5). God planned ahead or **predestined** that those who believe would become His children, enjoying the full status of membership in God’s family. This does not mean that some are chosen and appointed to be saved and others to be condemned. Rather, it means that those who accept the substitutionary work of Christ are chosen and appointed to be fully adopted as God’s children. Indeed, God desires that all would be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).

- He redeemed us through the blood of Jesus (Ephesians 1:7). At the Cross, God provided a way for all people to be saved. Jesus shed His blood to pay the penalty for everyone’s sin (1 Timothy 2:5–6).
- He revealed His will to us (Ephesians 1:9–10). Through the gospel, we understand that God wants us to repent, receive Christ, and follow Him throughout life. Afterward, He wants to live with us eternally.
- God sealed us with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 1:13–14). All believers receive the Spirit when they are born again. He is the down payment or deposit and guarantee of good things to come. The Spirit’s presence within us shows that God owns us.

Reread these five things God has done for us, and then take a few moments to worship. Let your heart be filled with praise and your mind be filled with wonder that God loves us so much. Note Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1:15–23 in which he says, “I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better” (v. 17). What an opportunity—to walk with God and know Him better day by day! How can it be that humans turn away from this invitation?

The Relationship between Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2–3)

The major theme of Ephesians 2–3 is that, in Christ, God unites Jews and Gentiles into one spiritual body. Although Jews and Gentiles come from different cultures, the principles Paul teaches in these chapters can help believers everywhere relate better to each other.

In the past, Gentile believers were dead in sins, following the ways of the world and the devil (Ephesians 2:1–2). We were disobedient and were led by the desires of our flesh (2:2–3). At that time, we were objects of God’s wrath (2:3); but by God’s mercy we have been saved from sinful living and from His wrath (2:4–5). Note the five phrases that describe our sinful past: We were “*separate* from Christ, *excluded* from citizenship in Israel and *foreigners* to the covenants of the promise, *without hope* and *without God* in the world” (2:12, italics added). Therefore, Paul urges us to remember the change that has taken place.

Now, we who were far (the Gentiles) have been brought near to God through the blood of Christ. He is our peace, and He has made Gentiles and Jews as one (2:14).

God unites Jews and Gentiles into one spiritual body.

Scripture	Ephesians
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“[Christ] has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.”	2:14
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“His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross.”	2:15–16
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“He came and preached peace to you (Gentiles) who were far away and peace to those (Jews) who were near.”	2:17
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“For through him we both have access to the 2:18
Father by one Spirit.”

“This mystery is that through the gospel the 3:6
Gentiles are heirs together with Israel,
members together of one body, and sharers
together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the 4:3–6
Spirit.... There is one body and one Spirit
... one hope ... one Lord, one faith, one
baptism; one God and Father of all.”

Just as Paul closes Ephesians 1 with prayer, he also closes Ephesians 2–3 with a prayer for the “whole family” (3:14–21). Paul’s prayer relates to the Trinity in that he wants us to be strengthened by the Spirit and prays that we may grasp Christ’s love for us—in all of its width and length and height and depth. He also prays that we might be filled with God’s presence. May God answer this prayer as we pray it for others and for ourselves. He is able to do so much more than all we can ask or imagine by His Spirit in us (3:20). To Him be glory in the church and in Christ (3:21).

Our Relationships in the Family of God (Ephesians 4–6)

Ephesians 1 emphasizes God’s part in our relationship with Him, reminding us that we are saved by grace. However, Ephesians 4–6 emphasizes our part in the journey to heaven. That is, grace brings responsibilities: “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received” (4:1). In these chapters, as well as in Colossians, Paul describes what it means to live worthy of God’s calling in the context of our relationships with others. The following chart compares the teachings in Ephesians and Colossians about relationships in the family of God.

Teachings on Family Relationships

Relationship	Ephesians	Colossians
<i>All believers</i>	“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with <i>one another</i> in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (4:2–3). “Speak truthfully ... for we are all <i>members of one body</i> . Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and	“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Rid <i>yourselves</i> of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your

<p>slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to <i>one another</i>, forgiving <i>each other</i>, just as in Christ God forgave you. Be imitators of God.” (4:25, 31–32; 5:1)</p> <p>“But <i>among you</i> there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for <i>God’s holy people</i>” (5:3).</p> <p>“Speak to <i>one another</i> with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (5:19).</p>	<p>lips. Do not lie to each other.” (3:5, 8–9)</p> <p>“As God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with <i>each other</i> and forgive whatever grievances you may have against <i>one another</i>. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.... Put on love.” (3:12–14)</p> <p>“Teach and admonish <i>one another</i> with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs” (3:16).</p>
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Spouses

<p>“<i>Wives</i>, submit to your husbands as to the Lord” (5:22).</p> <p>“<i>Husbands</i>, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church” (5:25).</p>	<p>“<i>Wives</i>, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord” (3:18).</p> <p>“<i>Husbands</i>, love your wives and do not be harsh with them” (3:19).</p>
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Children and parents

<p>“<i>Children</i>, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right” (6:1).</p> <p>“<i>Fathers</i>, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord” (6:4).</p>	<p>“<i>Children</i>, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord” (3:20).</p> <p>“<i>Fathers</i>, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged” (3:21).</p>
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Servants and masters

<p>“<i>Slaves</i>, obey your earthly masters ... just as you would obey Christ” (6:5).</p> <p>“<i>Masters</i>, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since ... he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him” (6:9).</p>	<p>“<i>Slaves</i>, obey your masters in everything ... with sincerity of heart ... working for the Lord, not for men” (3:22–23).</p> <p>“<i>Masters</i>, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because ... you also have a Master in heaven” (4:1).</p>
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Our Relationship to Evil Spirits (Ephesians 6)

In closing, Paul discussed our relationship to evil spirits of darkness (Ephesians 6:10–20), explaining that believers are at war with Satan and evil spirits. Our protection in this warfare is the whole armor of God. If we use it, we will be able to overcome the devil’s attacks.

Paul described six pieces of armor: the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, feet fitted with the readiness from the gospel of peace, shield of faith to extinguish Satan’s flaming arrows, helmet of salvation, and sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God (6:14–17). Then he added, “And pray in the Spirit on all occasions” (6:18). Prayer and the armor of God are absolutely vital in the spiritual warfare we fight day by day.

Lesson 7.2 Philippians

Summarize the background of Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

In Europe, the gospel was first preached in Philippi, a city named after King Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great (Douglas 1978, 23). In the province of Macedonia, the city was about eight miles north of Neapolis on the Aegean Sea. By the time Paul first visited Philippi around AD 49–53, it was a Roman city with many citizens.

On his second missionary journey, Paul sailed from Troas to Philippi after his vision of the Macedonian man’s call for help (Acts 16:9). In this way, the Spirit directed Paul and his friends to preach the gospel in Philippi (16:10). Likewise, we need the Spirit’s guidance today. The Spirit knows every person. He can guide us to those who are seeking to know God.

In Philippi, Paul and his friends (Silas, Timothy, and Luke) first preached to a group of women who met for prayer near the river outside the city (16:13–14). Among them was Lydia, a businesswoman. She and her family became an important part of the church Paul planted in the city.

Trouble soon came, however. A slave girl “who had a spirit by which she predicted the future” followed Paul and Silas throughout the city (16:16–17) until Paul turned and cast out the demon. When the girl’s masters realized that she was no longer useful to them for profit (16:19), they had Paul and Silas beaten and thrown into prison.

God sent an earthquake that night to free His servants from prison. As a result, the Philippian jailer became a believer (16:29–34). The next day, Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship, and he and Silas were set free (16:37–40).

Years later, when Paul was again a prisoner because of false accusations from the Jews, he wrote his letter to the Philippians. Despite the circumstances, Paul was able to write with joy about the good news of Christ. This is a clear example of his testimony, “For to me, to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21).

Outline of Philippians

- I. Introduction, 1:1–11
 - A. Greeting (1:1–2)
 - B. Thanksgiving and prayer for believers (1:3–11)
- II. Paul’s Joy in Prison, 1:12–26
- III. Paul’s Guidelines for Believers, 1:27–2:18
 - A. Live a life worthy of the gospel (1:27–30)
 - B. Follow the servant example of Christ (2:1–18)
- IV. Paul’s Messengers to the church at Philippi, 2:19–30
 - A. Timothy (2:19–24)
 - B. Epaphroditus (2:25–30)
- V. Paul’s Warnings against False Teachers, 3:1–4:1
 - A. The Judaizers: those who overemphasized Moses (3:1–16)
 - B. The worldly: those who overemphasized the flesh (3:17–4:1)
- VI. Paul’s Final Counsel, 4:2–20
 - A. Teachings about unity, joy, gentleness, and peace (4:2–9)
 - B. Testimony and thanks to the Philippians (4:10–20)
- VII. Conclusion, 4:21–23

Explanations of the Outline

Summarize what Philippians teaches about joy and unity.

Paul’s Joy in Prison (Philippians 1:12–26)

Paul worked at having a good attitude at all times. Remember that this Spirit-filled apostle was in prison—in chains—when he wrote of his many reasons to rejoice:

In light of Paul’s reasons for rejoicing in prison, what kinds of reasons might you find to rejoice in the midst of a difficult situation?

- The Philippian believers partnered with him in the gospel, and he prayed with joy for them (1:3–11).
- He could witness to the guards (1:12–13).
- His boldness in chains encouraged free believers to be bold (1:14).
- Others were preaching Christ, whether with good or bad motives (1:15–18).
- The Philippians were praying for him (1:19).
- The Philippians’ joy would be full when he came to them (1:20–26).

Paul teaches us that we can always find reasons to rejoice. Prisons were not new to Paul. In fact, he and Silas were imprisoned the first time they went to Philippi. There, beaten and fastened in stocks, they found reasons to sing praises to God (Acts 16:22–25).

Follow the Servant Example of Christ (Philippians 2:1–18)

Having heard that some believers were quarreling (see Philippians 4:2–3), Paul wrote about unity and humility. Christ showed us the way to humility by His own example. Although Jesus was equal with God (2:6), He made himself nothing to redeem us on the Cross (2:7–8). As a result, the Father raised His Son to the highest place so that Christ’s name is greater than every other name. One day, every knee will bow before our Lord (2:9–10). The key to unity, therefore, is learning to have Jesus’ humble attitude (2:1–18).

Warnings against False Jewish Teachers (Philippians 3:1–4:1)

Philippians 3:3–14 contains a well-known passage about Paul’s background as a Pharisee, showing that he was very religious and zealous for the Law. Paul summarizes his past to teach that no one, not even himself, should trust in the Law. Rather, we should trust in Christ. Paul considered all of his education, good works, and religious past as trash (3:8). He did not seek “a righteousness of (his) own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ” (3:9). Like a runner in a race, he focused on the goal ahead, not on his past (3:12–14).

Paul then warns about the Judaizers (false Jewish teachers), calling them “dogs,” “men who do evil,” and “enemies of the cross of Christ” (3:2, 18). These false teachers said salvation came by keeping parts of the Law, particularly the rite of circumcision. Therefore, Paul referred to them as those who mutilate or cut the body (3:2). Under the new covenant, we trust in Christ to save us, not in religious practices (3:9).

Paul’s Final Counsel (Philippians 4:2–20)

Choose one of your favorite teachings from Philippians 4 and personalize it. (For example, Rejoice in the Lord always = I will find reasons to express joyful praise to the Lord in every situation.)

A favorite chapter in the Bible for many, Philippians 4 contains several famous teachings:

- “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (4:4).
- “Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus” (4:6–7).
- “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things” (4:8).
- “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances” (4:11–12).
- “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (4:13).
- “And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (4:19).

7.3 Colossians

Analyze the Colossian heresy and Paul's teachings on it.

Like Romans, the epistle of Colossians was addressed to a church Paul did not start. He may have learned about the church at Colosse from Epaphras, “our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit” (Colossians 1:7–8; 4:12). Remember that this letter was written while Paul was a prisoner. He mentions his chains and imprisonment in Colossians 4:3, 10, 18.

Background and Purpose

What is the main idea of Colossians?

The city of Colosse was not as large or important as Ephesus, nor was it located beside a sea. However, Colosse was near the Lycus River, on the major road between Rome and the East. Travelers of this road brought many false teachings that mixed Jewish and Gnostic ideas. The word *Gnostic* comes from the Greek word *gnosis*, which means “knowledge.” The Gnostics claimed to have secret knowledge needed for salvation and taught that the body and all matter were evil. Called the **Colossian heresy**, these false teachings at Colosse also included angel worship and strict rules of self-denial.

Paul wrote to correct these errors and to instruct the Colossians about holy living (Colossians 2:8–3:4). Whereas the false teachers were taking away from the importance of Jesus, Paul wrote that Jesus is supreme and sufficient. He is the head over every power and authority, and we are complete in Him (2:10). The key verse in Colossians is the last part of 1:18: “that in everything He (Jesus) might have the supremacy.”

Outline of Colossians

In his letters, Paul usually followed a two-step pattern of (1) presenting doctrine first, then (2) applying this theology to daily life. That is, he wrote about the theological basis of our salvation in the first part of his epistles. Then, in the second part, Paul liked to answer the question, “Now what?” All good teaching and preaching applies theology and doctrine to daily living. In the same way, Colossians can be divided into two main parts:

- I. Powerful doctrine: our supreme Savior (1–2)
- II. Practical teaching: guidelines for holy living (3–4)

An expanded outline of Colossians is as follows:

Introduction, 1:1–14

- A. Greeting (1:1–2)
- B. Thanksgiving (1:3–8)
- C. Prayer for the Colossian believers (1:9–14)
- I. Powerful Doctrine: Our Supreme Savior, 1:15–2:23
 - A. The supremacy of Christ (1:15–23)
 - B. Paul’s work for the church (1:24–2:7)
 - C. Warnings against false teachers (2:8–23)
- II. Practical Teaching: Guidelines for Holy Living, 3:1–4:6
 - A. The old self and the new self (3:1–17)
 - B. Rules for the family of God (3:18–4:1)
 - C. More teachings (4:2–6)
 - D. Conclusion (4:7–18)

Explanations of the Outline

The Supremacy of Christ (Colossians 1:15–23)

Christ is supreme; that is, He is above everything and everyone. He is equal with God the Father. Note some of the things Paul tells us about Christ:

- He is the (physical, visible) image of the invisible God (1:15).
- He is the **firstborn** over all creation (1:15). Jesus was never created; rather, He created everything (John 1:3). Therefore, He is first in rank. Paul describes Him as firstborn to show that He is above all that He created (Colossians 1:15–16).
- He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together (1:17).
- He is the head of the body, the church (1:18).
- He is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have the supremacy (1:18).
- He is the One who changed us from being God’s enemies into being God’s children (1:21–22).

Warnings against False Teachers (Colossians 2:8–23)

Summarize the Colossian heresy.

The false teachings in the Colossian church had five characteristics:

1. *Rules*: The Colossian church taught strict rules about eating, religious feasts, and circumcision that were closely related to tradition (2:4, 8, 11, 20; 3:11).
2. *Self-denial*: “Do not handle! Do not taste! Do not touch!” (2:21, 23).

3. *Angel worship*: Some taught that believers should approach God through angels rather than through Jesus. They believed God is too far above us or too harsh to approach directly (2:18).
4. *Lowering Christ*: This is the main reason Paul emphasized that Jesus is above all, the most prominent theme of Colossians (1:15–20; 2:2–3, 9).
5. *Secret knowledge*: The false teachers were like the Gnostics, who claimed they had secret knowledge needed for salvation (2:2–4, 18).

The Old Self and the New Self (Colossians 3:1–17)

Explain Paul's teaching about old and new clothes.

Next, Paul shows that Christ demands a new way of living (Colossians 3:5–17). Paul compares Christianity to removing old clothes and putting on new ones, saying believers must get rid of evil actions that belong to our fleshly nature (3:5). Removing our old self means putting away sexual sins, lust, evil desires, and greed. It means getting rid of anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language (3:5–8). Paul warns that God's wrath is coming on all who wear the old self (3:6).

Summarize Paul's teaching on old and new clothes.

In contrast, Paul insists that believers put on new clothes. This new self includes compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience (3:12). Over all these, we are to add love, which brings unity (3:14). As we grow in these impressive qualities, we learn to forgive each other and enhance our relationships.

Rules for the Family of God (Colossians 3:18–4:1)

In Colossians, Paul gives special teachings for relationships in God's family:

- Wives—submit to your husbands (3:18).
- Husbands—love your wives (3:19).
- Children—obey your parents (3:20).
- Fathers—do not be too hard on your children (3:21).
- Servants—obey your masters (3:22–25).
- Masters—treat your servants fairly (4:1).

In everything, Christ must be the center of our beliefs, and He must direct how we live and act.

Comparison with Ephesians

How are the themes of Ephesians and Colossians different?

While Ephesians emphasizes the nature of and relationships within the church, Colossians emphasizes the supremacy of Christ. Yet, despite this difference in theme, the epistles of Colossians and Ephesians are very similar. In fact, although they are not identical, some people call them the “Twin Epistles” of the New Testament.

Overall, three topics are common to the Colossians and Ephesians:

1. Both teach about the relationship between Christ and His church. In Ephesians, Paul emphasizes the church as Christ’s body (Ephesians 1:22–23). In Colossians, he emphasizes that Christ is the “head of the body” (Colossians 1:18).
2. Both describe the “old self” and the “new self” (Ephesians 4:22–24; Colossians 3:9–10).
3. Both give instructions for the members of God’s family (Ephesians 5:22–6:9; Colossians 3:18–4:1).

The following chart summarizes similar verses in the Twin Epistles.

Similar Verses in Ephesians and Colossians (Eadie 1979, xviii)

<i>Eph.</i>	<i>Col.</i>	<i>Eph.</i>	<i>Col.</i>	<i>Eph.</i>	<i>Col.</i>	<i>Eph.</i>	<i>Col.</i>	<i>Eph.</i>	<i>Col.</i>	<i>Eph.</i>	<i>Col.</i>
1:1	1:1	2:1, 12	1:21	3:1	1:24	4:15	2:19	5:3	3:5	6:1	3:20
1:2	1:2	2:5	2:13	3:2	1:25	4:19	3:1, 5	5:4	3:8	6:4	3:21
1:3	1:3	2:15	2:14	3:3	1:26	4:22	3:8	5:5	3:5	6:5	3:22
1:7	1:14	2:16	1:20	3:7	1:23, 25	4:25	3:8	5:6	3:6	6:9	4:1
1:10	1:18			3:8	1:27	4:29	3:8; 4:6	5:15	4:5	6:18	4:2
1:15–17	1:3–4					4:31	3:8	5:19	3:16	6:21	4:7
1:18	1:27					4:32	3:12	5:22	3:18		
1:21	1:16							5:25	3:19		
1:22	1:18										

7.4 Philemon

Analyze three people and two lessons in the letter to Philemon.

Again, Paul wrote the short epistle of Philemon while he was a prisoner (Philemon 1, 9), probably in Rome (Acts 28:16, 30–31). The letter is addressed to a slave owner and believer named Philemon, who found Christ under Paul's ministry (Philemon 19). It is believed that Philemon lived in Colosse since some of the same individuals are named in Colossians and Philemon (Philemon 1–2, 10, 23–24; Colossians 4:9–10, 12, 14, 17). Apparently, Tychicus, a fellow worker of Paul, carried the two letters together to Colosse (Colossians 4:7–9).

Along with Paul and Philemon, the third primary person in this epistle is Onesimus, a slave who ran away from Philemon. Onesimus became a believer when he met Paul, probably in Rome.

Outline of Philemon

- I. Greeting, 1–3
- II. Thanksgiving and Prayer for Philemon, 4–7
- III. Request for Philemon to Restore Onesimus, 8–21
- IV. Conclusion, 22–25

Explanations of the Outline

Greeting (Philemon 1–3)

In the days of Paul and Philemon, no church buildings existed like we have today. Instead, believers met together in homes. If one home was too small for all the believers, they met in several homes in various locations in the city. One such church in Colosse met in Philemon's home (v. 2).

Thanksgiving and Prayer for Philemon (Philemon 4–7)

Paul thanked God for Philemon and prayed that Philemon would be active in fellowship. Having fellowship in the faith is a key to understanding our blessings in Christ (v. 6). We grow and value our faith more as we fellowship with others.

Request for Philemon to Restore Onesimus (Philemon 8–21)

Explain why Onesimus may have intentionally sought Paul out in Rome.

Philemon was the master of Onesimus, a runaway slave. Somehow, Onesimus met Paul in Rome, which may have been more than a mere coincidence. Roman law allowed slaves who had offended their master to flee to one of the master's trusted friends, seeking protection and intervention. It is possible that Onesimus had caused some financial loss for Philemon. Whether or not he had actually stolen from his master, the loss of his time and presence could have been viewed as theft, resulting in serious consequences to a runaway slave and anyone who harbored him (Keener 1993, 643–644). Instead of facing the consequences, Onesimus may have actually fled to Paul with the express purpose of seeking his help. Onesimus most likely knew that his master highly regarded Paul and was following a new religion because of him (Philemon 19). He knew Paul's words would carry influence with Philemon (Ehrman 2000, 316–317).

Whatever the circumstances of his meeting Paul, Onesimus found someone who would not only plead his case but who would also introduce him to the One who could save his soul. Like Philemon, Onesimus received Christ through Paul's preaching (v. 10) and proved kind and helpful to Paul. Nevertheless, Paul sent Onesimus back to his master.

According to Roman law, upon the slave's return, Philemon could punish him or even have him killed. But Paul asked Philemon to forgive Onesimus and receive him back. Paul wanted Philemon to accept Onesimus not as a slave, but as a brother, and even to consider sending him back to Paul (v. 16).

Lessons from Philemon

Give one example of someone you know whose life was completely changed for the better by the gospel.

The letter to Philemon teaches us at least two lessons. First, accepting the gospel improves an individual's character. Onesimus' name means "useful." However, as a slave who ran away and became a liability to his master, Onesimus was *useless* to Philemon. Yet Onesimus changed because of the gospel. He was *useful* to Paul as a helper (v. 11) and would be "better than a slave" to Philemon (v. 16). God's love causes us to forgive others and treat them with love and respect. A few scholars speculate that this Onesimus and the later bishop of Ephesus named Onesimus were one and the same (Knox 1955, 556–560). Although unverifiable, this would emphasize the amazing power of the gospel to change a person's heart. Accepting the gospel changes our lives and makes us better citizens.

Second, this epistle shows how the gospel works in society, giving believers the love they need to solve hard problems. Paul loved his converts enough to help pay their debts. Onesimus loved Paul enough to go back to his master. Philemon loved Paul enough to forgive Onesimus.

Paul asked Philemon to receive Onesimus as he would receive the apostle himself (v. 17). In Christ, apostles, masters, and workers are brothers and sisters who love each other enough to forgive and do what is right.

The gospel brings change into society not by force or rebellion, but by changing hearts, one at a time. It teaches believers to “do to others what you would have them do to you” (Matthew 7:12) and to love others as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:39).

In light of this, let us consider the issue of slavery, which we have seen three times in this chapter. Review these verses:

Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. Obey them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him. (Ephesians 6:5–9)

Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord. Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving. Anyone who does wrong will be repaid for his wrong, and there is no favoritism. Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you also have a Master in heaven. (Colossians 3:22–4:1)

I am sending him—who is my very heart—back to you. I would have liked to keep him with me so that he could take your place in helping me while I am in chains for the gospel. But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any favor you do will be spontaneous and not forced. Perhaps the reason he was separated from you for a little while was that you might have him back for good—no longer as a slave, but better than a slave, as a dear brother. He is very dear to me but even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord. (Philemon 12–16)

Paul encourages slaves to remain under their masters to keep the gospel from being maligned. His principle is that all should remain in the situation they are in when they become believers: “Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches” (1 Corinthians 7:17).

This principle means Gentiles should not seek to be circumcised for religious purposes. That is, they should live as Gentiles and not try to become Jewish. In the home, wives should be subject to their husbands, and children should obey their parents. In society, slaves should not run away or rebel. All believers should submit to the government (Romans 13:1). The gospel does not cause confusion or disorder in society; rather, it makes society a better place.

It should be noted, however, that Paul does not advocate unhealthy submission to unjust government or submission that leads to a compromise of biblical convictions. Nor does he address the issue of abusive spouses (see 1 Corinthians 7:13, 15). Nevertheless, a lifestyle of biblical submission fulfills God’s will and ensures that the gospel will not be slandered (Ephesians 5:21; Titus 2:5).

Chapter 8 Letters about the Future: 1 and 2 Thessalonians

The Thessalonian believers faced fiery trials of persecution and were becoming discouraged. The two brief letters Paul wrote to encourage them have since encouraged millions of believers. Rather than promoting an inward focus on self, Paul turned the Thessalonians' attention to God, the true source of comfort and strength. In 136 total verses in both letters, Paul refers to God, Christ, the Holy Spirit, or a combination thereof more than 150 times (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 332).

Paul praised the Thessalonians for turning from idols to Jesus and thanked them for standing firm in suffering, saying they were a model for others. For further encouragement, Paul reminded them of Jesus' imminent return for His followers. This truth continues to encourage us today as we eagerly await the day our Redeemer will come back for us. The hope and assurance of His coming gives us strength to withstand everything we face, just as it did for the Thessalonians long ago.

Lesson 8.1 First Thessalonians

Objectives

8.1.1 *Summarize the background of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.*

8.1.2 *Identify the theme, purposes, and three main parts of 1 Thessalonians.*

Lesson 8.2 Second Thessalonians

Objective

8.2.1 *Summarize and apply what 2 Thessalonians teaches about the Rapture, Antichrist, and Second Coming.*

Lesson 8.1 First Thessalonians

Summarize the background of Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians.

Give four facts that describe the background of 1 Thessalonians.

Situated on the Egnatian Way, a road that stretched from Rome through Philippi, Thessalonica was the capital of the province of Macedonia. Some think its total population grew to about 200,000 (Thomas 1978, 229). Paul arrived in the city on his second missionary journey, accompanied by Silas and Timothy (Acts 17:1–9).

At first, all went well for the missionaries in Thessalonica. However, some of the Jews soon became jealous and angry, accusing Paul and his friends of “defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus” (Acts 17:7). These bitter Jews forced Paul and his friends to leave Thessalonica under cover of night.

After leaving Thessalonica, Paul traveled to Athens and on to Corinth (Acts 18). Yet the persecution for the Thessalonian believers continued (1 Thessalonians 2:14). Later, having been sent to Thessalonica to see how the believers were doing, Timothy returned to Paul and praised the Thessalonians for their faith and love (3:5–10). Upon hearing the good report, Paul wanted to return to them but could not. Instead, he wrote a letter from Corinth to encourage them.

Although both Thessalonian epistles deal with many issues current to Paul’s day, they are also well known for their emphasis on the future and are sometimes called the Eschatological Epistles. The word *eschatology* is based on the Greek words *eschatos* meaning “last” and *logos* meaning “word.” Thus, eschatology is the study of the end-time, the final events in history. This is the theme of 1 and 2 Thessalonians—the second coming of Christ.

Outline of 1 Thessalonians

Identify the theme, purposes, and three main parts of 1 Thessalonians.

- I. Paul Gives Thanks to Encourage the Thessalonians, 1
- II. Paul Defends His Actions and Absence, 2–3
 - A. Defense of Paul’s actions (2:1–16)
 - B. Defense of Paul’s absence (2:17–3:10)
 - C. Paul’s prayer (3:11–13)
- III. Paul Instructs Believers, 4–5
 - A. About sexual purity (4:1–8)
 - B. About brotherly love (4:9–10)
 - C. About honest work (4:11–12)
 - D. About the coming of Christ (4:13–5:11)
 - E. About respect for spiritual leaders (5:12–13)
 - F. About Christian living (5:14–18)
 - G. About spiritual discernment (5:19–22)
- IV. Conclusion, 5:23–28

Explanations of the Outline

Paul Gives Thanks to Encourage the Thessalonians (1 Thessalonians 1)

What did Paul identify as praiseworthy among the Thessalonian believers?

Paul wrote this letter as a friend and spiritual counselor to the Thessalonian believers, his spiritual children. Facing many problems and trials, they were discouraged and had difficulty understanding why they were suffering.

Writing to encourage these suffering believers, Paul began by saying good things about them. While Paul never used flattery (1 Thessalonians 2:5), he did use praise. Unlike flattery, praise is sincere and brings out the best in those who receive it. Paul praised the Thessalonians for several things:

- He thanked God for the fruits of their faith, hope, and love (1:3).
- In spite of severe suffering, they followed the examples of Paul and the Lord (1:6).
- They became a model for all believers in the provinces of Macedonia and Achaia (1:7).
- Their testimony spread everywhere (1:8).

Comment on how the hope of Christ's return brings encouragement to believers who are suffering for their faith.

- They turned from idols to serve the living God (1:9). This reference seems to indicate that Thessalonica was primarily a Gentile church, since Jews vehemently opposed idols (Morris 1984, 47).

Then Paul moves to another type of encouragement, reminding them that they are waiting for Jesus to come again (1:10). Referred to as the *blessed hope* (Titus 2:13), the Lord's return is a great encouragement to all believers. This recurrent theme is woven throughout the entire letter of 1 Thessalonians. Every chapter in the epistle ends with some teaching about the **coming of the Lord**:

- 1:10: "Wait for his Son from heaven ... Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath."
- 2:19–20: "In the presence of our Lord Jesus when he comes ... you are our glory and joy."
- 3:13: "May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy ... when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones."
- 4:14–18: "God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.... For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, ... We who are still alive and are left will be caught up with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air."

- 5:23: “May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul Defends His Actions and Absence (1 Thessalonians 2–3)

After encouraging and praising the Thessalonian believers, Paul turns to a defense of his ministry. Perhaps some were slandering him, or maybe the Thessalonians simply needed to review the past. In any case, Paul emphasizes both his actions and his absence.

Reviewing his past actions (1 Thessalonians 2:1–16)

- Paul reminds the Thessalonians of his suffering in Philippi before he came to them (2:2).
- His motives were pure. He was not guilty of flattery or greed and was not a financial burden to them. Rather, he worked night and day to support himself (2:3–9).
- He was gentle, like a mother caring for her children (2:6–7).
- He was holy, righteous, and blameless. He was like a father caring for his children (2:10–12).
- His words were received as the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 2:13).

Defending his absence (1 Thessalonians 2:17–3:10)

Why might Paul have needed to defend himself?

Recall that Paul wrote to the Thessalonians from Corinth. He explains that he tried in every way to come to them, but Satan prevented him (2:17–18). Therefore, Paul sent Timothy to encourage them and remind them that trials come to all believers (3:1–4). Paul was afraid that the Thessalonians would become discouraged and lose their faith, making his ministry there a waste of time (3:5). However, Timothy brought back a good report, and Paul gave thanks, praying that God would strengthen the Thessalonians until Christ returned (3:6–13).

Paul Instructs Believers (1 Thessalonians 4–5)

What hope and comfort from 1 Thessalonians can you offer those whose loved ones have died?

Note from the outline of 1 Thessalonians that chapters 1–3 deal with the past. In those chapters, Paul gives thanks for the Thessalonians. Then, in chapters 4–5, Paul gives warnings and instructions about daily living. Specifically, in 1 Thessalonians 4:13–5:11, Paul answers questions about the coming of the Lord.

Some believers in Thessalonica had died after Paul left, and their loved ones were sorrowing, fearful that those who died would miss the coming of Christ. Their old pagan religion offered no hope for life after death (1:9–10); it taught that death was an experience filled with darkness and fear. Living believers wondered, “Will we ever see our dead loved ones again?” Paul assured

them that, yes, they would have a joyful reunion (4:13–18). Today, we refer to the catching up of all believers to meet Jesus in the air as *the Rapture*. All believers look forward to the moment when Jesus returns, and we are both united with Him and reunited with our loved ones in Christ. Thank God for the encouragement and hope of the Second Coming!

Yet, although the reality of the Rapture brings great comfort to suffering believers, this future hope also brings two responsibilities: (1) All believers must be alert for His coming, and (2) all must have self-control (5:6). Paul warns believers to watch for the Lord's return, since Christ's coming will not surprise those who are alert. Those who do not watch for Jesus are in the group of the wicked; they "belong to the night or to the darkness" (5:5). The righteous, however, watch for Jesus as they live holy lives (Gundry 1994, 270).

Lesson 8.2 Second Thessalonians

Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians shortly after penning 1 Thessalonians, still in Corinth on his second missionary journey. The Thessalonian believers had taken Paul's words about the coming of the Lord to heart, but were in danger of overemphasizing that truth. In the face of continuing persecution, they were focusing too much on the hope of Christ's immediate return. Some had stopped working for the Lord, choosing to only sit and watch the clouds for Jesus to come back.

What potential danger can an overemphasis on the nearness of the Rapture bring?

In addition, someone claimed to have a prophecy, report, or letter from Paul stating that Jesus had already returned (2 Thessalonians 2:1–2). Perhaps some thought they were in the Great Tribulation after the Rapture. Consequently, Paul wrote the Thessalonians again to correct these false beliefs. He said 2 Thessalonians was the true letter from him (3:17).

Outline of 2 Thessalonians

Summarize and apply what 2 Thessalonians teaches about the Rapture, Antichrist, and Second Coming.

- I. Paul Encourages Believers during Persecution, 1
 - A. Greeting (1:1–2)
 - B. Thanks for their progress during persecution (1:3–4)

- C. Assurance of final rewards and judgment (1:5–10)
 - D. Prayer for believers (1:11–12)
- II. Paul Teaches Believers about the End-time, 2
 - A. The Day of the Lord yet to come (2:1–2)
 - B. The man of lawlessness to first be revealed (2:3–12)
 - C. Believers encouraged to stand firm in the truth (2:13–15)
 - D. Paul’s prayer for believers (2:16–17)
- III. Paul Exhorts Believers about Daily Living, 3
 - A. Urging them to pray for him and stand firm (3:1–5)
 - B. Urging each one to work hard (3:6–13)
 - C. Urging them to discipline the disobedient (3:14–15)
 - D. Praying for them and saying farewell (3:16–18)

Explanations of the Outline

Paul Encourages Believers during Persecution (2 Thessalonians 1)

As he did in 1 Thessalonians, Paul begins his second letter with praise (1:3–4), complimenting the believers for standing firm during persecution. Then, in 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10, Paul reminds the believers that vengeance belongs to God:

God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.

Knowing that the future will be better is encouraging for believers during times of suffering.

Paul Teaches Believers about the End-time (2 Thessalonians 2)

Second Thessalonians 2:1–12 contains six important theological phrases. We will identify and define each of them.

- *The coming of our Lord* (2:1), or *Second Coming* (Greek **parousia**), is a broad phrase that includes two phases of the Lord’s return: both His private return and His public coming (see chart at the end of this section). First, in the event referred to as the Rapture, Jesus will come *for* His saints or holy ones. It is the private phase in the sense that only the holy will see Him. “On that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left” (Luke 17:34). That is, unbelievers will be left behind for the seven years of tribulation during the **Antichrist**’s rule. Then, in the second phase, the Lord will come *with* His holy ones. We call this the public revelation of Christ because, at that time, every eye will see Him (Jude 14; Revelation 1:7). In this public return after the seven years of tribulation, Jesus comes to judge His enemies.
- *Our being gathered to Him* (2 Thessalonians 2:1) refers to the Rapture, in which believers are caught up to meet Christ in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:16–17).

- *The day of the Lord* (2 Thessalonians 2:2) refers to the period of time in which Christ will bring His judgments (Harris 1995, 353).
- *The rebellion* (2 Thessalonians 2:3). In the Greek, this word is *apostasia*, from which the English word *apostasy* is derived. The rebellion may refer either to a falling away from Christ or to a general rebellion against law and order as people reject God and His rule. It may include people within the church. Jesus spoke of this time, saying, “The love of most will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12).

Summarize two views regarding the identity of the one who holds back lawlessness (2 Thessalonians 2:7).

- *The man of lawlessness* (2 Thessalonians 2:3) refers to the Antichrist, who will rule the earth during the Tribulation. He is a world leader of wickedness and persecution in the last days (Gundry 1994, 271). Paul says this evil ruler exalts himself in God’s temple, claiming to be God and demanding to be worshipped (2 Thessalonians 2:4; Revelation 13). Jesus will destroy him with the breath of His mouth (2 Thessalonians 2:8; Revelation 19:11–21).
- *The one who now holds it back* (2 Thessalonians 2:7). A popular modern view is that the One who holds back lawlessness is the Holy Spirit working through the church. When the Holy Spirit stops holding back evil, it will cover the earth like a flood. Many think this will begin just after the Rapture. Then evil will have little to oppose it. On the other hand, a popular view held by many of the early church fathers asserted that the Roman Empire and its emperor constituted the force that held back lawlessness. Some would even identify the emperor Nero as the persecutor and man of lawlessness. Nero was preceded by Claudius, who ruled when Paul wrote this letter and whose name was linked to a Latin word that means “restrain” or “hold back” (Keener 1993, 601–602).

Some Thessalonian believers were confused and afraid that the Day of the Lord was past (2 Thessalonians 2:2). Paul assured them that God’s judgments were still in the future. He told them that before the final judgment, whatever was holding back evil would be removed. The church would be raptured, and the man of lawlessness would rule the world. Sometime after that, the Lord would return and destroy him in public. Therefore, the Thessalonians did not need to be afraid of missing the Day of the Lord. When these events happened, all on earth would know it.

Ten differences in verses on the two phases of the Second Coming

	Phase I (The Private Rapture)	Phase II (The Public Revelation)
1.	Jesus comes for His saints (1 Thess. 4:16–17).	Jesus comes with His saints (Rev. 19:8, 14; Zech. 14:1–5).

2. "Two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left" (Luke 17:34). "Every eye will see him" (Rev. 1:7).
3. Jesus promised to deliver the church at Philadelphia from the hour of trial (Rev. 3:10). Jesus resurrects those who died in the Tribulation (Rev. 13:15; 20:4).
4. Believers are caught up to meet Jesus in the air before He comes to earth (1 Thess. 4:16–17). Jesus returns to earth to rule (Rev. 19:1–21). Satan is thrown into the Abyss for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1–3). Then those who died for Christ in the Tribulation are raised (Rev. 20:4).
5. The Rapture is imminent. We are only told to watch for the Lord not for a sign (John 14:1–4; 1 Cor. 15:51–58; 1 Thess. 4:13–18). Many signs show His coming. "Even so, when you see all these things, you know that it is near, right at the door" (Matt. 24:33).
6. Trials are not mentioned in passages on the Rapture (John 14:1–4; 1 Cor. 15:51–58; 1 Thess. 4:13–18). The Second Coming is in the midst of great tribulation (Zech. 14:1–2; Matt. 24:21; Rev. 6–18).
7. Passages on the Rapture clearly teach that the saints will rise to meet Him (John 14:1–4; 1 Cor. 15:51–58; 1 Thess. 4:13–18). Passages on the Second Coming do not refer to a Rapture, perhaps because it occurred years earlier (Zech. 14:1–5; Matt. 24:26–31; Rev. 19:11–21).
8. At the Rapture, those still alive will be changed (1 Cor. 15:51; 1 Thess. 4:17). No passages on the Second Coming teach that living saints will be changed.
9. Passages on the Rapture clearly show that the dead in Christ will be raised (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:16). Passages on the Second Coming do not clearly show the resurrection of the church (Dan. 12:1–2; Rev. 20:4).
10. No changes on the earth can predict the Rapture; however, the removal of the Church Passages on the Second Coming teach changes in the earth. The Mount of Olives

will obviously become a change in the earth at the moment of the Rapture.

will split (Zech. 14:4). Ezekiel 40–48 assumes some changes in earth. (See Rev. 6:12–14.)

Paul Exhorts Believers about Daily Living (2 Thessalonians 3)

Finally, Paul urged the Thessalonians to do three things:

- Pray for him (3:1–2). Paul reminded them that God is faithful. He knew the Lord would strengthen him and the Thessalonians.
- Work hard (3:6–13). Believers cannot just sit and wait for the Lord to return. Those who do not work should not eat (3:10).
- The church should discipline those who refused to obey his letter (3:14–15). Discipline in love is necessary for every healthy church.

Chapter 9 Letters for Pastors: 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus

When Marcus finished Bible school, he was invited to start a new church. He not only prayed, asking God if this was His will, but he also talked with a more experienced pastor in a nearby city. The other pastor prayed with him and encouraged him to start the church.

The pastor's encouragement did not stop there. In fact, he kept encouraging Marcus for many years. The neighboring pastor took time to meet with Marcus regularly and shared much of his wisdom about the ministry. He answered Marcus's tough questions and helped him to understand what it means to be a pastor. Without the counsel of this other pastor, Marcus would not have grown in the ministry as he did.

In the same way, Paul encouraged Timothy and Titus in their pastoral calling. He helped them get started in the ministry, and he wrote letters to them to share his wisdom regarding the ministry. Whereas almost all of Paul's other letters were written to churches, the three Pastoral Epistles were written to individuals. In these letters, Paul tells Timothy and Titus how to be effective pastors and ministers of the gospel. He also intends for the churches to understand key principles of community life, organization, and leadership.

Lesson 9.1 First Timothy

Objectives

9.1.1 *Summarize Timothy's parentage, conversion, and relationship to Paul.*

9.1.2 *Identify at least three topics Paul wrote about in 1 Timothy.*

Lesson 9.2 Titus

Objectives

9.2.1 *Compare Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3 on qualifications for pastors.*

9.2.2 *Summarize what Titus teaches about grace and the reputation of the gospel.*

Lesson 9.3 Second Timothy

Objectives

9.3.1 *Explain Paul's comparison of a pastor to a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer.*

9.3.2 *Summarize what Paul taught about the last days and the Scriptures.*

Lesson 9.1 First Timothy

We have reached the last three of Paul's thirteen letters. Recall that we divided his letters into four groups:

1. Letters about salvation (Soteriological Epistles): Romans, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians
2. Letters from prison (Prison Epistles): Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon
3. Letters about the future (Eschatological Epistles): 1 and 2 Thessalonians
4. Letters to pastors (Pastoral Epistles): 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus

The Pastoral Epistles give instructions to pastors for both their home life and church work. Paul wrote these letters to Timothy and Titus, two men who had worked closely with him.

Many Bible scholars believe Paul was a prisoner twice in Rome: the first time as recorded in Acts 28 and the second several years later. It appears that Paul wrote 1 Timothy and Titus after his release from his first Roman imprisonment (2 Timothy 4:16–17). This could have been during a fourth missionary journey Paul possibly took between AD 62 and AD 66 (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 334–335). Paul likely wrote 2 Timothy during his second Roman imprisonment around AD 67, just before his execution by Nero (Earle 1978, 343–344).

Background

Summarize Timothy's parentage, conversion, and relationship to Paul.

We first read about Timothy in Acts 16:1 when Paul came to Lystra on his second missionary journey. Luke calls Timothy "a disciple," perhaps indicating that Timothy became a Christian during Paul's first missionary journey to Galatia (Acts 14:8–20). The believers at Lystra and

Iconium spoke well of him (Acts 16:2), and Paul himself called Timothy “my true son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2) and “my dear son” (2 Timothy 1:2).

Describe Timothy’s family background and the probable time of his conversion.

When did Timothy travel with Paul?

Although Timothy’s father was Greek, his mother was Jewish (Acts 16:1, 3). Paul acknowledges the sincere faith of Timothy’s mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois (2 Timothy 1:5). Eunice had taught Timothy the Old Testament Scriptures from the time he was a very small child (2 Timothy 3:14–15).

Where did Timothy pastor? What does this show us?

When Paul and his group left Lystra, he took Timothy along to accompany them on the rest of the second missionary journey as well as the entire third journey. Later, Paul left Timothy in Ephesus to take care of church problems there (1 Timothy 1:3; 3:1–15; 4:6–16).

From 1 and 2 Timothy, we learn that Timothy was a faithful, hardworking leader. He was close to Paul’s heart (Philippians 2:19–22). The fact that Paul trusted him with the responsibility of the church at Ephesus, a large and important church, demonstrates Paul’s faith in Timothy’s ability and faithfulness. However, at times Timothy needed encouragement (1 Timothy 4:12–16; 2 Timothy 1:6–7). Calling him a “man of God” (1 Timothy 6:11), Paul told Timothy to imitate the Lord, “who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession” (6:13). He also warned Timothy to “guard what has been entrusted to your care” (6:20).

Outline of 1 Timothy

Identify at least three topics Paul wrote about in 1 Timothy.

After Paul's release from prison in Rome and ministry further west, he commissioned Timothy to care for the church at Ephesus. Now in 1 Timothy, Paul writes to instruct him about personal and church matters. These instructions are clearly seen in the book's outline.

- I. Introduction, 1
 - A. Greeting (1:1–2)
 - B. Warning against false teachers (1:3–11)
 - C. The Lord's grace to Paul (1:12–17)
 - D. The purpose of the instructions to Timothy (1:18–20)
- II. Instructions on Public Worship, 2
 - A. Prayer in public worship (2:1–8)
 - B. Women in public worship (2:9–15)
- III. Instructions on Managing the Church, 3
 - A. Qualifications for overseers (3:1–7)
 - B. Qualifications for deacons (3:8–13)
 - C. The purpose of the instructions to Timothy (3:14–16)
- IV. Instructions on False Teachings, 4
 - A. False teaching described (4:1–5)
 - B. Methods of refuting false teaching (4:6–16)
- V. Instructions **on Various People in the Church, 5–6**
 - A. The older and younger (5:1–2)
 - B. Widows (5:3–16)
 - C. Elders (5:17–25)
 - D. Slaves (6:1–2)
 - E. False teachers (6:3–10)
 - F. The man of God (6:11–16)
 - G. The rich (6:17–19)
- VI. Conclusion, 6:20–21

Explanations of the Outline

Introduction (1 Timothy 1)

Paul greets Timothy as his “true son in the faith” (1 Timothy 1:2). The apostle had “no one else like him” (Philippians 2:20).

In the next verses, Paul urges his protégé to rebuke false teachers who were emphasizing the Law (1 Timothy 1:3–11). He states that the Law is necessary for the lawless, not the righteous. Those who receive the gospel do what is right to please God. Paul then denotes his own conversion and ministry as living proof that God can save the worst of sinners (1:12–17).

Knowing that the elders had once prophesied over Timothy, apparently concerning his role as a faithful church leader (1 Timothy 1:18; 4:14), Paul wanted to help Timothy “fight the good fight.” Thus, Paul wrote 1 Timothy for two reasons:

1. To encourage Timothy as a person. Paul wanted him to continue to be a good example in his character.
2. To enable Timothy to teach and manage the church properly.

Instructions on Public Worship (1 Timothy 2)

Paul opens 1 Timothy 2 with a request for prayer. He urges believers to pray for everyone, especially government leaders, for three reasons:

- Praying for leaders helps us live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness (2:2).
- God wants all to be saved (2:4).
- Jesus died for everyone (2:6).

Therefore, we should “lift up holy hands in prayer” for everyone (2:8).

Express your understanding of Paul’s view on the involvement of women in ministry.

Paul then moves to the topic of Christian women’s decorum (2:9–15). Women should dress modestly, not depending on lavish and expensive jewelry and extravagant hairdos. They should also be submissive to their husbands. Paul did not allow a wife to have authority over her husband (2:11–12). In turn, the Bible commands husbands to treat their wives as they treat themselves, and not as slaves (Ephesians 5:28). Paul tells husbands never to be harsh with their wives (Colossians 3:19). Wives, children, employees, and citizens do not resent submission when treated with love, respect, and appreciation.

From his other writings, we know that Paul was not opposed to women in ministry. Timothy was aware that Paul worked closely with Aquila and his wife Priscilla (Acts 18:1–28; Romans 16:3–4). In Romans 16:1–2, Paul commends Phoebe, perhaps a deaconess, saying she had been “a great help to many people.” In addition, Paul seems to place the woman Junias on the level of an apostle (Romans 16:7).

Paul’s aim in 1 Timothy 2:9–15 is to address a conflict regarding women in the Ephesian church speaking out strongly in public. This reminds us of a similar problem at Corinth (1 Corinthians 11), where some women may have misunderstood their freedom in Christ. They thought freedom meant that they no longer needed to observe social and relational standards. Paul emphasizes that these women were incorrect.

First Timothy 2:15 focuses on the role of women in the family and in society. God saves women in the same way He saves men. However, salvation does not often change a person’s role in society. Christian women who are married with children will continue to be mothers and submissive wives. In today’s society, women are being accepted into different roles than in the first century. It is now common for women to become senators, governors, mayors, and chief executive officers for large corporations. Christian women who are civic and community leaders will continue to function in these capacities, effecting change and helping people. Additionally, women who come out of a lifestyle of sin and degradation may experience what is called a “social lift” because of their salvation. That is, as they learn to model Christlikeness, others are likely to respect them more and may entrust them with more responsibility.

Instructions on Managing the Church (1 Timothy 3)

In the first century, the clause *Here is a trustworthy saying* was a common way to introduce a Christian hymn, slogan, or special teaching (Gundry 1994, 414). It appears five times in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Timothy 1:15; 3:1; 4:9; 2 Timothy 2:11; Titus 3:8).

In 1 Timothy 3:1, Paul uses these words to introduce qualifications for overseers. From the Greek word *episkopos*, the term *overseer* refers to one who supervises, such as a presbyter, bishop, or pastor. In the next lesson, we will compare the qualifications of an overseer or pastor given in 1 Timothy with those given in Titus.

A *deacon* (taken from the Greek word for “minister”) is a person who helps an overseer. It is important that the church choose pastors and deacons with biblical qualifications, since church leaders set an example for believers (1 Timothy 4:12). This example must be evident in the home in the context of marital and family relationships (Stamps and Adams 1990, 1882). A leader should also be a good financial steward and show moderation and integrity in all areas of life and ministry.

Finally, 1 Timothy 3 quotes an early Christian hymn or creed that briefly traces Jesus’ earthly life from birth to ascension. Paul uses this hymn excerpt to emphasize that the real secret of true godliness is to fully accept the person and work of the Messiah, Jesus (Stock 1983, 263). The simplicity of the gospel can be elusive to those who merely pursue sensationalism or seek to add elements to an already full gospel. All those who seek Christ as He has revealed himself will find the key to the mystery of godliness.

Instructions on False Teachings (1 Timothy 4)

Name some common false teachings that seem to create problems in the church today.

The Spirit warns that in the last days, some will abandon the faith—a warning that shocks and saddens us. Not all who receive Christ continue to follow Him. Deceptive spirits working through false teachers will seduce some away from Christ (1 Timothy 4:1–2). Paul says that pastors are responsible to point out false teachings to those they lead (4:6).

One of the best ways to teach the truth is to live it. Therefore, Paul commands Timothy to “set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (4:12).

Instructions on Various People in the Church (1 Timothy 5–6)

In 1 Timothy 5–6, Paul writes about pastoring church members, giving practical advice about several groups of people:

Identify some ways your church might be able to effectively minister to widows. Consider how single mothers can best be ministered to and what principles may be applied from 1 Timothy 5.

- *The older and younger* (5:1–2): Men and women of any age should be treated like family members.
- *Widows* (5:3–16): The families of widows should support them. Godly widows more than 60 years old without families should receive help from the church. Younger widows should

remarry to avoid an immoral lifestyle. Paul notes that some younger widows had already turned away from the faith to follow Satan.

- *Elders* (5:17–20): Faithful elders who minister deserve financial support from the church. Accusations against elders must be made based on evidence from two or more witnesses.
- *Slaves* (6:1–2): The gospel does not free a slave from submitting to a master. While the gospel turns slaves into brothers of believing masters, Paul still urges slaves “not to show less respect” for their masters but to “serve them even better.”
- *False teachers* (6:3–10): Paul says that false teachers are proud. Those who think faith is a path to money have been “robbed of the truth.” God supplies our basic needs such as food and clothing. Those who learn to be content with the basic things of life are spiritually wealthy.
- *The man of God* (6:11–16): Paul contrasts the pastor with false teachers who love money. Rather than running after riches, a pastor should seek righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness.
- *The rich* (6:17–19): Those who are wealthy should be humble and trust in God, not money. Through their generosity in sharing with others, they will store treasure in heaven.

Lesson 9.2 Titus

It seems that Paul led both Titus and Timothy to Christ. The apostle called Titus “my true son in our common faith” (Titus 1:4).

Titus was a Greek, probably from Antioch in Syria. He traveled with Paul and Barnabas from Antioch to Jerusalem to discuss their ministry to Gentiles with the church leaders (Galatians 2:1–3).

Titus himself was a Gentile and became a follower of Christ without Jewish circumcision. Thus, he is an example of being saved through faith in Christ rather than by keeping the law of Moses:

We who are Jews by birth and not “Gentile sinners” know that a man is not justified by observing the law, but by faith in Jesus Christ. So we, too, have put our faith in Christ Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by observing the law, because by observing the law no one will be justified. (Galatians 2:15–16)

Although Titus is not mentioned by name in the book of Acts, his name appears several times in Paul’s letters (Guthrie 1989, 183). We know that he worked closely with Paul and that Paul depended on him to help solve church problems. For instance, Paul sent Titus to deal with the issues in the Corinthian church. When writing 2 Corinthians, Paul expressed pleasure because Titus had just returned from Corinth with a good report (2 Corinthians 7:6–10, 13–16). In fact, Titus wanted to return to Corinth to do further work and collect an offering the church had pledged to give to Jerusalem believers (8:6, 16–17, 23). Paul last mentions Titus in 2 Timothy 4:10, stating that he had traveled to **Dalmatia** (the modern-day region of Serbia and Montenegro, Macedonia, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Croatia), presumably for ministry.

When Paul wrote his letter to Titus, the young worker was on the island of **Crete** to “straighten out what was left unfinished” (Titus 1:5). Paul’s theme in the epistle is sound doctrine, or good teaching (1:9; 2:1, 7–8). Healthy, biblical doctrine is characteristic of the life

and teaching of all faithful ministers. A minister's living out the doctrines he or she teaches will silence those who seek to find fault and try to disrupt what God desires to do in His church.

Outline of Titus

- I. Greeting, 1:1–4
- II. Instructions about Appointing Elders, 1:5–9
- III. Instructions about False Teachers, 1:10–16
- IV. Instructions about Various Groups in the Churches, 2
 - A. Teachings for each group (2:1–10)
 - B. Lessons from grace (2:11–15)
- V. Instructions on Godly Living, 3
 - A. Our relationship with all others (3:1–2)
 - B. The reason for holy living (3:3–7)
 - C. Discern between the profitable and unprofitable (3:8–11)
- VI. Conclusion, 3:12–15

Explanations of the Outline

Compare Titus 1 and 1 Timothy 3 on qualifications for pastors.

Instructions about Appointing Elders (Titus 1:5–9)

While Paul wrote about appointing both pastors and deacons in 1 Timothy, he deals only with appointing pastors in Titus, and then only briefly. The following chart summarizes the qualifications for pastors or church leaders given in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

Name the pastoral characteristics that are unique to Titus. Name those that are unique to 1 Timothy 3.

Identify at least two pastoral characteristics with which you struggle the most as a believer. What steps have you taken to correct these areas? What further steps is God prompting you to take?

Twelve Requirements for Pastors

	1 Tim.	Titus
Negative Characteristics to Avoid (Blameless: not guilty of five accusations)	3:2	1:6–7
1. Not given to drunkenness	3:3	1:7
2. Not overbearing or quarrelsome	3:3	1:7
3. Not quick-tempered; not violent	3:3	1:7
4. Not a lover of money; not pursuing dishonest gain	3:3	1:7
5. Not a recent convert	3:6	
Positive Characteristics to Have (Respected for seven good reasons)	3:2–7	1:7
1. The husband of one wife	3:2	1:6
2. Gentle	3:3	
3. Temperate; self-controlled; disciplined	3:2	1:8
4. Hospitable	3:2	1:8
5. One who loves what is good; upright and holy		1:8
6. Able to teach; and holding firmly to sound doctrine	3:2	1:9

7. A good manager of his own family 3:12

1:6

In summary, church leaders must be godly and have proven character. They must succeed at home before leading in the church. Because the Cretans were known for being sinful (Titus 1:12–13), the letter to Titus emphasizes that a pastor must be righteous and holy and love what is good (1:8).

Instructions about False Teachers (Titus 1:10–16)

At the time of Paul's writing, the main problem in Crete involved Jewish false teachers. Paul described the false teachers of his day as the following:

- Rebels who refuse to cooperate (1:10)
- Deceivers. They talk about worthless things like genealogies (relating salvation to dead ancestors; 1:10; 3:9) and teach myths and legends as truth (1:14).
- Legalists (Judaizers) who teach that circumcision has religious value (1:14)
- Individuals with corrupt minds and consciences (1:15)
- Those who claim to know God but whose actions deny Him (1:16)
- Disobedient people and unfit for doing any good (1:16)

Paul asserted that these false teachers ruined entire families, primarily to gain money (1:11). Thus, sound teaching is important for the faith of everyone. Paul urged Titus to base his doctrine and teaching on God's Word (Titus 1:3; 2:5, 10). He expounded on sound teaching in Titus 2 and 3.

Instructions about Various Groups in the Churches (Titus 2)

Summarize what Titus teaches about grace and the reputation of the gospel.

Paul identifies several groups in Titus 2, just as he did in 1 Timothy 5:1–6:2. They include older and younger men, older and younger women, and slaves. Since we considered these in our study of 1 Timothy, we will not discuss much about them here.

Describe the godly lifestyle required of both young women and men that will result in a good reputation for the gospel.

Along with self-control, one major theme in Paul's teachings to young women, young men, and slaves is consideration. That is, he did not want the actions of anyone to be a stumbling

block to others or to make the gospel look bad. The following table shows the relationship between the actions of believers and the reputation of the gospel.

Paul taught that the actions of believers create the reputation of the gospel.

Titus	How Believers Should Act	Why?
2:4–5	Younger women, love your husbands; be self-controlled and pure; be busy at home; be kind; submit to your husbands.	So that no one will malign or speak evil of the Word of God
2:6–8	Young men, be self-controlled. Titus, be an example for them in doing what is good. Teach with integrity that cannot be condemned.	So that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us
2:9–10	Slaves (workers), submit to your masters. Do not be rude. Do not steal from them. Be worthy of trust.	So that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive

What does the grace of God teach believers to do, according to Titus 2:11–14?

The grace we show others is an extension of God’s grace toward us. According to Titus 2:11–14, grace is a teacher. Every student should memorize this special passage about grace:

For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. (2:11–14)

Instructions on Godly Living (Titus 3)

In Titus 3, Paul states the reasons believers can obey his teachings:

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. (3:3–7)

Believers live holy and righteous lives because Jesus has saved us. He has washed us and poured out His Spirit on us. Therefore, we live to please Him as we wait for His return. Then we will enjoy living with Him forever.

Lesson 9.3 Second Timothy

Second Timothy is Paul’s final letter. The Roman emperor Nero was persecuting believers in Rome in an attempt to stop the spread of Christianity, and Paul was Nero’s prisoner for the second time (2 Timothy 1:16). With the exception of Luke, all of his friends had left him (1:15; 4:9–11). Paul knew that his ministry was over. He had faithfully run and won the race God had set before him. Death was near (4:6–8, 18).

Summarize Paul’s circumstances when he wrote 2 Timothy.

It is fitting that Paul would pen a final letter to this young man who was so dear to him—a disciple he called “my dear son” and “my fellow worker” (2 Timothy 1:2; Romans 16:21). Timothy had helped deliver six of Paul’s letters and was with Paul the first time the apostle was in the Roman prison (Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1). As the great apostle faced death, it is not surprising that he wanted to see his son in the faith one more time. In addition to their close relationship, it is likely “that Paul had important truths and strategies to impart to Timothy—which could only be communicated in the give-and-take of extended personal exchange” (Hughes and Chapell 2000, 258). Twice in 2 Timothy, Paul requests that Timothy come to the prison (4:9, 21). We do not know if Timothy arrived before Paul was executed (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 339). Nevertheless, it is probable that Timothy responded immediately to Paul’s beckoning and joined Luke and Mark in Rome, where (according to Clement of Rome) Paul was beheaded at the Ostian Gate, just outside the city (Hughes and Chapell 2000, 270).

Outline of 2 Timothy

Paul’s concern for both Timothy and the Ephesian church is seen in the outline of 2 Timothy.

I. Paul’s Fatherly Concern for Timothy, 1

- A. Greeting (1:1–2)
- B. Paul’s encouraging words to his son (1:3–14)
- C. Paul’s circumstances (1:15–18)
- II. Paul’s Special Instructions to Timothy, 2
 - A. Call to endure hardship (2:1–13)
 - B. Warning about foolish questions (2:14–26)
- III. Paul’s Warning about the Last Days, 3
 - A. Terrible times are coming (3:1–9)
 - B. Continue to serve the Lord anyway (3:10–17)
- IV. Paul’s Departing Words, 4
 - A. Preach the Word (4:1–5)
 - B. His personal testimony (4:6–8)
 - C. His personal words to Timothy (4:9–18)
- V. Conclusion, 4:19–22

Explanations of the Outline

Explain Paul’s comparison of a pastor to a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer.

Which of Paul’s instructions in 2 Timothy are most needed in your life today? Explain.

Paul’s Fatherly Concern for Timothy (2 Timothy 1)

Second Timothy gives the last recorded words of Paul in the New Testament. It states Paul’s thoughts as he came to the end of his life and ministry. In the midst of his suffering, Paul’s main concern was for Timothy and the success of his work in Ephesus. Paul gave Timothy some strict instructions to which all of us should pay careful attention. They are arguably the most important part of 2 Timothy. The following chart summarizes these commands from 2 Timothy 1–4:

Paul’s Pastoral Instructions to 2 Tim. Timothy

“Fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you.” 1:6

“Do not be ashamed to testify.... But join with me in suffering.” 1:8

“Keep ... the pattern of sound teaching.” 1:13

“Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you.” 1:14

“Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.” 2:1

“The things you have heard me say ... entrust to reliable men.” 2:2

“Keep reminding them of these things. Warn them before God.” 2:14

“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved.” 2:15

“Avoid godless chatter.” 2:16

“Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness.” 2:22

“Don’t have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments.” 2:23

“Be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful.” 2:24

“Lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—... Have nothing to do with them.” 3:4–5

“Continue in what you have learned.” 3:14

“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage.” 4:2

“Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, ... discharge all the duties of your ministry.” 4:5

Paul’s Special Instructions to Timothy (2 Timothy 2)

Explain how a pastor is like a soldier, an athlete, and a farmer.

Paul used seven comparisons to describe the kind of pastor Timothy should be (2 Timothy 2). These comparisons emphasize the responsibilities of a Christian leader:

1. As a *son*, he is to be strong and active (2:1–2).
2. As a *soldier*, he is to suffer hardship and please his commander (2:3–4).
3. As an *athlete*, he is to obey the rules of the game (2:5).
4. As a *farmer*, he is to work hard and should be the first to eat some of the food he grows (2:6).
5. As a *workman*, he is not to be ashamed; rather, he should correctly handle the Word of God (2:15).
6. As an *instrument*, he is to be holy and useful for the Master (2:21).
7. As a *servant*, he is to be gentle and helpful (2:24–25).

Paul's Warning about the Last Days (2 Timothy 3)

Summarize what Paul taught about the last days and the Scriptures.

In 2 Timothy 3:1–9, Paul lists the characteristics of people in the last days, painting a dark picture. Do any of the characteristics describe the lost in your culture today? Jannes and Jambres (3:8) were probably two of Pharaoh's magicians (Gundry 1994, 417) who opposed Moses while he was attempting to bring God's deliverance to Israel. Likewise, modern-day false teachers oppose God's leaders who seek to spread the gospel to those in bondage.

How does 2 Timothy 3:1–9 relate to today? Explain.

How did God give us the Scriptures (2 Timothy 3:16)? Why did He give them?

In contrast to those in darkness, however, Paul described a picture of himself—the faithful, godly apostle—as an example for others to follow (2 Timothy 3:10–17). In the darkest times, it is beneficial to focus on godly examples and imitate them. Paul left good footprints for Timothy to follow.

Paul then describes Timothy's great weapon against evil, explaining the nature of the Scriptures (3:14–17). The Scriptures are God-breathed; that is, God breathed His Spirit into those

who wrote the Bible. For this reason, we are sure that the Scriptures are inspired, true, and without error. The Scriptures make individuals wise concerning salvation (3:15). They would help Timothy teach, rebuke, correct, and train believers in the church (3:17). As the sword of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 6:17), the Bible is one of our main weapons for the work of the ministry. God will bless you for studying it.

Paul's Departing Words (2 Timothy 4)

Do you think Paul was about to die (2 Timothy 4:6–8)? Explain.

Second Timothy 4:1–5 is a famous passage that calls for Timothy to faithfully fulfill the duties of ministry. All who are going into ministry should study these words. Their main emphasis is preaching the Word of God. Since the Bible is our main weapon against false teaching, we must always be prepared to proclaim the truth of Scripture, making it relevant in any given setting. In summary, Timothy is charged to fulfill what God has called him to do “by packing his ministry to the full with the things Paul has been exhorting him to do in these two Epistles” (Earle 1978, 411–412).

Paul ends 2 Timothy with some personal thoughts, including his request for Timothy to come to him soon, before winter if possible (4:9, 21). Timothy may have received this letter from Tychicus in the summer. If he did not leave soon afterward, he would need to wait until spring due to the hazardous weather on the seas during late fall and winter. Paul's urgent plea indicates that by springtime, he would likely already be present with the Lord (Keener 1993, 633). Paul wanted his coat for warmth, his books for study in prison, and his son in the faith for companionship. Paul was active and alert to the very end of his life:

For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day. (2 Timothy 4:6–8)

Unit 3 Eight Letters for All and the Apocalypse

The books in the final portion of the Bible were written to strengthen and encourage believers. They urge us to persevere when suffering for our faith. They warn us to be on guard against distortions of the truth. And in Revelation, John offers us hope, peace, and knowledge as we look forward to Christ's return.

Trials and false teachings have not disappeared over the centuries. In fact, they seem to have worsened. The same God-inspired truths that nurtured and taught the early believers still fortify and teach believers today.

Chapter 10 Letters to Suffering Believers: Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter

Lessons

C10.1 Hebrews

C10.2 James

C10.3 First Peter

Chapter 11 Letters about False Teaching, Part 1: 1, 2, and 3 John

Lessons

C11.1 First John

C11.2 Second John

C11.3 Third John

Chapter 12 Letters about False Teaching, Part 2: 2 Peter and Jude

Lessons

C12.1 Second Peter

C12.2 Jude

Chapter 13 The Book of Revelation

Lessons

C13.1 The Background of Revelation

C13.2 Understanding Revelation

C13.3 Symbols, Characters, and Contrasts in Revelation

Chapter 10 Letters to Suffering Believers: Hebrews, James, and 1 Peter

On his desk, Dr. Mark Barclift has a beautiful picture to remind him that God is with us, even in our sufferings. The picture is made from small scraps of cloth torn from the dresses of women who were imprisoned during World War II. One of these women was his great-aunt Kathryn, a

missionary to the land of the East Indies. She returned to the island of Sumatra knowing not only that she faced great danger but also that God had called her.

At the onset of the war, Kathryn was arrested and placed in a prison camp. The camp had little food and much disease. Hundreds of women and children died from hunger and sickness. When the end of the war liberated Kathryn, she too was near death.

However, her best memory from this time of suffering was the Lord's help. She wrote, "Surely, if the Lord was ever sufficient, He was during this time. To know Him as I do now, I would be willing to endure it all again, if necessary." The light of His presence shines brightest in the darkest hours.

Suffering has always been a part of the Christian life. In this chapter, the letters to suffering believers show us that God is with us in the midst of trials.

Lesson 10.1 Hebrews

Objectives

10.1.1 Analyze the background, author, date, and first readers of Hebrews.

10.1.2 Explain six comparisons that show Jesus' superiority.

10.1.3 Summarize and apply the purpose of the seven warnings in Hebrews.

Lesson 10.2 James

Objectives

10.2.1 Explain the name General Epistles, and list the seven books in this group.

10.2.2 Indicate the author, purpose, and style of James.

10.2.3 Summarize and apply what James says about trials, the tongue, faith, and the wealthy.

Lesson 10.3 First Peter

Objectives

10.3.1 Explain four things the Bible tells us about the author of 1 Peter.

10.3.2 Summarize what 1 Peter teaches about suffering.

10.3.3 Contrast the lifestyles of believers and unbelievers.

Lesson 10.1 Hebrews

Analyze the background, author, date, and first readers of Hebrews.

Despite their coexistence in the early church, Gentile and Jewish believers had different cultural struggles. Gentile believers did not feel as much pressure from Judaism, and few attended the temple. The past of the Gentiles did not include Jewish feasts, Jewish customs, the Law, or the temple. On the other hand, Jewish believers faced many struggles with Judaism

(Tenney 1961, 355–357). They trusted Jesus as Savior, but they held on to the Law. They kept the Sabbaths, attended the feasts, circumcised their sons, and sacrificed animals in the temple. In its account of the first thirty years of church history, Acts reveals that most Jewish believers followed Jesus and the law of Moses (Acts 21:20; 22:12). It took many years for Jewish believers to realize that Jesus replaced animal sacrifices. It took time for them to understand that we are saved by grace, not by keeping the Law.

How much of the Jewish system were Jewish believers to maintain after embracing Jesus as their Messiah? Was it wrong for them to continue observing the Sabbath and celebrating Jewish feasts? Explain.

These believers knew Jesus had predicted that the temple would be destroyed, that not one stone would be left upon another (Matthew 24:2). Thus, they knew that God’s judgment was coming on Jews who rejected the Messiah. Still, they loved the Jewish Scriptures and the temple with its priests and sacrifices. They not only were loyal to Moses and to God but also loved their fellow Jews.

Many unbelieving Jews were fierce opponents of the Jews who followed Jesus. Recall how Paul, a Jew, breathed out hatred and murder against Christians (Acts 9:1–2), dragging men and women to prison. Everywhere he went, he had tried to force believers to turn away from Jesus until he met the Lord himself and became a follower of Christ. At once, the other Jews sought to kill him (Acts 9:23). Repeatedly in Acts, we read that Paul’s most intense opposition came from unbelieving Jews.

Therefore, we see that two things pressured believing Jews to turn from Christ back to Judaism: (1) their loyalty to Moses and Jewish customs and (2) the fierce persecution from unbelieving Jews. Following Jesus often cost these believers their reputations, houses, lands, possessions, and freedom (Acts 8:1; Hebrews 10:32–34). The temptation to turn back to Judaism was great.

Author and Date

Although God did not choose to reveal who wrote the letter to the Hebrews (a term for Jewish believers), the author knew his readers well. His request for prayer that he would be restored to them soon (Hebrews 13:18–19) shows that he had a strong relationship with them.

The statement “Those from Italy send you their greetings” (13:24) seems to indicate that the author was writing to those in Italy from other Roman believers living outside Italy (Kent 1972, 24). The group of believers who were away from Italy could have included such persons as Priscilla and Aquila, since they had again left Rome to go to Ephesus (2 Timothy 4:19). Their mobility may have been prompted by missionary zeal as well as their trade (Earle 1978, 417). Regardless, the author appears to have spent some time in Italy and certainly in Rome, its capital.

Some people believe that Paul wrote Hebrews. However, many biblical scholars do not agree with this for at least three reasons:

Based on your knowledge of the issue, who do you think was the author of Hebrews? Why?

1. Hebrews quotes mostly from the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Old Testament. Paul usually quoted from the Hebrew version of the Old Testament in his letters.

2. The writer of Hebrews places himself among second-generation Christians. That is, he places himself in the group that was told the gospel by others who heard Christ (Hebrews 2:3). In contrast, Paul claims to have heard the Lord directly (Galatians 1:11–12).

3. The author's polished style, vocabulary, and method differs from those in letters we know Paul wrote.

Speculations about the writer's identity have also included Barnabas or Priscilla (Keener 1993, 648). Others, like Luther, suppose that Apollos may have been the author of Hebrews. However, we agree with Origen, one of the early church fathers, who said, "Who it was that really wrote the epistle, only God knows" (Tenney 1961, 358).

Why do most scholars conclude that Hebrews was written prior to the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70?

As for the date, the language of Hebrews (possibly so named in the second century) seems to indicate that the sacrificial system was still in operation when the book was written (Hebrews 8:13). From the verb tense used, we gather that the old covenant was becoming, but had not yet become, obsolete (Arthur 2002, 12). Although some scholars argue that the issue of tense is irrelevant because Hebrews describes tabernacle worship rather than temple worship, others assert that Jews would have viewed both types of worship essentially the same (Kent 1972, 27). In any case, the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem in AD 70 marked the end of animal sacrifices in Judaism. While Hebrews says much about the temple and priests, it does not mention the destruction of the temple. This leads most to conclude that Hebrews was written before AD 70. The letter to the Hebrews would presumably have mentioned the temple's destruction if it had already occurred, since such an event would have sealed the author's argument that Christ's sacrifice had replaced those in the temple (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 348).

While the writer's name and exact date of Hebrews remain uncertain, it is evident that the author wrote like an apostle filled with the Spirit. Throughout the centuries, the church has recognized Hebrews to be inspired by God. More than any other book of the New Testament, Hebrews reveals Jesus as better than all who came before Him.

Recipients

The traditional view claims that Hebrews was intended for a predominantly Jewish audience to emphasize the superiority of Christ's new covenant. This chapter in our study has been developed according to the traditional view. However, some scholars believe that the audience included a mix of both Jews and Gentiles. This view may find support in the author's avoidance of describing either Jews or Gentiles throughout the book. Other writers might have used a term such as *barbarian* to describe the Gentiles (Romans 1:14) and may have referred to the Jews or the Judaizers as Pharisees or legalists (Trotter 1997, 30–31). The fact that this writer did not and, in fact, took care not to offend either party may indicate that he wrote to a mixed audience. His message of hope, encouragement, and warning would have been relevant to any persecuted body of believing Christians, just as it is today.

Outline of Hebrews

Review and identify the seven warnings in the outline of Hebrews.

- I. Jesus is a Superior Revealer and Leader, 1:1–4:13
 - A. He is superior to the prophets (1:1–3)
 - B. He is superior to the angels (1:4–14; 2:5–18)
First warning: Neglect (2:1–4)
 - C. He is superior to Moses (3:1–6)
Second warning: Unbelief (3:7–19)
 - D. He is superior to Joshua (4:2–10)
Third warning: Unbelief (4:1, 11–13)
- II. Jesus is a Superior Mediator and Priest, 4:14–10:18
 - A. He is superior to Aaron (4:14–5:10)
Fourth warning: Immaturity (5:11–6:20)
 - B. He is superior to the Levites (7:1–28)
 - C. His covenant is superior (8)
 - D. His sanctuary is superior (9:1–12)
 - E. His sacrifice is superior (9:13–10:18)
- III. Following Jesus Requires Faith, 10:19–13:21
 - A. Faith is the key to perseverance (10:19–25)
Fifth warning: The danger of not persevering to the end (10:26–31)
 - B. Faith has always been the way people please God (10:32–11:40)
 - C. Faith helps us endure discipline (12:1–13)
Sixth warning: Turning away (12:14–17)
 - D. Faith unites us with the Father, Jesus, and all in heaven (12:18–24)
Seventh warning: Refusal (12:25–29)
 - E. Faith enables us to live holy, godly lives (13:1–21)
- IV. Conclusion and Greetings, 13:22–25

Explain six comparisons that show Jesus' superiority.

Notice how many times the word *superior* appears in the outline. Superior means “better, of more worth, more excellent, of higher quality, preferred, and above.” The theme of Hebrews is that Christians must persevere in their faith and remain in fellowship with other believers. This is possible because Jesus is superior to all humans and angels.

Explanations of the Outline

What was the purpose of Hebrews?

Jewish believers were enduring persecution and becoming discouraged. Hebrews was written to strengthen the faith of these believers and warn them of God's judgment on all who turned away from Christ.

Jesus is a Superior Revealer and Leader (Hebrews 1:1–4:13)

Hebrews is sometimes called “The book of better things.” The author uses the Greek word translated *better* thirteen times in this letter. That word is used only six times in all the rest of the New Testament (Morris 1981, 15). Jesus is superior or better in many ways:

- *Jesus is superior to the prophets* (Hebrews 1:1–3) in that He revealed God in a better way. The prophets brought a short, occasional word from God. Each of them told a part of what God was like. However, Jesus not only told us what God is like; He showed us. Jesus was God in flesh. He is greater than the prophets because, as the Word of God, He gave us a complete and final message of God (John 1:1). Hebrews 1:1–3 describes Jesus as superior because He is.
 1. The One through whom God has spoken completely (vv. 1–2)
 2. The Son of God (v. 2)
 3. The Heir of all things (v. 2)
 4. The One through whom God created the universe (v. 2)
 5. The One who shines God's glory (v. 3)
 6. The exact representation of God the Father (v. 3)
 7. The One who holds up all things by speaking (v. 3)
 8. The One who provided cleansing for our sins (v. 3)
 9. The One seated at the right hand of God the Father (v. 3)
- *Jesus is superior to the angels* (1:4–14; 2:5–18). His name or title—the Son of God—is superior to theirs. Angels worship Jesus (1:6). They are messengers, but He is God (1:7–9).

- *Jesus is superior to Moses* (3:1–6). Moses was a servant over God’s house, but Jesus built the house. We are God’s house if we hold on to our courage and hope (3:6).
- *Jesus is superior to Joshua* (4:2–10). The rest Jesus offers is better than the rest Joshua offered in Canaan. The Lord’s rest is complete and eternal.

Jesus is a Superior Mediator and Priest (Hebrews 4:14–10:18)

- *As our High Priest and Mediator, Jesus is better* (4:14–5:10; 6:19–7:28). He is superior to Aaron and the Levites because they were sinners and they died. His life is sinless and endless. The high priest entered the inner part of the temple once a year to make a sacrifice for the nation’s sin. Jesus did not have to approach God in the inner **sanctuary**—He *is* God, and His sacrifice was once and for all.
- *Jesus’ covenant is superior to the old covenant* (7:22; 8:1–13). The promises of the old covenant were for life on earth. The promises of the new covenant are for eternity. God, not humankind, built the city that we are seeking (11:10).
- *Jesus’ heavenly sanctuary and sacrifice are superior to the temple and animal sacrifices* (9:1–10:18). The temple in heaven is better than the temple on earth. The blood of the Son of God is better than the blood of animals.

Thus, Hebrews shows that we can persevere in the midst of our trials because Jesus is better than all who came before Him, and He will help us (10:19–23, 36).

Following Jesus Requires Faith (Hebrews 10:19–13:21)

Hebrews also emphasizes that we must live by faith in Jesus to please God. Chapter 11, a well-known favorite for many, lists many heroes of faith:

Abel	Moses’ parents	Samson
Enoch	Moses	Jephthah
Noah	The Israelites	David
Abraham	Rahab	Samuel
Isaac	Gideon	The prophets
Jacob	Barak	Many others
Joseph		

These Old Testament believers persevered by faith; that is, they continued to trust in God, regardless of the circumstances. Believers are like runners in a stadium surrounded by “a great cloud of witnesses” (Hebrews 12:1) who proclaim that God is faithful (Stedman 1992, 135). Faith has always been the way people please God. If we continue in faith, we will be heirs together with the heroes of Hebrews 11 (see v. 40). Only those who stay in the race receive a crown (Hebrews 12:1; Philippians 3:12–14), and we are running for a crown that will last

forever. Let us keep running by faith so that we will not be rejected or disqualified (1 Corinthians 9:24–27).

Summarize and apply the purpose of the seven warnings in Hebrews.

If believers stop running the race and reject their faith, they will lose everything. Throughout Hebrews, the author warns believers of the danger of rejecting God and turning away from their salvation. God will judge those who turn back. None who desert the faith will receive God's promises.

Identify three of the let us passages that you find most encouraging and helpful. Try to find the provision for each one you identified (i.e., the provision for drawing near in Hebrews 10:22 is the blood of Jesus and the fact that He is our great priest).

Yet the writer of Hebrews offers hope and exhortation. To balance his warnings, he includes many *let us* passages. These encourage believers to persevere and keep living by faith:

“Let us” Passages	Hebrews
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“*Let us* be careful that none of you be found 4:1
to have fallen short of it (God's rest).”

“*Let us*, therefore, make every effort to enter 4:11
that rest.”

“*Let us* hold firmly to the faith we profess.” 4:14

“*Let us* then approach the throne of grace 4:16
with confidence.”

“*Let us* leave the elementary teachings about 6:1
Christ and go on to maturity.”

“*Let us* draw near to God with a sincere 10:22
heart in full assurance of faith.”

“*Let us* hold unswervingly to the hope we 10:23
profess.”

- “*Let us* consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds.” 10:24
- “*Let us* not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing.” 10:25
- “*Let us* encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” 10:25
- “*Let us* throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.” 12:1
- “*Let us* run with perseverance the race marked out for us.” 12:1
- “*Let us* fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith.” 12:2
- “*Let us* be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe.” 12:28
- “*Let us*, then, go to him outside the camp, bearing the disgrace he bore.” 13:13
- “*Let us* continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise.” 13:15

Lesson 10.2 James

Explain the name General Epistles, and list the seven books in this group.

The seven letters after Hebrews—James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude—are commonly called the *General Epistles* because most of them are general in nature. That is, unlike Paul’s letters, they are written for many or all of the churches rather than one local church. Only 2 and 3 John are the exceptions. Thus, these seven letters are also sometimes called the *Catholic Epistles* in the sense that the word *catholic* means “general, universal, or to all.” In addition to their nature, the General or Catholic Epistles differ from Paul’s letters in their naming. Whereas Paul’s

epistles are named for their recipients, the General Epistles are named for their authors, like the Gospels.

Along with Hebrews and 1 Peter, the epistle of James was written to believers in the midst of suffering:

Why are the seven General Epistles also called the Catholic Epistles?

Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering. Sometimes you were publicly exposed to insult and persecution; at other times you stood side by side with those who were so treated. You sympathized with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions. (Hebrews 10:32–34)

James, too, talks of persevering in the face of “trials of many kinds” (1:2–4). Suffering for faith has not stopped over the centuries; if anything, it has grown worse. Believers in many places suffer from persecution. Thus, James’ words of encouragement are still relevant today.

Author and Date

Indicate the author, purpose, and style of James.

Who most likely wrote the epistle of James?

The author of James is named in the first verse: “James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1). However, the New Testament mentions at least three men named James: (1) the apostle James, John’s brother and Zebedee’s son, (2) James the son of Alphaeus, another of Jesus’ disciples (Matthew 10:3), and (3) Jesus’ half-brother James (Mark 6:3). To help determine which James authored this epistle, we must first consider the date of its writing, which evidence shows to be about AD 45–49. With this in mind, the author could *not* be the well-known apostle James since Herod Agrippa I beheaded him around AD 44 (Acts 12:1–2). Nor does the author seem to be James the son of Alphaeus, whom the Bible says little about (Gromacki 1974, 335).

Most Bible teachers agree, therefore, that the author was James, the half-brother of Jesus (Galatians 1:19). Although the Catholic church teaches that Mary was always a virgin and had no other children, Scripture teaches that Jesus had several brothers and sisters (Matthew 13:55–56; Mark 6:3; John 2:12; 7:3, 10). Jesus was their half-brother because Joseph was not His father, but Mary was most likely the mother of all of them (Gundry 1994, 432).

One of the many sons of Mary and Joseph, James was likely the oldest of Jesus' brothers since he is mentioned first in the list of Matthew 13:55: "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas?" Other facts about the Lord's brother James can be gleaned from many Scripture passages. The New Testament has much to say about him:

- He was an unbeliever during Christ's earthly ministry (John 7:5). Later, he became a well-known leader.
- Jesus appeared to him after the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:7).
- James was a pillar in the Jerusalem church (Galatians 2:9).
- When Peter was set free from prison, he sent word to James (Acts 12:17).
- James was a leader at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15).
- After Paul was saved, he saw James in Jerusalem (Galatians 1:19).
- Years later, Paul saw James on his final visit to Jerusalem (Acts 21:18).
- James was so well-known that Jude refers to himself as "Jude, the brother of James" (Jude 1).

According to Josephus, the Jewish historian, James was stoned in Jerusalem about AD 62 (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 354).

Readers and Purpose

James was written "to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations" (1:1). Along with James 2:21, this verse suggests that the readers were Jewish believers. The Greek word used here for a scattering is *diaspora*, which refers to Jews scattered outside their homeland of Palestine (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 354). In this case, some Jewish believers probably fled from Jerusalem because of the persecution that arose after Stephen's death. Unbelieving Jews drove Jerusalem believers to escape into Judea and Samaria (Acts 8:1), with some traveling as far as Phoenicia (Lebanon), Cyprus, and Antioch of Syria.

Summarize James' reasons for writing his epistle.

Since James was a leader of the Jerusalem church, some of his readers may have been his "sheep," that is, believers who had been forced to leave his leadership. If so, he writes to them as one who has spiritual authority, who is in touch with their needs (Burdick 1981, 167).

Speaking extensively about the fruit and footprints of faith, James' primary concern in his epistle is faith in action. James wrote his epistle for three reasons:

1. To encourage Jewish believers who were suffering for their faith
2. To correct false ideas about the nature of saving faith

3. To teach his readers how faith shows itself in righteous living and good deeds

Form and Style of Writing

The writing in James reflects two kinds of Old Testament writings: prophecy and wisdom (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 355). In one sense, James writes like the prophets. At times, he is tender, like the prophet Jeremiah was when he wept. James often calls his readers “brothers” and “my dear brothers” (James 1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12). At other times, like the prophet Nathan who rebuked King David face-to-face, James uses strong, direct words:

- “You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?” (James 2:20).
- “You adulterous people, don’t you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God” (James 4:4).
- “Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom” (James 4:8–9).

Such strong words often remind us of John the Baptist or Jesus. Within the 108 total verses in James are more than fifty direct commands (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 356).

In another sense, the writing style of James reminds us of a wisdom book like Proverbs. After touching on a topic, he proceeds to the next one. This style—moving quickly from thought to thought—also reminds us of the way Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7). Still, one theme weaves through the entire book: *faith that works*.

Outline of James

What single theme seems to be evident throughout the book of James?

- I. Greeting, 1:1
- II. Face Trials and Temptations, 1:2–18
 - A. Recognize their purpose (1:2–4)
 - B. Pray for wisdom to face them (1:5–8)
 - C. Rejoice in their result (1:9–12)
 - D. Discern the source of temptation (1:13–18)
- III. Hear the Word and Obey It, 1:19–27
- IV. Be Impartial: Do Not Show Favoritism, 2:1–13
- V. Prove Faith through Deeds, 2:14–26
- VI. Recognize and Avoid Sin, 3:1–5:6
 - A. The tongue (3:1–12)
 - B. Two kinds of wisdom: from below and from above (3:13–18)
 - C. Two attitudes: loving the world and loving God (4:1–10)
 - D. Slandering a brother (4:11–12)

- E. Boasting about tomorrow (4:13–17)
- F. Selfish wealth (5:1–6)
- VII. Live by God’s Standards, 5:7–20
 - A. Be patient in suffering (5:7–11)
 - B. Be honest: Let yes mean yes (5:12)
 - C. Practice prayer for the sick (5:13–18)
 - D. Try to bring back those who wander from the faith (5:19–20)

Explanations of the Outline

Summarize and apply what James says about trials, the tongue, faith, and the wealthy.

Face Trials and Temptations (James 1:2–18)

James uses the words *trials* and *temptations* often in his epistle. The word *trials* refers to troubles that come upon believers from the outside. In contrast, *temptations* come from within us (1:13–15), arising from the lusts of our sinful nature.

James traces the complete life of sin (James 1:14–15; Hybels 1999, 24). Sin begins as small as a baby begins inside a mother. Little by little it grows. Then, when it is mature, it brings spiritual death. Sometimes we marvel at how quickly children grow. Likewise, sin grows faster and larger than people expect. As one preacher said, “Sin will take you further than you want to go. It will keep you longer than you want to stay. And it will charge you more than you want to pay!”

Hear the Word and Obey It (James 1:19–27)

James writes, “Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like” (1:23–24). This echoes Christ’s words in Matthew 7:26–27: “But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”

Be Impartial: Do Not Show Favoritism (James 2:1–13)

In his instructions against showing favoritism, James’ primary point is that every person is valuable, regardless of economic status (2:1–4). No one should look down on the poor, since many times they are rich in faith (2:5). In the same way, the rich should not take pride in their riches. Earlier, James reminds the rich that they will pass away just like anyone else, and then their wealth will mean nothing (1:10–11).

James especially warns against submitting to the rich who use their wealth for wickedness. Some of the rich were persecuting the believers, dragging them into court, and slandering the

name of Christ (2:6–7). James uses this to illustrate the error in elevating the rich and slighting the poor.

However, later James asserts that it is not enough to sympathize verbally with the poor and treat them with respect. Rather, God calls believers to do as much as possible to meet the physical needs of the people with whom they come in contact (2:15–16). In this way, believers begin to put their faith into action.

Prove Faith through Deeds (James 2:14–26)

An old man used a small boat with two oars to help people cross a river. One day a passenger noticed the word *faith* on one oar and the word *works* on the other. “Why have you carved a word on each oar?” asked the curious rider. “I’ll show you,” replied the old man. At first, he rowed only with the oar of faith. This caused the boat to go in a circle. Then, he rowed only with the oar of works. Again, the boat went in a circle, the other way. However, when the man rowed with the two oars of faith and works, the boat traveled straight ahead. “So it is in life,” said the wise old man. Faith and works must pull together. One without the other is useless. (Tan 1984, 403)

Is it possible to harmonize the teachings of Paul and James? Explain how Romans 3:28 and James 2:17, 24 can work together.

In the early 1500s, with the help of a mentor and through studying the Scriptures for himself, Martin Luther began to realize that we are saved by faith in Jesus Christ, not by our own good works. Because of his deep conviction of this truth, in 1522 Luther referred to James as an Epistle made of straw (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 353), meaning that it was weak. He mistakenly thought that Romans and James contradicted each other. In fact, Luther said that if anyone could harmonize Romans 3:28 and James 2:17, 24, it would prove that he (Luther) was a fool (Orr 1956, 1566).

Some of Paul’s epistles do have strong teachings on salvation by faith alone. Romans 3:28 says, “A man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.” Nevertheless, we believe that the Holy Spirit inspired James to emphasize the fruit and actions of faith. Therefore, we should respect the letter of James as much as Romans. James 2:20 sounds like it was written for men like Luther. It is better to see the value of both Epistles rather than to prefer one above the other (Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 1993, 386–387).

You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless? Was not our ancestor Abraham considered righteous for what he did when he offered his son Isaac on the altar? You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did. And the scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness,” and he was called God’s friend. You see that a person is justified by what he does and not by faith alone. (James 2:20–24)

Faith that saves is more than just head-belief in God. “You believe that there is one God. Good! Even the demons believe that—and shudder” (James 2:19). Just as demons will not

receive salvation, those who claim to have faith but have no good works will not be saved. It is impossible to have fire without heat. Likewise, it is impossible to have saving faith without good deeds. As James says, faith without deeds is as dead as the body without the spirit (2:26).

Although some say that James is the least doctrinal book in the New Testament (Gundry 1994, 343), teachings requiring action are just as important as teachings requiring thought. For some, as in Luther's day, Romans had the most-needed teachings (to correct the errors in some Catholic Church doctrine). However, for others, as in our day, James also has indispensable teachings. Romans emphasizes that we are saved by faith in our hearts. James emphasizes that when faith is in the heart, we can see it in tangible actions. Incidentally, even Paul wrote that faith produces works (Ephesians 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:3). Faith and works are two sides of the same coin.

Recognize and Avoid Sin (James 3:1–5:6)

James teaches us to recognize and avoid sin in many different areas:

- *The tongue* (3:1–12): Each of us must watch what we speak. The tongue can be an instrument of destruction or blessing, depending on the speaker's choice of words. In fact, praises and curses should not flow out of the same mouth. "For out of the overflow of the heart the mouth speaks" (Matthew 12:34).
- *Wisdom from below versus wisdom from above* (James 3:13–18): Wisdom breeds humility. Worldly, unspiritual wisdom involves selfish ambition, envy, and pride. On the other hand, heavenly, spiritual wisdom is "first of all pure; then peace loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere" (3:17).
- *Loving the world versus loving and submitting to God* (4:1–10): Indulging the desires of the sinful nature and loving worldly things lead to pride, quarreling, envy, and selfishness. In contrast, loving God requires humility. By humbling ourselves and submitting to God, we will receive His grace and will be able to resist the devil.
- *Slander* (4:11–12): When we misrepresent or damage a person's reputation, we are in effect judging that individual. James declares that we have no right to do that: "But you—who are you to judge your neighbor?" (4:12). Only God is the rightful Judge. Each one of us is answerable to Him.
- *Boasting about the future* (4:13–17): In these well-known verses, James reminds us that our lives are temporary. Since we do not know what a day will hold, we have no need to take pride in our plans or accomplishments (see Proverbs 27:1). Our times are in God's hands (Ecclesiastes 9:1) and unfold according to His will.
- *Self-indulgence* (James 5:1–6): With vivid description, James cautions that those who have lived in luxury and self-indulgence without looking to the needs of the poor will reap destruction. Hoarding wealth is useless because riches cannot last eternally.

Live by God's Standards (James 5:7–20)

Patience

Have you noticed how many illustrations James includes? Like Jesus, James liked to use examples and illustrations to move truth from the head to the heart and the hands. For instance, James follows his admonition for suffering believers to be patient (5:7) with three illustrations of such patience:

1. A *farmer* patiently waits for the periods of rain and sun to produce a valuable harvest (5:7–8).
2. The *Old Testament prophets* endured their suffering with patience (5:10).
3. Although devastated, *Job* persevered through his trial with patience, and the Lord rewarded him (5:11).

Prayer

How has prayer been powerful and effective in your life?

James declares that the prayer of faith benefits everyone:

- Those who are in trouble should pray (5:13).
- Those who are happy should sing songs of praise (5:13).
- Those who are sick should ask the church leaders to pray for them (5:14–16).

Unquestionably, the prayers of righteous men and women are still “powerful and effective” (5:16). For instance, a pastor named Jacob had been suffering with a weak voice for several years. Finding it difficult to speak above a whisper, he took a year off, away from preaching, but his voice did not improve. Then, in the fall of 2001, Jacob visited a church in Missouri. Near the beginning of the service, the elders gathered at the front of the church to pray for the sick. Jacob went forward, and the elders anointed him with oil and asked God to restore his voice. Jacob sensed the presence of God upon him. Returning to his seat, he joined the congregation in singing a song of praise to the Lord. Suddenly, he noticed that he was singing as loudly as others were. His voice was completely healed! The prayer of faith still heals people today.

Lesson 10.3 First Peter

Another of the epistles written to suffering believers is 1 Peter, the first of two recorded letters from the renowned apostle. A scribe named Silas, who wrote excellent Greek, helped Peter write this first epistle (1 Peter 5:12). In contrast, Peter probably wrote his second letter without help, since its Greek is less polished and more common. We will consider 2 Peter in chapter 12 of our study.

First Peter is addressed to Jews whom the apostle called “strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (1:1). (See map on previous page.) As with James, many of Peter’s readers had fled Jerusalem during the persecution after Stephen’s death. Others may have included converts from the Day of Pentecost, when Peter preached to God-fearing Jews from at least fifteen different places (Acts 2:8–11, 14). He referred

to these believers as “strangers and aliens” or foreigners (1 Peter 1:1; 2:11) to remind them that their true home was heaven.

Author, Date, and Purpose

Explain four things the Bible tells us about the author of 1 Peter.

Peter identifies himself as the author of 1 and 2 Peter (1 Peter 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1, 16, 18). Evidence seems to indicate that he wrote 1 Peter about AD 60–63. We know quite a bit about Peter because the New Testament refers to him more than 150 times (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 362).

Consider the transformation that Jesus worked in Peter’s life. How does this affect your view of the changes that are needed in your own life?

- Peter and his brother, Andrew, were fishermen. They grew up in Bethsaida, a little town on the northern coast of the Sea of Galilee (John 1:44).
- Andrew brought Simon Peter to Jesus, saying, “We have found the Messiah” (John 1:40–42).
- Jesus changed this disciple’s name from Simon to Peter. Both *Peter* (Greek) and *Cephas* (Aramaic) mean “rock.” In his early years as Jesus’ disciple, Peter was unstable and trusted in himself (Matthew 26:31–35). Gradually, Jesus changed him into a rock and pillar of the church (Galatians 2:9). Jesus sees in each of us what we can become by His grace.
- Later, Jesus called Peter to follow Him and learn to be a “fisher of men” (Mark 1:16–18). Peter left everything to become one of Jesus’ twelve apostles (3:13–16). In fact, Peter was one of the three apostles closest to Jesus (5:37; 9:2; 14:33).
- Peter was a man of great courage. He was quick to speak and act. Peter was the only apostle who dared to walk on the water to Jesus (Matthew 14:25–33). He was the one who declared that Jesus was the Son of God (16:16). Nonetheless, at times he trusted in himself too much. He rebuked Jesus when the Master said death on the Cross was near (16:22). He also denied Jesus after the Lord would not allow Peter to fight for Him (26:69–75).
- Beginning at Pentecost, we see a great change take place in Peter. He received a new spiritual power in that the Spirit brought boldness to speak about Jesus. Before Pentecost, Peter denied Jesus in the presence of a few people by a fire. After Pentecost, this fisherman spoke boldly to a great crowd in Jerusalem. As a result, three thousand people were saved in one day (Acts 2:14–41). Later, the Holy Spirit gave Peter boldness to speak before the Sanhedrin, causing the court to let Peter and John go unpunished (4:8–21). Again, this change in Peter’s boldness for the gospel came from his baptism in the Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:5, 8). Both

apostles and common believers needed to be baptized in the Holy Spirit (Matthew 3:11; Acts 8:14–17; 10:44–46; 19:1–7). In fact, this spiritual power is available to all believers. Called the *baptism in the Holy Spirit*, this filling occurs after a person is saved. Like Peter and all the apostles, those filled with the Spirit speak in new languages (Acts 2:4), an outward sign of a new inner boldness.

- Full of the Spirit, Peter performed miracles in Jesus' name. He healed a crippled beggar by the temple in Jerusalem (Acts 3:11–16). The Spirit's power was so great working through Peter and the other apostles that people laid the sick in the street, hoping that even Peter's shadow would touch them (5:15). Later, in the town of Lydda, Peter healed a cripple named Aeneas. As a result, all in Lydda and Sharon turned to Christ (9:32–35). Likewise, in Joppa, Peter raised Dorcas from the dead, causing many to believe in Jesus (9:36–42). The Spirit who enabled Peter has not changed; He still gives believers power to do miracles. However, as Peter emphasized, the power is in the name and person of Jesus, not in the name of humans (Acts 4:8–12). Power to heal comes only from the living God (14:14–15).
- Peter also helped lead the Jerusalem church in missions. He and John prayed for the new believers in Samaria to be filled with the Spirit (Acts 8:14–17). On their way back to Jerusalem, they preached to many Samaritans (8:25). Later, through a vision, God led Peter to preach in Caesarea to Cornelius, a Roman centurion, and his family. Cornelius and all his household were saved and filled with the Spirit (10:44–46). Thus, Peter provides a good example of how to witness to individuals of other cultures.
- Throughout his life, Peter suffered from persecution (Acts 5:17–33, 40–41; 12:1–5), and Jesus prophesied that Peter would die a cruel death (John 21:18–19). When the Roman emperor Nero ordered him to be crucified, the great apostle felt unworthy to die like Jesus. Consequently, he asked to be crucified with his feet up and his head down. Nero agreed and crucified him upside down (Berry 1998, 12–13).

First Peter refers to several truths that Peter preached about in Acts. The following chart lists the common themes.

What is the theme of 1 Peter?

Five Themes Common to 1 Peter and Acts (Barclay 1976, 140–141)

Peter's Sermons in Acts 1 Peter (Purkiser 1974, 170–171)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Jesus, the prophesied Messiah, has come. A new age has dawned. | 2:14–16; 3:13; 4:11; 10:34–43 1:3, 10–12; 4:7 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|

2. Salvation is possible through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. 2:20–31; 3:13–14; 10:43 1:20–21; 2:21–25
3. By the Resurrection, Jesus is exalted to the right hand of God. He is the head of the New Israel. 2:22–26; 3:13; 4:11; 5:30–31; 1:21; 2:7; 2:24; 3:22 10:39–42
4. Christ will soon come again to judge the living and the dead. 3:19–23; 10:42 1:5, 7, 13; 4:5, 13, 17–18; 5:1, 4
5. All should repent of their sins and accept forgiveness, eternal life, and the Holy Spirit. 2:38–39; 3:19; 5:31; 10:42 1:13–25; 2:1–3; 4:1–5

More than any other topic in 1 Peter, however, the apostle wrote about suffering, telling believers to rejoice in sharing the sufferings of Christ (1 Peter 4:13). Peter had known such persecution and thus spoke from experience. Suffering as Jesus did is the major theme of 1 Peter.

Outline of 1 Peter

- I. Greeting, 1:1–2
- II. The Believer's Relationship to God, 1:3–2:10
 - A. Our suffering proves that our faith is real as we wait for Jesus to return (1:3–12).
 - B. We live holy lives because He is holy (1:13–2:3).
 - C. We are living stones, built into a spiritual temple for God (2:4–10).
- III. The Believer's Relationship to Others, 2:11–3:12
 - A. All should submit to rulers, even if this brings suffering (2:11–17).
 - B. Slaves should submit to masters, even if this brings suffering (2:18–20).
 - C. All should follow Christ's example of suffering (2:21–25).
 - D. Wives should submit to their husbands (3:1–6).
 - E. Husbands should be kind to their wives (3:7).
 - F. All should be loving and humble (3:8–12).
- IV. The Believer's Relationship to Suffering, 3:13–4:19
 - A. Suffering should result from doing good following Christ's example (3:13–22).
 - B. Suffering kills our desire for sin and helps us live for God (4:1–11).
 - C. Suffering may be God's will for us (4:12–19).
- V. The Relationship between the Young and the Old, 5:1–11
- VI. Conclusion, 5:12–14

Explanations of the Outline

Summarize what 1 Peter teaches about suffering.

Truths about Suffering

From the outline, we see that Peter has much to say about suffering as Jesus suffered:

- *Length and purpose of suffering* (1:6–7): The believers have undergone trials “for a little while” to prove the sincerity of their faith and to bring glory and honor to Christ.
- *Prophesied suffering* (1:11): The Spirit of Christ spoke through the prophets and predicted both Jesus’ sufferings and His glories to follow.
- *Undeserved suffering* (2:19–25): Jesus is our example when facing undeserved persecution. Enduring unjust suffering honors God and is commended by Him. In the midst of His suffering, Jesus did not retaliate but trusted in God. We are to do the same.
- *Suffering for what is right* (3:14–18): Suffering indicates blessing. Again, Christ is our example of enduring persecution for righteousness’ sake. We should persevere under trial with gentleness and respect and without fear.
- *Results of the right attitude about suffering* (4:1–6): Since Jesus endured the Cross for us, we should go through suffering with an attitude of patience and **perseverance**. In essence, our attitude about suffering is a weapon against our enemies. As a result, we will no longer live to please ourselves but will live to please God.
- *Rejoicing in suffering* (4:12–19): To followers of Christ, suffering should not come as a surprise but should be expected. We rejoice in suffering in that we participate in what Christ endured and in His glory to be revealed. Persecution is God’s purifying judgment. “If you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name” (4:16).
- *God’s promise concerning suffering* (5:10): Peter ends his exhortations about suffering with a wonderful promise from God. “And the God of grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. To him be the power for ever and ever. Amen” (5:10–11).

Instructions for Believers

Contrast the lifestyles of believers and unbelievers.

Throughout his first letter, Peter contrasts believers (strangers in this world) with those living like the world is their home (see the following chart).

Believers

Unbelievers

1 Peter

Are obedient children, called to be holy as God is holy	Conform to evil desires and live in ignorance	1:14–16
Abstain from evil desires; crave pure spiritual milk to mature in salvation; glorify God with their good deeds	Engage in malice, deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander	2:1–3, 11–12
Are being built into a spiritual house	Reject the living Stone	2:4–8
Are a chosen people, royal priesthood, holy nation, people belonging to God	Destined to stumble and disobey the gospel message	2:8–9
Have been called by God into His light	Live in darkness	2:9
Have received mercy	Have not received mercy	2:10
Silence foolish talk by doing good	Engage in ignorant talk	2:15
Have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer	Are like sheep going astray	2:25
Live in harmony; are sympathetic, loving, compassionate, and humble; return blessing for evil	Repay evil for evil and insult for insult	3:8–9
“The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer.”	“The face of the Lord is against those who do evil.”	3:12
Keep a clear conscience; answer criticism with gentleness and respect	Slander; speak maliciously against godly behavior	3:16
Live according to God’s will	Live according to sinful desires	4:2
No longer give in to sinful desires, but choose to live according to God in regard to the spirit	Choose to live in debauchery, lust, drunkenness, orgies, carousing and idolatry; plunge into a “flood of	4:3–6

dissipation”; heap abuse on
believers

Suffer insults because of the name of Christ	Suffer as murderers, thieves, 4:14–15 criminals, or meddlers
-------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------

Are clothed with humility and receive God’s grace	Are proud and experience 5:5 God’s opposition
------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------

Most of these comparisons in 1 Peter take the form of exhortations or instructions. We noted that about half of the verses in James are commands. Likewise, Peter uses many commands to advocate a godly lifestyle for suffering believers (Tenney 1961, 351–352).

Difficult Verses in 1 Peter

List as many characteristics of a godly lifestyle as you can identify in 1 Peter.

First Peter contains two passages that are difficult to interpret.

1 Peter 3:18–20

For Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit, through whom also he went and preached to the spirits in prison who disobeyed long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water.

What interpretation seems to best fit 1 Peter 3:18–20?

Verse 19 states that through the Spirit, Christ went and preached to the spirits in prison. Some believe these spirits were angels. However, such a view does not agree with the rest of the New Testament in that the gospel is always preached to humans, not angels. Others believe that either Jesus himself preached to the dead in Hades or that He preached through Noah to those who were spiritually dead during the days of Noah (Keener 1993, 718). Again, preaching the gospel to the unbelieving dead would appear to contradict Luke 16:25–26, where the rich man was not given another opportunity to respond to God’s grace. The judgment is presented as sequential to death (Hebrews 9:27). That Christ preached to unbelievers through Noah is not disputed, but Scripture rarely refers to humans as spirits.

The original Greek of this passage shows that Peter does not use the Greek word commonly used for preaching the gospel. Instead, he uses a Greek word that means “to announce” or “to

proclaim” (Blum 1981, 242). Although the word Peter uses can refer to the gospel, it often does not. Most scholars today embrace the view that Jesus proclaimed victory over the fallen angels, possibly those from Noah’s day (Keener 1993, 718).

Regardless of how one interprets this difficult passage, a word of caution is in order. Some teachers claim that Christ had to go to hell to suffer on our behalf. Yet this would mean that the Cross of Christ was insufficient for our salvation. “While historic Christianity has debated the issue of whether or not Jesus actually descended into hell (e.g., to proclaim the gospel, declare victory, etc. [1 Peter 3:18–19]), no orthodox believer ever held to the belief that Christ suffered and atoned for our sins in hell, rather than on the cross” (Christian Research Institute 2005). Whatever 1 Peter 3:18–20 alludes to, it should not be used as a proof text for the popular, but aberrant, teaching that Jesus’ death on the Cross required further suffering in hell to secure our atonement.

Another difficult verse is “She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son Mark” (1 Peter 5:13). The uncertainty of this verse centers on Babylon. Does it refer to Babylon itself as mentioned in the Old Testament? This is possible, since in Peter’s day Babylon existed as a small city on the Euphrates River. The city had lost its former glory, but a large number of Jews lived there. Because Peter was an apostle to the Jews, he may have gone to Babylon and started a church (Galatians 2:7–8; Harris 1986, 315). On the other hand, others believe that Peter used the term *Babylon* to refer to Rome. In Revelation 17–18, the apostle John referred to Rome as Babylon, but that was thirty years after Peter wrote his epistle.

Whatever the case, Peter’s use of the term brings to mind the Israelites’ captivity in the foreign land of Babylon for seventy years. Thus, Peter’s reference to Babylon reminds us that we as believers are strangers and foreigners in this world (1 Peter 1:1, 17).

Chapter 11 Letters about False Teaching, Part 1: 1, 2, and 3 John

A marathon is a race of 42 kilometers (26.2 miles). Although the best runners strive to finish first, or as quickly as possible, most people who run a race like this have only one goal—to cross the finish line. For many marathon runners, the finish line is the goal that drives them on.

Biblical writers compare the Christian life to running a race:

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man

beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize. (1 Corinthians 9:24–27)

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:13–14)

Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor’s crown unless he competes according to the rules. (2 Timothy 2:5)

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7–8)

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1)

The goal of the Christian life is to cross the finish line and win the crown of life. It is not enough to *begin* walking in the light of God. The Christian must *continue* walking in the light until the end. False teachers want believers to stop walking in the light, to quit before they cross the finish line. John wrote to warn against these false teachers. His letters encourage us to keep running the race.

Lesson 11.1 First John

Objectives

11.1.1 Explain how 1 John relates to the errors of the Gnostics.

11.1.2 Summarize what 1 John teaches about Jesus Christ, sin, knowledge, and love.

Lesson 11.2 Second John

Objectives

11.2.1 Identify three passages in 2 John that are similar to those in 1 John and the Gospel of John.

11.2.2 Explain the relationship between love and truth in 2 John.

Lesson 11.3 Third John

Objective

11.3.1 Describe the spiritual character of Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius.

Lesson 11.1 First John

Author

Summarize three reasons why we believe the apostle John wrote 1 John.

As previously stated, we conclude that the apostle John wrote five books of the New Testament: his Gospel, three epistles, and Revelation. Although John does not state his name in 1 John, we believe he is the author because of at least three types of evidence:

1. Early church fathers from the second century named the apostle John as the author. These witnesses include Irenaeus and Clement of Alexandria (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 367).
2. The author of 1 John states that he had a close relationship with Jesus (1 John 1:1; 2:5–6, 24, 27–28). John was “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and sat next to Jesus at the Last Supper (John 13:23).
3. The style, words, and themes of 1 John and the Gospel of John are similar (Benware 2003, 261).

Similar verses in 1 John and the Gospel of John point back to one author for both books.

1 John	Verse	Verse	John
1:1	“That which was from the beginning, ... the Word of life.”	“In the beginning was the Word.... The Word became flesh.”	1:1, 14
1:4	“We write this to make our joy complete.”	“ ‘Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.’ ”	16:24
1:6–7	“If we claim to have fellowship with him yet walk in the darkness, we lie.... But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, ...”	“ ‘This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.’ ”	3:19
2:7	“Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one.”	“ ‘A new command I give you: ... As I have loved you, so you must love one another.’ ”	13:34–35

3:8	“He who does what is “ ‘You belong to your 8:44 sinful is of the devil.” father, the devil.’ ”
3:14	“We know that we “ ‘Whoever hears my 5:24 have passed from word and believes ... death to life, because has crossed over from we love our brothers.”death to life.’ ”
4:6	“We are from God, “ ‘He who belongs to 8:47 and whoever knows God hears what God God listens to us.” says.’ ”
4:9	“This is how God “ ‘For God so loved 1:14, 18; 3:16 showed his love the world that he gave among us: He sent his his one and only one and only Son into Son.’ ” the world.”
5:9	“We accept man’s “ ‘And the Father who5:37 testimony, but God’s sent me has himself testimony is greater testified concerning ... about his Son.” me.’ ”
5:12	“He who has the Son “ ‘Whoever believes 3:36 has life; he who does in the Son has eternal not have the Son of life, but whoever God does not have rejects the Son will life.” not see life.’ ”

State at least four facts about the apostle John’s life.

Let us review some facts about John’s personal life:

- John grew up in Galilee. John and his brother James were fishing with their father, Zebedee, when Jesus called them (Matthew 4:21–22). John’s mother, perhaps named Salome, was at times near Jesus (Matthew 20:20; 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1; John 19:25).
- John was one of the *inner circle*, the three apostles closest to Jesus. He was with Jesus at the raising of Jairus’s daughter (Luke 8:51), on the mountain when Jesus was glorified (9:28), and in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). He was present at Jesus’ trial (John 18:15–16), and from the Cross, Jesus guided John to care for Mary (19:26–27).

- John was one of the first not only to see the empty tomb (John 20:1–8) but also to see the risen Lord. He saw Jesus in a locked room with the other disciples (20:19–28) and later in Galilee (21:1–24; Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 367).
- John was in Jerusalem when Paul and Barnabas arrived about AD 45 (Galatians 2:6–10). Later, history records that John ministered in Ephesus. Near the end of his life, John had possibly been condemned to die on the island of Patmos. There, John suffered as Jesus had prophesied (Matthew 20:20–23), but the Lord did not forsake him. On Patmos, the old apostle received the visions he wrote about in Revelation (Revelation 1:9). We believe that John wrote Revelation about AD 95 (Mounce 1998, 15). Likewise, we believe he wrote 1–3 John sometime during AD 85–95.

Background

Explain how 1 John relates to the errors of the Gnostics.

Considered one of the General Epistles, 1 John is not addressed to specific people or cities. The churches in Asia (as addressed in Revelation) may have been the first readers of 1 John.

How did the Gnostics view the nature of Jesus?

The early church faced significant problems related to false teaching. One group of false teachers called the Gnostics (from the Greek word *gnosis*, meaning “knowledge”) had apparently been part of the Christian community but had withdrawn after being influenced by the early teachings of **Gnosticism**. Gnosticism developed more fully and became a prominent teaching in the mid to late second century (Akin 2001, 29). The Gnostics claimed to have secret knowledge that everyone needed in order to be saved.

First John teaches the truth in contrast to the five errors of Gnosticism.

False Teachings of the Gnostics	Truth in 1 John
----------------------------------------	------------------------

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. The spirit is good, and the body is bad. | “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched—this we proclaim concerning the Word of life” (1:1). The Word became flesh but remained sinless. |
|---------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Therefore, the body itself is not sinful or bad.

3. Jesus was only a man. The divine Spirit of Christ joined Him at His baptism. The Spirit left Him before He died.

“Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world” (4:2–3). Notice that John stated “Jesus Christ” as one name (1:3; 2:1; 3:23; 4:2; 5:6, 20). In contrast, the Gnostics separated Jesus from the Christ.
4. The body should be treated harshly, since it is evil.

“If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (3:17).
5. Sinning with the body is not wrong, since only the spirit matters.

“Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (3:7–8).

Why does John emphasize that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh (1 John 4:2–3)?

Many of the verses in 1 John have new meaning when we understand what the Gnostics taught. John fought these false teachers by showing that Jesus Christ was both human and divine (1:1–3; 4:1–3). He wrote that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (2:22–23; 3:23; 4:15; 5:1, 5, 6–12, 20).

Purposes

In John’s Gospel, he clearly stated that he wrote so we would believe and have eternal life (John 20:31). Likewise, in 1 John, the apostle’s eleven references to his reasons for writing lead us to see that John wrote for at least four purposes. Although we have separated these purposes in the outline below (I–IV), they are actually woven into the entire letter, like threads in a garment. John introduces a theme and moves on. Later, he returns to the theme again, as we

return to the chorus of a song (Drane 2001, 452–453). Let us look at the four purposes as they appear in the outline.

Outline of 1 John

Based on the outline of 1 John, state four major truths about the children of God.

- I. Introduction: We Are Sure That the Word Became Flesh, 1:1–4
- II. Children of God Fellowship with Him in the Light, 1:5–2:28
 - A. Principles of fellowship with God (1:5–2:2)
 - B. Evidence of fellowship with God (2:3–28)
- III. Children of God Know the Truth, 2:29–4:6
 - A. Characteristics of God’s children (2:29–3:18)
 - B. Confidence of God’s children (3:19–24)
 - C. The Spirit and God’s children (4:1–6)
- IV. Children of God Love as God Loves, 4:7–5:3
 - A. The source of love (4:7–16)
 - B. The evidence of love (4:17–5:3)
- V. Children of God Have Assurance from Him, 5:4–20
 - A. About life now and forever (5:4–12)
 - B. About prayer and faith (5:13–20)
- VI. Conclusion, 5:21

Explanations of the Outline

Summarize what 1 John teaches about Jesus Christ, sin, knowledge, and love.

John Wrote to Complete Our Joy through Fellowship with God (1 John 1:5–2:28)

Our joy is complete as we have fellowship with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ (1:3). John explained the conditions of fellowship with God:

How does John define sin?

- Fellowship with God is possible only as we walk in the light. God is light; there is no darkness in Him. Therefore, those who walk in the darkness cannot fellowship with God in the darkness. If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with God and one another. His blood cleanses those who walk in the light (1:5–7).
- Fellowship with God is possible only as we turn away from sin. Notice that the words *darkness* and *sin* mean the same thing to John; that is, walking in the darkness means walking in sin. John says that “sin is lawlessness” (3:4). It is rebelling against God’s law and doing what is wrong (5:17). Sin is any act or attitude that is against God (Orr 1956, 2798). In other words, sin is anti-God and anti-Christ (Douglas 1978, 1189–1190). Walking in the light means leaving the darkness of sin.

Explain the difference between sins of commission and sins of omission.

Sins of commission refer to wrongs we commit, whether actions or attitudes. However, being tempted by an evil thought is not sin. Satan tempted Jesus with evil thoughts (Matthew 4:1–11), but Jesus did not sin. We sin if we rebel against God by doing or meditating on what is wrong. That is, mental sin occurs when a person chooses to meditate on evil desires such as lust. One teacher explained that we sin in our thoughts if we turn sin over and over in our minds like we do a piece of candy in our mouths (Spurgeon 1976, 50–53).

Sins of omission occur when we refuse to do the things God commands us to do. The term refers to things we omit (leave out) through neglect or stubbornness, such as the refusal to forgive. The Gnostics claimed that sinning did not matter, but John said that sin was darkness. One of his purposes was to remind us that darkness and light have no fellowship. “My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin” (2:1).

None of us will be perfect until we reach heaven. However, the Bible does not define *sin* as being less than perfect or less than the best. Likewise, we do not define *holy* as being better than the worst.

All of us have sinned in the past (1 John 1:8). We all rebelled against God’s law before He saved us. However, Jesus “appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin” (3:5). Jesus gave us new desires when He saved us. He came to take away the roots and the branches of sin in us (Wesley 1983, 1 John 3:5). Now, we delight to please Him rather than rebel against Him. Still, if we sin, John tells us not to remain in the darkness but to confess our sins and repent. Then God will forgive our sins and purify us again from all unrighteousness (1:9; 2:1–2).

“No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him” (3:6). In contrast, the Gnostics said doing wrong did not matter. They were trying to lead believers astray. Thus, John wrote to correct this false teaching:

Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he [God] is righteous. He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed

remains in him; he cannot go on sinning, because he has been born of God. This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; neither is anyone who does not love his brother. (3:7–10)

Some believe that because we are human, Christians cannot help but sin every day. Yet John taught that God's will is for us to abide in Christ and thus avoid sinning (3:6). Is it possible to live a day or an hour without rebelling against God and doing wrong? Yes, it is possible by God's grace. In fact, such a lifestyle is God's will for His children. He invites us to walk in His presence and in His Spirit throughout the day. He wants us to fellowship with Him in the light, moment by moment. None of us should be content to sin day by day. The Gnostics claimed that it did not matter. However, our daily goal is to be led by the Spirit, not by the sinful nature. A day when we choose darkness and wrong should be unusual. The days that we obey God all day should be common. John encourages us to live without sinning. Remember that he defines sin as "lawlessness" or "wrongdoing" (3:4; 5:17).

Do believers lose their salvation each time they sin?

John says if we see a brother or sister sin, we should pray so that God will give life to him or her (5:16). Sin causes spiritual death. It kills our relationship with God, preventing us from having fellowship with Him. Turning a sinner from his or her error saves that person from spiritual death (James 5:19–20).

Does one sin cause a believer to lose his or her salvation? This is a hard question. The answer is not the same in every case. On one hand, Hebrews speaks of sinning believers who are still God's sons and daughters, saying that God disciplines us when we sin because we are His children (Hebrews 12:4–11). This indicates that we do not lose our salvation because of one sin. On the other hand, one sin can lead to the loss of salvation in that one sin often leads to another sin.

Because of one sin,

- Adam and Eve lost access to the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:23).
- Moses lost the privilege of entering the Promised Land (Numbers 20:1–13).
- Achan and all of his family lost their inheritance and their lives (Joshua 7).
- Samson lost his eyes and his relationship with God (Judges 16:20–21).
- David had Bathsheba's husband killed and lost both his reputation and any hope of a peaceful household. He and Bathsheba also lost their first child (2 Samuel 11–12).
- David's census caused seventy thousand people to lose their lives (1 Chronicles 21).
- Ananias and Sapphira lost their lives (Acts 5:1–11).
- Thousands have lost their marriages, reputations, and lives.

God is merciful. He loves to forgive us. So why do some people still refuse to repent? Just as water hardens cement or the sun hardens mud, sin hardens a person's heart (Hebrews 3:13).

Those with hard hearts refuse to repent. As a tree cannot bend when it is dead, individuals can lose their ability to bow and repent as they become spiritually dead. Therefore, believers should run from sin as from a deadly snake. Those who do engage in wrongdoing should quickly turn from sin and seek forgiveness. Let no one misjudge the danger of one sin.

John's final word about sinning appears near the end of his letter: "We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin; the one who was born of God [Jesus] keeps him safe, and the evil one does not touch him" (5:18). Praise the Lord! Our Savior has delivered us from being slaves of sin (John 8:32, 34–36). As His followers, may we be known for doing what is right. Let none of us suffer as an evildoer (1 Peter 4:15), but let us enjoy fellowship with God, walking in the light as He is in the light. Let us abide in Christ. The Bible presents the redeemed, saved life as the complete opposite of sin (Orr 1956, 2801).

John Wrote to Emphasize What God's Children Know (1 John 2:29–4:6)

Read through 1 John, and mark at least three verses that explain how we can know that we are children of God.

The Gnostics claimed that believers needed more knowledge to be saved. In contrast, 1 John emphasizes that we are already saved. We already know what we need to know about salvation. In this epistle, John uses a form of the word *know* thirty-three times. He contrasts what we know with the secret knowledge that the Gnostics said we need:

- "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands" (2:3).
- "This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must walk as Jesus did" (2:5–6).
- "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and all of you know the truth" (2:20).
- "If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him" (2:29).
- "But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is" (3:2).
- "But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins" (3:5).
- "This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; neither is anyone who does not love his brother" (3:10).
- "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers" (3:14).
- "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us" (3:16).
- "This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything" (3:19–20).
- "And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us" (3:24).
- "We know that we live in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit" (4:13).
- "This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands" (5:2).

- “You who believe in the name of the Son of God ... may know that you have eternal life” (5:13).
- “And if we know that he hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of him” (5:15).
- “We know that anyone born of God does not continue to sin” (5:18).
- “We know that we are children of God” (5:19).
- “We know also that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding, so that we may know him who is true” (5:20).

John Wrote to Remind Us to Love One Another (1 John 4:7–5:3)

John stresses that love is from God. In fact, God *is* love (4:7–8). Several verses throughout the epistle remind us to love one another:

What are two signs that we are born again (1 John 4:7; 5:1)?

- “Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness” (2:9).
- “Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble” (2:10).
- “Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother” (3:12).
- “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers” (3:14).
- “This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers” (3:16).
- “If anyone ... sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him?” (3:17).
- “Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth” (3:18).
- “Dear friends, let us love one another, for love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God” (4:7).
- “Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another” (4:11).
- “Anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen” (4:20).
- “This is how we know that we love the children of God: by loving God and carrying out his commands” (5:2).

John Wrote to Give Us Assurance from God (1 John 5:4–20)

The Gnostics claimed that Jesus was only a man. They said that the Spirit of God came on Him at baptism and left before His death. In contrast, John says that Jesus Christ came through water and blood. That is, Jesus is the divine Christ who came through the waters of baptism. He also came through the blood of the Cross, and the Spirit bears witness in our hearts that Jesus died for us. Thus, John assures us that the Spirit, water, and blood testify about Jesus Christ. He gives believers assurance of their salvation.

Lesson 11.2 Second John

Author and Date

Identify three passages in 2 John that are similar to those in 1 John and the Gospel of John.

We have already noted that the apostle John wrote a Gospel, three letters, and Revelation. John was one of the closest apostles to Jesus. We believe that the apostle John wrote all three of his epistles between AD 85 and 95. This chart shows similar verses in 2 John, 1 John, and the Gospel of John. These similarities suggest that one author wrote all three books.

What evidence seems to suggest that the same author wrote the Gospel of John as well as 1 and 2 John?

Similar Verses in 2 John, 1 John, and John

2 John		1 John		Gospel of John
5	Dear lady, I am not writing you a new command.	2:7	Dear friends, I am not writing you a new command but an old one.	13:34–35 “A new command I give you: Love one another.”
6	This is love: that we walk in obedience to his commands.	5:3	This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not [a burden].	14:23 “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.”

7	Many deceivers, who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh, have gone out into the world. Any such person is the deceiver and the antichrist.	4:3	Every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist.	8:42	“If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God.”
12	I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete.	1:4	We write this to make our joy complete.	16:24	“Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.”

Outline of 2 John

- I. Greeting, 1–3
 - A. To the **chosen lady** (1)
 - B. Because of the truth (2–3 [11 times])
- II. Praise for Truth, 4
- III. Command to Love, 5–6
- IV. Warning about False Teachers, 7–11
 - A. Discern false teachers (7)
 - B. Beware, lest they deceive you (8–9)
 - C. Refuse to have them in your home (10–11)
- V. Closing, 12–13

Explanations of the Outline

Explain the relationship between love and truth in 2 John.

Greeting (2 John 1–3)

John the apostle was old when he wrote this letter, referring to himself as *the elder*. This was probably a title of honor due to John's age. He was the last apostle to die (Berry 1998, 14).

John wrote to the "chosen lady and her children" (2 John 1). Although some think this lady was a widow John knew, most believe the words *chosen lady* (or *elect lady*) refer to a local church for three reasons:

1. When referring to the lady, John uses the word *you* in verses 5, 8, 10, and 12. In the Greek, the form of the word *you* is plural (Barclay 1976, 138), meaning that in writing to the *lady*, John is writing to a group of people. Thus, the lady is probably a church.
2. Peter uses similar words: "She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings" (1 Peter 5:13). In this verse, Peter referred to the church in Babylon as *she*. The word *church* in Greek is *ekklesia*. Although this is a feminine word, linguistic gender is often unrelated to the literal gender of a person. Nevertheless, it does not surprise us that John would call the bride of Christ a *chosen lady*. *Her children* may refer to the church's members.
3. John sends greetings from "the children of your chosen sister" (2 John 13). This likely refers to the church that John was pastoring.

In what sense is love related to truth?

Since the Caesars were persecuting believers, Peter and John may have avoided the word *church* because of danger. Referring to the church as a *lady* protected the identity of the believers to whom it was written (Barker 1981, 361–362).

Notice that John links love and truth in verses 1 and 3 (Barclay 1976, 139). The apostle says he "loves" the chosen lady and her children "in the truth." He also says Jesus will be with them "in truth and love" (v. 3). The world uses the word *love* in lesser ways. To those of the world, love may refer to passion, desire, and lust that offend God; it is often sick, soft, weak, and selfish. In contrast, Christian love not only is always righteous, strong, and true, but it is always in the realm of light and truth. John's love caused him to warn believers. Biblical love does not close its eyes to error that leads to destruction. Think about how love is truthful as you read the thirteen verses in 2 John.

Praise for Truth (2 John 4)

John had great joy because some of the lady's children were walking in truth. Every Christian parent and grandparent delights in righteous children. Still, John acknowledges that not all of the church's members walk in truth. Some, like Ananias and Sapphira, were in the church but not of the church. For now, the wheat and the weeds grow side by side. Yet when Jesus returns, the angels will "weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil" (Matthew 13:41).

Command to Love (2 John 5–6)

Love is a major theme in John's Gospel and in 1–3 John. Earlier, he wrote, "Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another" (1 John 4:11; John 13:34–35). Some people are harder to love than others, but God commands us to love other believers. Love shows

itself by forgiving others as God forgave us. It shares with those in need as the Good Samaritan did. Love visits those who are suffering. It prays for those who need God's help. Love reaches out a hand to those who need a friend. It listens when others speak. Finally, as John emphasizes, love stands firmly for the truth.

Warning about False Teachers (2 John 7–11)

In what ways do false teachers penetrate churches today? What are some ways the church can guard itself against false teachers?

Like 1 John, 2 John describes false teachers as those who deny that Jesus Christ came in the flesh. Recall that the Gnostics claimed Jesus was only a man. In this second epistle, John says these false teachers are the antichrist (v. 7). In contrast, true teaching about Christ declares that He is God's Son (v. 3). The true gospel says that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who came in the flesh. God's Spirit was in Him in the womb and on the Cross.

The Gnostics claimed to have new truth that moved ahead of the gospel. Today, some claim to know more than apostles like Paul and John did. They say that the apostles were like children who needed to grow in knowledge. We recognize that those who "run ahead" of Scripture (v. 9) are false teachers of whom believers must beware. We must reject all whose teaching contradicts the Bible. Those who reject the teachings of Christ reject Christ.

In John's time, many churches met in homes, and teachers traveled around. Some welcomed these visiting teachers into their homes to eat, sleep, and teach. "Anyone who receives (helps) a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward" (Matthew 10:40–41). However, John warns that anyone who welcomes (supports) false teachers shares in their sin (2 John 11). Love and truth must be united. Our love for God does not allow us to support false teachers.

Closing (2 John 12–13)

In the last few verses, John explains why his letter to the chosen lady is so short: "I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face, so that our joy may be complete" (v. 12).

Lesson 11.3 Third John

Author and Date

John the apostle is the author of 3 John. The following chart shows similar words and phrases from 3 John and 2 John. Take a moment to look at these similarities. We believe that John wrote the three epistles around AD 85–95.

What are three similarities between 2 John and 3 John?

Similar verses in 3 John and 2 John point back to the same author.

3 John

2 John

1	The elder, To my dear 1 friend Gaius		The elder, To the chosen lady and her children
1	whom I love in the 1 truth.		whom I love in the truth
4	I have no greater joy 4 than to hear that my children are walking in the truth.		It has given me great joy to find some of your children walking in the truth
13–14	I have much to write 12 you, but I do not want to do so with pen and ink. I hope to see you soon, and we will talk face to face.		I have much to write to you, but I do not want to use paper and ink. Instead, I hope to visit you and talk with you face to face.

Outline of 3 John

- I. Greeting, 1–2
- II. Gaius: A Faithful Man, 3–8
- III. Diotrephes: A Proud Man, 9–11
- IV. Demetrius: A Good Man, 12
- V. Conclusion, 13–14

Explanations of the Outline

Describe the spiritual character of Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius.

Greeting (3 John 1–2)

John wrote his third letter to his dear friend, Gaius. The Greek word for *dear* is *agapetos*, meaning “dear, loved, or beloved.” It appears ten times in John’s three letters.

The name *Gaius* appears several times in the New Testament: We read of Gaius of Corinth (Romans 16:23), Gaius of Macedonia (Acts 19:29), and Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20:4). John’s friend Gaius was none of these three. He must have been known among the churches of Asia in which John ministered during the last years of his life.

In verse 2, John prayed that Gaius would enjoy good health as his soul prospered. Jesus and the apostles recognized that people have both physical and spiritual needs.

Gaius: A Faithful Man (3 John 3–8)

What do we know about Gaius?

In verses 3–4, John praises Gaius for walking in the truth. We must not only believe the truth; we must also live it. The greatest joy of adults—whether pastors, parents, grandparents, or teachers—is to hear that their children are walking in the truth. Truth is only helpful as it affects our actions.

In 2 John, the apostle warned believers not to show hospitality to false teachers. However, in 3 John 5–8, he tells them to show hospitality to worthy teachers. By helping God’s workers, we are partners in truth (v. 8). The elder praised Gaius for showing faithfulness to God by extending kindness to worthy preachers and teachers.

Diotrephes: A Proud Man (3 John 9–11)

What error did Diotrephes make?

On the other hand, a church leader named Diotrephes did not show kindness to visiting preachers because he was proud. Wanting to be the only leader, he rejected a letter from the apostle John (v. 9) and gossiped about him (v. 10). Furthermore, not only did Diotrephes refuse to help the visiting teachers, but he also stopped those who wanted to help them—even putting the hospitable believers out of the church (v. 10). Diotrephes was full of pride and clearly lacked love and kindness. Leading and loving must go hand in hand (Neyrey 1993, 28).

Consider John’s love in dealing with the issue of Diotrephes. John was a great apostle—the only one of the Twelve still living at that time. Had a lesser leader like Diotrephes insulted John as a young apostle, John might have reacted in a totally different way. Earlier, when the Samaritans rejected Jesus, John and his brother James wanted to call down fire to destroy them

(Luke 9:54); they earned Jesus' rebuke. However, Jesus changed John from a son of thunder (Mark 3:17) to an apostle of love. As an elder, John wrote about Diotrephes with love. Although Diotrephes had rejected those working for Jesus, John himself once made this same mistake by rebuking a man who was casting out demons in Jesus' name (Mark 9:38). John had to correct Diotrephes, but he was gentle. The mistakes we make help us show love to others who make the same errors.

Demetrius: A Good Man (3 John 12)

What is known about Demetrius?

John gives a threefold witness on behalf of Demetrius. This may have served as a recommendation for him, since he was likely the messenger who carried John's letter to Gaius. First, Demetrius had a good reputation. Everyone spoke well of him. Second, it was apparent that Demetrius was devoted to the truth, as opposed to the false teachers. Third, John and the church he was writing from (likely Ephesus) vouched for Demetrius (Akin 2001, 250–251). Such a commendation was helpful to the recipients of this short letter to ensure them that no imposter was attempting to pass off a false letter. John's recipients could trust that what they read was genuine and true.

Conclusion (3 John 13–14)

As in 2 John, the elder says he hopes to visit them soon (vv. 13–14). If so, he will call attention to the errors of Diotrephes (v. 10). Thus, John's letter gave Diotrephes time to repent.

Chapter 12 Letters about False Teaching, Part 2: 2 Peter and Jude

In today's world, writings and teachings increase faster than anyone can imagine. Publishers produce magazines and new books at an amazing rate. The largest bookstores in the world now offer millions of books in a plethora of subjects. However, not everything that people say or print is true.

The most important contest between truth and error centers on the topic of religion. In keeping with the current trend, more religious books are printed today than ever before, and more and more individuals are preaching and teaching on religious topics. Although false teachers claim to teach the truth of the Bible, they twist and distort the Scriptures, destroying themselves and others (2 Peter 3:16).

Second Peter and Jude warn against false teachers and teach us that walking in truth means walking in holiness and righteousness. We find the truth not by the mind alone but also by the

heart (Hewett 1988, 481). Many of those who try to find truth using only one or the other are led astray. Ultimately, God’s Word and the Spirit work together to guide us into all truth. The Bible is a light that shines in the darkness (2 Peter 1:19–21), a lamp to our feet and a light for our paths (Psalm 119:105).

Lesson 12.1 Second Peter

Objectives

12.1.1 Explain the contrasts between growing in grace and falling from grace found in 2 Peter.

12.1.2 Summarize what 2 Peter says about the Scriptures and false teachers.

Lesson 12.2 Jude

Objectives

12.2.1 State the author and purpose of Jude.

12.2.2 Summarize the origins of the Old and New Testament canons.

Lesson 12.1 Second Peter

The remaining two General Epistles in our study are 2 Peter and Jude, which we will consider together because of their similarity. Along with 1–3 John, these two books say a lot about false teaching.

Author and Date

What problem is addressed in 2 Peter, 1–3 John, and Jude?

The author of 2 Peter is “Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1). In our study of 1 Peter, we mentioned that Jesus changed this apostle’s name from *Simon* to *Peter*, which means “rock” (John 1:42), in view of the changes He would make in Peter’s life. In his second letter written to those who were scattered (2 Peter 3:1), Peter reminds his readers that he was an eyewitness to Jesus’ ministry and His transfiguration (1:16–18; Matthew 17:1–13; Harris 1989, 355). Peter wants them to remember the truths he presents even after his death.

Peter and Paul were brothers in Christ (2 Peter 3:15). Earlier, we noted that Paul wrote his last letter, 2 Timothy, about AD 67 near the end of his life. Likewise, Peter wrote his second letter as an old man, about AD 66–68. Like Paul, Peter knew that he would soon face death at the hands of Nero. The old apostle referred to the Lord’s prophecy in John 21:18–19 concerning his last days:

I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I

will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things. (2 Peter 1:13–15)

In writing 2 Peter, the apostle's fourfold purpose was to urge the scattered believers to (1) grow in grace, (2) attend to the Scriptures, (3) guard against false teachers, and (4) live a holy life.

Outline of 2 Peter

- I. Greeting, 1:1–2
- II. Take Steps to Grow in Grace, 1:3–11
- III. Pay Attention to the Scriptures, 1:12–21
- IV. Be on Guard against False Teachers, 2:1–22
 - A. The characteristics of false teachers (2:1–19)
 - B. The danger of being saved and then turning back to sin (2:20–22)
- V. Live a Holy Life Because the Lord is Coming, 3:1–18
 - A. Scoffers deny that Christ is coming again (3:1–7)
 - B. The return of Christ is certain (3:8–10)
 - C. Live ready for His coming (3:11–18)
- VI. Closing Prayer, 3:18

Explanations of the Outline

Explain the contrasts between growing in grace and falling from grace found in 2 Peter.

Take Steps to Grow in Grace (2 Peter 1:3–11)

God's grace is a wonderful gift to us through which He has given us great and precious promises (2 Peter 1:3–4). Peter says that through these promises we “participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires” (1:4). Another translation of 2 Peter 1:4 says that through God's promises we “become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust” (NASB). This verse is a key to understanding the entire epistle of 2 Peter. Peter will return to this thought when he talks about false teachers (2:20). Consequently, we must ask some questions about this verse.

According to the context of 2 Peter 1, how does a believer partake of the divine nature?

What does it mean to participate, partake, or share in God's divine nature? We begin to share in God's nature when we are born again. At the new birth, eternal life from God himself flows into us (John 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:9). The moment we receive the Spirit of Christ by faith, God recreates us spiritually, and we become His children (John 1:12; Romans 8:16–17; Galatians 3:26). As we partake of God's divine nature, we become new creations in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:9–10), “created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4:24). We grow in His likeness as we grow in grace. The context of 2 Peter 1 shows that we partake of the divine nature by getting to know God (1:2), by embracing His “very great and precious promises” (1:4), and by growing in our faith and in the character of Christ (1:5–7). Paul says, “We ... are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18).

A second question that arises from 2 Peter 1:4 is, How do we escape the corruption (sin) in the world caused by our lust? Peter answers this question clearly: “by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2:20). This does not mean that we cannot return to the sin and bondage of the world, but every believer can testify of the change that takes place at the new birth. “A man is a slave to whatever has mastered him” (2:19). Our Savior's name is *Jesus* because He saves His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). When Jesus saves us, He sets us free from the bondage of sin. Sin loses its grip on us as we receive a spiritual desire to please God and obey Him. Everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin (John 8:34; 2 Peter 2:19), but if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed (John 8:36; Romans 6:18).

The process of sharing in God's nature involves grace from start to finish. Grace gives us the power to grow in Christ's image. Still, Peter tells believers to “make every effort” to grow in grace (2 Peter 1:5; 3:14, 18). He says that to our faith we should add goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, kindness, and love (1:5–7). Galatians 5:22–23 includes goodness, self-control, kindness, and love as part of the fruit of the Spirit. We cannot add this spiritual fruit by our own efforts. The Spirit must produce it in us.

If salvation is by grace and faith, why must we “make every effort” (2 Peter 1:5; 3:14, 18)?

Therefore, we find ourselves wrestling with a paradox. On one hand, salvation is by grace, not by our efforts. We do not deserve salvation. We cannot earn it; it is a gift. On the other hand, Peter tells us to “make every effort” to add the fruit that comes by grace (2 Peter 1:5; 3:14). Our efforts to please God show that we are thankful for the free gift. God is working in us, but we must cooperate with Him and work out the areas of our lives over which He has given us control. Thus, we live in a manner that is worthy of God's grace (Ephesians 4:1; Revelation 3:4). We make every effort to obey and please the Spirit of grace. Likewise, Jesus said to “make every effort” to enter heaven through the narrow gate (Luke 13:24).

In contrast, some receive God's grace and then set it aside (Galatians 2:21). As a result, they fall from grace (5:4). Others insult the Spirit of grace (Hebrews 10:29) or constantly resist Him (Acts 7:51). We must be careful not to put out the Spirit's fire (1 Thessalonians 5:19). Paul wrote about those who receive the grace of God in vain (2 Corinthians 6:1).

No one stands still for long as a believer. We either move forward or backward (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 366). Therefore, Peter commanded believers to “make every effort” to grow in grace so they would not fall from grace (2 Peter 1:5–10; 3:17–18; Hebrews 12:14–15). Those who do not grow in grace live in great danger like the believers referred to in Hebrews 6. Although they should have been teachers at that point, instead they needed someone to reteach them the basics of the faith (Hebrews 5:11–13). Perhaps some had already fallen away (6:4–6). We lose what we refuse to use. Barnabas encouraged new believers “to continue in the grace of God” (Acts 13:43). Likewise, Peter warned that false teachers destroy the weak, attacking baby Christians “who are just escaping from those who live in error” (2 Peter 2:18). In his lifetime, he had seen some grow and some fall away. This prompted him to urge believers to put some effort into their Christian walk of faith.

2 Peter	Those who grow in grace	Those who fall from grace	2 Peter
1:5–7	Add to faith goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love.	Relax and ignore their responsibilities, becoming near-sighted and blind. They forget that Jesus cleansed them from their sins.	1:9
1:8	Become effective and productive.	Become ineffective and unproductive.	1:8
1:10–11	Are eager to make their calling and election sure. They will never fall but will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom.	Follow and teach false doctrines. They deny the sovereign Lord who bought them and follow the desires of the sinful nature.	2:1, 10
1:19	Pay attention to the Scriptures as to a light shining in the dark.	Have left the straight way to wander and follow the way of Balaam.	2:15
3:11–12	Live holy and godly lives, looking forward to the day of God and speed its coming.	Are re-entangled in the corruption of the world they once escaped through Jesus Christ.	2:20

3:14	Make every effort to be found spotless, blameless, and at peace with Him.	Have turned their backs on the sacred command that was passed on to them.	2:21
3:17	Avoid being carried away by the error of lawless men and falling from their secure position.	Fulfill the proverbs: A dog returns to its vomit; a sow that is washed goes back to wallowing in the mud.	A2:22

Grace is not something we usually receive as we lie in bed and sleep. Nor is grace something that forces itself on us. We choose to receive or reject God's grace moment by moment. Paul says that we are stewards of God's grace (1 Corinthians 3:10; 4:1–2). As such, we must be careful not to neglect God's grace like the lazy steward who wasted his talent and was cast into outer darkness (Matthew 25:28–30; Hebrews 2:1–4).

Because grace comes to us through the Spirit of grace, the key to growing in grace is walking in the Spirit. To walk in the Spirit, believers should first seek to be filled with the Spirit as those who were filled in Jerusalem, Samaria, Caesarea, and Ephesus (Acts 2:4; 8:17; 10:44; 19:6). Speaking in a new language is the initial outward sign of this inner filling. Second, believers should seek to be continually filled with the Spirit day by day (Ephesians 5:19). Other ways or means of receiving grace include prayer (Hebrews 4:16); fasting (Matthew 4:2; 6:16; Acts 13:2); worshipping (Acts 16:25); witnessing (Philemon 6); studying, meditating on, and obeying Scripture (Matthew 4:4; 1 Peter 2:2; 2 Peter 1:12–21); singing spiritual songs (Colossians 3:16); fellowship, church services, communion (Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26; Hebrews 10:25); and resisting sin and serving God (Romans 8:13–14; 2 Corinthians 9:8). We renew our physical strength daily by resting and eating. In the same way, we must renew our spiritual strength daily.

Pay Attention to the Scriptures (2 Peter 1:12–21)

Summarize what 2 Peter says about the Scriptures and false teachers.

Two passages in the New Testament refer to the inspiration of Scripture. Second Timothy 3:16 states, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." In 2 Peter, the apostle writes: "Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (1:20–21).

How does Peter say the Holy Spirit enabled those who spoke for God (2 Peter 1:20–21)?

Later, Peter puts the words of Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles on the same level (3:2) and equates Paul's letters with "other Scriptures" (3:15–16). This shows that discerning Christians were already beginning to see some of Paul's letters as inspired (Gundry 1994, 355).

Did early believers view any of the letters of the apostles as inspired by God?

Bible study helps us grow in grace as milk helps a new baby (1 Peter 2:2). We do not live "by bread alone." Rather, we live "on every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). "My son, pay attention to what I say; listen closely to my words. Do not let them out of your sight, keep them within your heart; for they are life to those who find them and health to a man's whole body" (Proverbs 4:20–22).

Scripture is also a great weapon for fighting false teaching. Jesus defeated the devil using the words "it is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). The Bible is the sword of the Spirit (Ephesians 6:17). God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path (Psalm 119:105). We should pay attention to Scripture "as to a light shining in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:19).

Be on Guard against False Teachers (2 Peter 2:1–22)

Peter contrasts true prophecy (2 Peter 1) with false teachers (2 Peter 2; Gundry 1994, 355). False prophets are among believers as false prophets were among the Israelites (2 Peter 2:1). Peter describes several characteristics and actions of false teachers:

- Secretly introduce destructive heresies that destroy believers' faith (2:1). As Paul said, they ruin the faith of entire households just for money (Titus 1:11).
- Deny the sovereign Lord who bought them (2 Peter 2:1).
- Lead many astray and give Christianity a bad reputation (2:2).
- Create stories to mislead and exploit people (2:3).

Peter gave what three examples to show that God would judge the false teachers?

- Stand under certain condemnation. God will judge them as He judged sinning angels, sinners of Noah's day, and sinners of Sodom and Gomorrah (2:3–9, 12–13, 17).
- Follow the corrupt desires of the sinful nature (2:10).
- Despise authority (2:10).
- Are bold and arrogant (2:10).
- Never stop sinning, seduce the unstable, and have eyes full of adultery. They are experts in greed (2:13–14).

- Have left the straight way and have wandered to follow the way of Balaam (2:15).
- Are springs without water. They speak empty, boastful words (2:17–18).
- Entice weak or new believers by appealing to fleshly desires for wealth, success, and pleasure (2:18).
- Promise freedom while they themselves are enslaved (2:19).
- May have once known the truth and salvation from sin, but they have become corrupted and overcome by the world again. Thus, they are worse off after turning back than they were before they knew Christ (2:20–21).

Live a Holy Life Because the Lord is Coming (2 Peter 3:1–18)

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. (2 Peter 3:10–12)

Throughout his letter, Peter presents many ways through which we can be at peace with God when Christ returns:

- Make every effort to add the fruit of the Spirit to our faith (1:5–10).
- Grow in grace and knowledge to keep from falling from our secure position (3:17–18).
- Refuse to follow the corrupt desires of the sinful nature (2:9–10).
- Do not be a slave to anything but righteousness (2:19).
- Be on guard against false teachers. Measure all teaching by the Scriptures (2:1–22; 3:16–17).
- Be patient as God is (3:8).
- Live a life that is holy and godly (3:10–13).
- Make every effort to be found spotless and blameless (3:14).

As described in 2 Peter 3:17–18, what were Peter’s two purposes for his letter?

Peter summarizes his purposes in the last two verses of his letter:

Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 3:17–18)

Lesson 12.2 Jude

The book of Jude is included in the General Epistles because it was not written to a specific person or church. Instead, Jude simply addressed his letter to believers, not differentiating between Jew and Gentile.

As you begin to study Jude, take a few minutes to read through this short, fiery epistle. Notice in the following chart the many times Jude writes his thoughts in triplets:

Threefold Statements in Jude (Neyrey 1993, 28)

Jude	Topic	Triplet or threefold statement
1	The readers	Called, loved, kept
2	Prayer	Mercy, peace, and love
4	The false teachers	Were written about, change God's grace, deny Christ
5–7	Sinners God judged	Israel in the wilderness, angels, Sodom and Gomorrah
8	The false teachers	Pollute, reject, slander
11	Three sinners God judged	Cain, Balaam, Korah
12	False teachers	Rainless clouds, fruitless trees, twice dead
14	The Lord	Is coming, to judge, to convict
16	The false teachers	Grumblers, faultfinders, followers of their own evil desires
19	False teachers	Divide you, follow natural instincts, do not have the Spirit
20–21	Believers	Build yourselves up, pray, wait
22–23	Helping weak believers	Be merciful, snatch, show mercy mixed with fear
25	To God	Glory, majesty, power and authority

Author and Date

State the author and purpose of Jude.

The author of this epistle refers to himself in verse 1 as Jude (Judas in Greek). Apart from Judas Iscariot, the New Testament mentions two Judases: (1) “Judas son of James,” one of the twelve disciples (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13), and (2) Judas, Jesus’ half-brother (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). Following are two reasons why we believe the author Jude is the Lord’s half-brother:

Give two reasons why the author of Jude is thought to be Jesus’ half-brother.

1. Jude says he is “a brother of James” (1:1). The Gospels mention only two brothers called Jude and James—the half-brothers of Jesus (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). Acts 1:14 includes Jesus’ brothers in the list of believers gathered in the upper room at Jerusalem. It appears, then, that the author of Jude is the half-brother of Jesus and full brother of James. We noted earlier that James was a church leader in Jerusalem and authored the book of James. Thus, we believe that these two half-brothers of Jesus both wrote books in the General Epistles.
2. The writer of Jude seems to exclude himself from the apostles, referring to the apostles as a group separate from himself (v. 17). Jesus’ half-brother Jude was not an apostle.

Jude’s date of authorship is linked to 2 Peter. The chart in the next section shows similar verses about false teachers in these two epistles. Because Jude 17–18 seems to refer to 2 Peter 3:3, it appears that Jude wrote after Peter. If so, Jude probably wrote his epistle in AD 70–80, an era in which believers indeed faced false teachers like those Jude described.

Purpose

What was Jude’s purpose in writing?

While Jude wanted to write and rejoice with his readers about the blessings of salvation, something was more important. Like wolves, false teachers were mingling among God's sheep. As a result, Jude felt he must warn believers about these false teachers: "Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to **contend** for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3). There comes a time when every leader must teach against error. Jude felt that this was such a time for him. Three words or phrases in Jude 3 deserve special attention.

- *The faith* refers to all the truth or true beliefs of the church. The truth of Scripture is our weapon against error (Ephesians 6:17; 2 Timothy 3:16). God gave us the truths of our faith through the apostles (Jude 17).
- Jude urged believers to *contend* (wrestle or fight) for the faith. Since God gave the truth to the church, it is the church's responsibility to keep the truth pure and free from false doctrine (Galatians 1:6–9; 1 Timothy 1:19; 6:3–5, 20–21; 2 Timothy 1:13–14). As believers, God expects us to resist, rebuke, and reject false teachers. This is why Jude urged all believers to fight for their faith.
- The faith or truth of the Bible was given *once for all*. That is, the truth of the gospel is final and unchanging. It is old, but ever new. As believers, we cannot allow false teachers to change the truth God gave us in Scripture.

In your opinion, how secure is the salvation of a professing believer who lives in habitual immorality but expects God's grace to somehow cover his or her sin?

Godless men were using grace as an excuse or license to sin (v. 4). Jude said that the false teachers were denying Jesus Christ, our "Sovereign and Lord." That is, these ungodly teachers refused to let Christ rule over them. Sin is anti-Christ. It is rebellion against the law or rule of Christ (1 John 3:4). The epistle of Jude, like 2 Peter, rebukes those who say we can live in sin because we are covered by grace. Like Paul and John, Jude teaches that those who practice sin will not inherit the kingdom of heaven (Galatians 5:19–21; 1 John 3:9).

Thus, the false teachers (Gnostics) were enemies of God and the Bible. Jude accused them of sexual sins (vv. 4, 8). They not only rebelled like Cain and Korah (v. 11) but were also greedy like Balaam (v. 11). Proud, deceitful, and led by the flesh (vv. 8, 16, 18), these false teachers caused divisions among the believers (v. 19).

One translation says the false teachers were "hidden reefs" (v. 12, NASB). A reef is a chain of rocks, coral, or sand just under the surface of the water. It can damage and even destroy ships that crash into it. Likewise, false teachers surprise young and weak believers and destroy their faith (1 Timothy 1:19; Titus 1:11).

Jude and 2 Peter 2 make similar statements about false teachers. Compare the verses in the following chart:

Similar Verses about False Teachers (Leaney 1967, 101–104)

Jude

2 Peter 2

- 6 “And the angels who did not keep their positions of authority but abandoned their own home—these he has kept in darkness, bound with everlasting chains for judgment on the great Day.” “For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but sent them to hell, putting them into gloomy dungeons to be held for judgment” 4
- 7 “In a similar way, Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding towns gave themselves up to sexual immorality and perversion. They serve as an example of those who suffer the punishment of eternal fire.” “If he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly” 6
- 8 “In the very same way, these dreamers pollute their own bodies, reject authority and slander celestial beings.” “This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority. Bold and arrogant, these men are not afraid to slander celestial beings.” 10
- 9 “But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a slanderous accusation against him, but said, ‘The Lord rebuke you!’ ” “Yet even angels, although they are stronger and more powerful, do not bring slanderous accusations against such beings in the presence of the Lord.” 11

10	<p>“Yet these men speak abusively against whatever they do not understand; and what things they do understand by instinct, like unreasoning animals—these are the very things that destroy them.”</p>	<p>“But these men blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.”</p>	12
12	<p>“These men are blemishes at your love feasts, eating with you without the slightest qualm—shepherds who feed only themselves.”</p>	<p>“They will be paid back with harm for the harm they have done. Their idea of pleasure is to carouse in broad daylight. They are blots and blemishes, reveling in their pleasures while they feast with you.”</p>	13
12–13	<p>“They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead. They are wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame; wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness has been reserved forever.”</p>	<p>“These men are springs without water and mists driven by a storm. Blackest darkness is reserved for them.”</p>	17
16	<p>“These men are grumblers and faultfinders; they follow their own evil desires; they boast about themselves and flatter others for their own advantage.”</p>	<p>“For they mouth empty, boastful words and, by appealing to the lustful desires of sinful human nature, they entice people who are just escaping from those who live in error.”</p>	18

17–18	<p>“But, dear friends, remember what the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ foretold. They said to you, ‘In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires.’ ”</p>	<p>“I want you to recall the words spoken in the past by the holy prophets and the command given by our Lord and Savior through your apostles. First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.”</p>	3:2–3
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Outline of Jude

- I. Greeting, 1–2
- II. Purpose: Defense of the Faith, 3–4
- III. Warning about False Teachers, 5–16
 - A. Their judgment illustrated (5–7)
 - 1. Israel (5)
 - 2. Angels who fell (6)
 - 3. Sodom and Gomorrah (7)
 - B. Their condition described (8–16)
 - 1. Their speech (8–10)
 - 2. Their character (11–13)
 - 3. Their destruction (14–16)
- IV. Counsel to Believers, 17–23
 - A. Remember what the apostles warned (17–19)
 - B. Build yourselves up by praying in the Spirit (20)
 - C. Keep yourselves in God’s love (21)
 - D. Help others through mercy and fear (22–23)
- V. Prayer, 24–25

Explanations of the Outline

Warning about False Teachers (Jude 5–16)

While discussing false teachers, Jude gives three illustrations of God’s judgment. From these illustrations, we draw three principles concerning judgment:

1. Destruction can follow deliverance. *Illustration:* God destroyed the Israelites in the desert after He delivered them from Egypt (Jude 5)

2. Eternal judgment can come to those whom God has given a high position and privilege. *Illustration:* Angels who rebelled against God are held in darkness and chains (v. 6).
3. Eternal fire will be the punishment of all who live sinful lives. *Illustration:* God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire because of sexual sins and perversion (v. 7).

To describe the character of false teachers (vv. 11–13), Jude includes several more illustrations or metaphors:

- *Cain* (v. 11): The false teachers chose to act like Cain, who refused to obey God’s statutes and killed his brother out of anger and jealousy (Genesis 4:1–16).
- *Balaam* (v. 11): Balaam helped the Midianites seduce Israel into worshipping idols such as Baal (Numbers 31:16). The false teachers of Jude’s day were trying to seduce believers away from the true faith.
- *Korah* (v. 11): Along with several others, Korah led a rebellion against Moses and Aaron’s—and ultimately God’s—leadership in the desert. Although given special duties as a Levite, Korah coveted more; he wanted to be included in the priesthood. As a result of Korah’s insolence, God caused the earth to open and swallow him and his household (Numbers 16:1–35). Like Korah, the false teachers rebelled against God’s authority and tried to assert their own.

Choose one of the word pictures in Jude 12–13, and explain how it describes false teachers.

- *Blemishes at your love feasts* (v. 12)
- *Shepherds who feed only themselves* (v. 12)
- *Clouds without rain, blown along by the wind* (v. 12)
- *Autumn trees, without fruit and uprooted—twice dead* (v. 12)
- *Wild waves of the sea, foaming up their shame* (v. 13)
- *Wandering stars, for whom blackest darkness is reserved forever* (v. 13)

We will discuss Jude’s passage about Enoch later in this lesson.

Counsel to Believers (Jude 17–23)

Jude urges believers to do four things:

- *Remember what the apostles warned* (vv. 17–19). “They said to you, ‘In the last times there will be scoffers who will follow their own ungodly desires’ ” (v. 18).
- *Build yourselves up, praying in the Spirit* (v. 20). The NASB translates this passage as follows: “But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God” (vv. 20–21). What does the phrase *praying in the Holy Spirit* mean?

Some see a link between praying in the Spirit and “building yourselves up.” They allude to Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 14:4—“He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself”—and assert

that Jude was speaking of praying in tongues. As one of Jesus' half-brothers, Jude was presumably in the upper room on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 1:14) and therefore had experienced speaking in tongues.

On the other hand, while praying in tongues is certainly part of praying in the Spirit, in fact, the Spirit helps us pray in many ways. In the context of spiritual battles, Paul wrote that we should “pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests” (Ephesians 6:18). In Romans 8:26, he assured us that “the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.” The Holy Spirit inspires prayer, tutors us in prayer, and gives us both the faith and the words to pray. All of these and more are aspects of praying in the Holy Spirit.

- *Keep yourselves in God's love* (v. 21). We have a responsibility to grow in our faith. That is, we should not expect God to take care of us without any of our own effort. At the beginning of his letter, Jude says believers are “loved by God the Father and kept by Jesus Christ” (v. 1). Near the end of his letter, he gives glory to God “who is able to keep you from falling” (v. 24). Thus, Jude 1 and 24 focus on God's part in our salvation. Yet Jude reminds us to keep a balance between God's part and our part, saying, “Keep yourselves in God's love.” Our part in salvation is small compared to God's part, but God does not save a person who refuses to keep in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:16–25). The false teachers said that sinning did not matter; but Jude reminds us that our choices either keep us in God's love or eternally separate us from Him. God gives us the grace we need, but we must respond to it. This is a major theme in Jude.
- *Help others through mercy and fear* (vv. 22–23). In these verses, Jude writes as though he is speaking to a pastor or elder, mentioning several methods of dealing with the weak. We do not help everyone in the same way. It is important to be led by the Spirit in helping those who are weak or sinning. Note Jude's attitude of fear and hate toward sin: He compares sin to a bleeding sore that stains a person's clothes. Would you enjoy holding a shirt stained by blood and disease? No? Then have the same attitude toward the sins of those whom you help.

Jude's closing prayer is like a mountaintop (vv. 24–25), displaying God's glory, majesty, and power. Some consider it to be the most glorious prayer that closes a book of the New Testament.

The Books in Our Bible

Summarize the origins of the Old and New Testament canons.

Using Nonbiblical Illustrations

Jude 14–15 refers to a prophecy from Enoch, whom he calls “the seventh from Adam.” Enoch was the seventh generation if we count Adam as the first (Genesis 5:18–24). Jude says, “Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men: ‘See, the Lord is coming with thousands upon thousands of his holy ones to judge everyone, and to convict all the ungodly of

all the ungodly acts they have done in the ungodly way, and of all the harsh words ungodly sinners have spoken against him' ” (vv. 14–15).

How did Jude know about this prophecy? One possibility is that the prophecy was oral tradition handed down from generation to generation. Much truth is passed on this way.

Yet the prophecy Jude quotes is also found in the book of Enoch. Although this book claims that the Enoch of Genesis 5:18–24 was its author, the book itself did not appear until the first century AD. We do not know if it was written before or after the book of Jude. It may be that Jude and the writer of Enoch referred to the same oral source, although it is more likely that Jude quoted from the book of 1 Enoch, which was part of Jewish apocryphal tradition (Perkins 1995, 153).

In either case, the book of Enoch is not in any Bible but is part of a group of books called the **Pseudepigrapha** (see the following chart). The prefix *pseud* means “false,” and *epigrapha* (plural) means “written” or “inscribed.” Thus, *pseudepigrapha* are false writings. Authors using false names wrote some of the books in the Pseudepigrapha. Obviously, since the Enoch of Genesis was not living when the book of Enoch was written, such is the case for this book.

Books of the Pseudepigrapha (Gundry 1994, 44–46)

1. 1 Enoch	7. Testament of Job	13. Life of Adam and Eve
2. 2 Enoch	8. Lives of the Prophets	14. Psalms of Solomon
3. 2 Baruch	9. Assumption of Moses	15. Letter of Aristeas
4. 3 Baruch	10. Martyrdom of Isaiah	16. 3 Maccabees
5. Sibylline Oracles	11. Paralipomena (Chronicles) of Jeremiah	17. 4 Maccabees
6. Testaments of the 12 Patriarchs	12. Jubilees	

In your opinion, if Jude quoted from an uninspired source (1 Enoch), does this create any problems with his message?

Although books in the Pseudepigrapha contain an element of truth, they also contain false statements. For that reason, they were not considered worthy of inclusion in the Bible. Yet that is not to say that they hold no value. Jewish apocryphal tradition can give us insight into the culture and background of first-century Jews, which can often assist us in understanding other parts of the Bible.

Several quotes from uninspired sources are included in the New Testament. For instance, Paul quoted Greek poets three times to illustrate his points (Acts 17:28; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Titus 1:12; Harris 1975, 183). This does not mean that everything the poets wrote was true. Rather, using the poets' words simply fulfilled Paul's purposes. Likewise, Jesus referred to a local saying about the weather (Matthew 16:2–3) and quoted a local proverb about a doctor (Luke 4:23). The Lord also referred to a tower that fell in Siloam and killed eighteen people (Luke 13:4). Thus, the Bible refers to some true sayings and events from local history, poets, or other books. The writers knew that all truth is God's truth; they felt free to refer to other sources of truth whenever the Spirit led them.

On the other hand, the biblical writers understood that many of these same sources of truth also contained error. Only the Bible itself contains no errors (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21). Yet this did not stop the inspired authors from using other sources to illustrate their points. Many of today's preachers do the same when they use sermon illustrations outside of Scripture; they have learned to separate the meat (truth) from the bones (error). Because the writers of Scripture understood this, we do not need to be concerned when they quote a nonbiblical source.

Compiling the Biblical Canon

Discussions about how the books of the Bible were compiled and why the Catholic Bible contains more books than the Protestant Bible are usually covered in an introductory course about the Bible or theology. Nevertheless, we will note a few facts here:

- The early church did not have the New Testament Scriptures. They depended on the Jewish Scriptures, the oral teachings of Jesus, the teachings of the apostles, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit. Even after the apostles wrote, it took years for the whole church to have all of the New Testament writings.
- The thirty-nine books of our Old Testament are the same books that the Jews accepted at the time of Jesus (Klein, Blomberg, and Hubbard 1993, 55). At the time of Jesus, the Jews of Jerusalem referred to their Scriptures as a fixed, well-known group of books. Phrases such as *It is written* indicate that the Jewish Scriptures had the authority of God himself (Matthew 4:10).
- The list of books in the Old Testament provided an example for listing the books in the New Testament. Under the old covenant, God's people referred to a list of inspired books. Therefore, we would expect God's people under the new covenant to refer to a list of inspired books.
- Jesus promised the apostles that the Holy Spirit would remind them of everything He had said (John 14:26). We believe the Spirit guided the biblical writers to remember and record God's truth for us (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20–21).
- We refer to the list of the books in our Bible as the *canon*. The word *canon* originally meant "a standard used to measure." To be considered part of the New Testament canon, a book had to meet four standards:
 1. An apostle or someone close to an apostle had to be the author.
 2. The book had to match what the church already knew to be Scripture.
 3. It had to be widely accepted by the church.
 4. It had to have a quality that revealed divine inspiration. (Menzies and Horton 1993, 29–30)
- The list of our twenty-seven books of the New Testament formed over a period of three centuries. During those years, church leaders discussed the list many times, but they did not force the list on church members. Rather, the Spirit of God in believers testified about which

writings were from God (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 28). The New Testament as we know it today was approved by AD 367 (Douglas 1978, 197). However, believers had approved the books before this. The church councils merely acknowledged formally what the church already believed. It is a matter of faith to believe that God guided the early church in choosing the books in our Bible (Gundry 1994, 57).

- The Catholic Bible and some Eastern Orthodox Bibles contain 12–15 books that were not part of the Hebrew Scriptures (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 28). We group these books into a class called the *Apocrypha*. The word *apocrypha* originally meant “hidden” but later came to mean “not in the canon, or list” (Douglas 1978, 186). These books were included in the Septuagint (Orr 1956, 2728). **Jerome**, translator of the Vulgate, the Latin version of the Bible, included the books of the Apocrypha but with notations that questioned the books’ divine inspiration. Before the Reformation, Roman Catholics assumed these books belonged in the Bible, a view that was officially accepted in 1546 at the Council of Trent. When Martin Luther challenged the Council, the Catholic Church accepted seven apocryphal books—Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Ecclesiasticus, Baruch, and 1 and 2 Maccabees—as well as minor additions to Esther and Daniel (Harris 1975, 180).

When was the list of New Testament completed?

Why do we reject the books of the Apocrypha as not being divinely inspired?

Jerome’s List of Books in the Apocrypha (NEB 1970, v)

1. 1 Esdras (Ezra)	6. Wisdom of Solomon	11. Susanna
2. 2 Esdras (Apocalypse of Ezra)	7. Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)	12. Bel and the Dragon
3. Tobit	8. Baruch	13. Prayer of Manasseh
4. Judith	9. Letter of Jeremiah	14. 1 Maccabees
5. Additions to Esther	10. Prayer of Azariah & Song of the Three Young Men (Metzger 1977, xi)	15. 2 Maccabees

- However, although the books of the Apocrypha contain some truth, they also contain error. All of the apocryphal books were rejected from the Hebrew Scriptures during Christ's time. Apparently, neither Jesus nor the apostles quoted directly from any of these books (Harris 1975, 183). Thus, because the early church did not consider them to be divinely inspired, the books of the Apocrypha did not meet the standards set for Scripture and are not included in the biblical canon.

Chapter 13 The Book of Revelation

To teach their children about the armor of God in Ephesians 6:10–18, some children's ministry workers staged a drama in which one man represented a believer. He was dressed in white clothes overlaid with armor and carried a sword and shield. His enemy was dressed in black and represented the devil. In the skit, the two men pretended to fight each other. Finally, the warrior in white conquered the one in black.

At the end of the drama, the leader asked the children to explain the skit's meaning. What did it teach them? Some said it showed the importance of wearing the armor of God. Others said it represented the need for truth or faith. But one small child captured the essence of the drama in a simple statement: "It shows us that the man in white wins in the end."

Despite all of the hard-to-understand details in the book of Revelation, this message stands out above everything else: In the end, Jesus wins! John saw Him returning as a conqueror on a white horse, followed by an army clothed in white and also riding white horses (Revelation 19:11–14). Christ will return as the King of kings and Lord of lords to reward His holy ones and judge His enemies. The great theme of Revelation is that Jesus wins and that those who overcome evil will reign with Him.

Lesson 13.1 The Background of Revelation

Objective

13.1.1 Indicate the title, author, date, setting, and themes of Revelation.

Lesson 13.2 Understanding Revelation

Objectives

13.2.1 Evaluate four ways of interpreting Revelation.

13.2.2 Divide Revelation into three parts based on Revelation 1:19. Note the chapters for each part.

13.2.3 Summarize five descriptions of Jesus in Revelation.

Lesson 13.3 Symbols, Characters, and Contrasts in Revelation

Objectives

13.3.1 Explain John's use of symbols and characters in Revelation.

13.3.2 Identify some of the key contrasts in Revelation.

Lesson 13.1 The Background of Revelation

Indicate the title, author, date, setting, and themes of Revelation.

More than any other book in the Bible, Revelation reveals Jesus, giving more than seventy descriptions of our Savior. While the Gospels tell about Christ's first coming, Revelation describes His second coming as the King of kings and Lord of lords. It unveils the ultimate victory of Christ over evil.

Title

What is the source and meaning of the title Revelation?

As discussed in Lesson 1.3 of our study, the word *revelation* comes from the Greek word *apokalupto*, meaning to “unveil” or “uncover” something hidden. Apocalyptic books such as Daniel and Revelation use visions and symbols to unveil the future (Horton 1991, 15). Revelation does this by (1) letting us see Jesus in His glory through vivid pictures and descriptions and (2) foretelling such events as Jesus' return to conquer evil. Thus, Revelation unveils Jesus and His future victory.

How do apocalyptic books tell their message?

Besides its apocalyptic and prophetic writing, Revelation is in the form of a letter. (Review descriptions of these three types of writing in Lesson 1.3.) John wrote Revelation as an epistle “to the seven churches in the province of Asia” (1:4). The letter form extends from the greeting to the final chapter of the book.

Author and Date

What are two of the four reasons given that support the apostle John as the author of Revelation?

We conclude that the writer of Revelation is the apostle John, the son of Zebedee and brother of James, for at least four reasons:

1. The author refers to himself as John four times (Revelation 1:1, 4, 9; 22:8). The book reveals that he was a Jew who knew the Scriptures well and that he needed only to mention his name for the seven churches to recognize him. Most Bible scholars agree that this well-known, spiritual writer was John the apostle.
2. The author states that he was on the island of Patmos and mentions suffering (1:9). Although we do not know the severity of his hardship, it may have been less severe than others due to his age and the nature of his so-called crime (Witherington 2003, 78–80). Regardless, his situation could easily fit the “cup” of suffering Jesus told James and John they would drink (Matthew 20:20–23). James was beheaded. We believe his brother John was the one banished to Patmos.
3. Some phrases and subjects in Revelation are similar to those in John’s Spirit-inspired Gospel and three epistles. For example, John presents Jesus as “the Word” in John 1:1, 14 and again in 1 John 1:1. In Revelation, he refers to Jesus as “the Word of God” (19:13). No other New Testament writer describes Jesus as the Word. In addition, John is the only Gospel writer to call Jesus “the **Lamb**” (John 1:29). The Lamb is a major emphasis in Revelation. This adds to the evidence that the apostle John wrote the final book of the New Testament.

We must also note that the style and some of the words in Revelation differ from John’s other books. However, we would expect this because the setting of Revelation is unusual and its purpose unique (Keener 1993, 757–758). When John wrote his Gospel, he was younger and calmly wrote about earthly experiences. In contrast, Revelation is a book filled with emotion. John was an elderly prisoner suffering on an island when he wrote it. Over and over, he wrote what he saw in a vision or heard an angel tell him. Since this was not the case for John’s other writings, we would expect the style and language of Revelation to be different.

4. Many of the early church fathers such as Irenaeus, Tertullian, Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, and Origen believed that the apostle John was the author (Elwell and Yarbrough 1998, 376).

Most of these early church fathers and historians agree that the apostle John wrote Revelation about AD 95 (Horton 1991, 17; Benware 2003, 270). The Roman ruler of that time was Domitian, a cruel Caesar who ruled from AD 81–96.

Setting

Describe John's setting when he wrote Revelation.

When he wrote Revelation, John was suffering on the island of Patmos (1:9), an island in the Aegean Sea near the seven churches addressed in Revelation 2–3. The Roman government sent criminals to Patmos to either serve a specified amount of time or possibly to die (Keener 2002, 82). Thus, John was not alone on the island. Either Domitian or one of his governors exiled John to Patmos, possibly for proselytizing or for propagating a superstition (Witherington 2003, 79–80).

Like the rest of the New Testament, the message the Holy Spirit inspired John to write in Revelation is for believers of all times. Nevertheless, to interpret Revelation—or any book of the Bible—correctly, we need to understand as much as possible about the first readers.

With this in mind, we note that John addressed Revelation to the seven churches in Asia (Revelation 1:4). Believers at that time faced persecution for several reasons:

- Christians refused to participate in Greek or Roman religions. They did not take part in the temple worship, feasts, and public meetings related to the Greek and Roman gods.
- Christians rejected the local or native religions, many of which emphasized fertility or fruitfulness.
- Rather than trusting in human teachings and worldly wisdom, believers trusted in God's wisdom. They rejected many other false teachings from the Greek and Roman worldviews as well.
- Persecution also came from and was caused by unbelieving Jews. The Roman government did not require Jews to worship Caesar but instead allowed them to worship in their synagogues. However, the unbelieving Jews often rejected Jews who accepted Jesus as the Messiah and forced them out of the synagogues. When this happened, the believing Jews were no longer protected from worshipping the Roman rulers (Witherington 2003, 192–195). Domitian thought very highly of himself and was the first Caesar to claim the title “lord and god” (Godwin 1981, 57). Yet John used the same phrase to remind believers that only one “Lord and God” existed (Revelation 4:11; Koester 2001, 30–31). In the end, faithful Christians who refused to worship the Roman Caesars became known as enemies of the government. They faced the possibility of losing their jobs, friends, families, and even their lives (Fox 1987, 433). Thus, loyalty to Jesus brought persecution.

Discerning these forces of persecution will help us to understand John's praises and rebukes to the seven churches. Namely, persecution was causing some believers to compromise (Revelation 2:14–15, 20). They were bending their beliefs to avoid persecution.

Themes

The first and greatest theme of Revelation is that Jesus will return to triumph over all evil (Gundry 1994, 385). John emphasizes that the time of Christ's return is near (Revelation 1:3; 22:12, 20). Then all will know that He is “the ruler of the kings of the earth” (1:5). John summarizes this major theme in 1:7: “Look, he is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see

him, even those who pierced him; and all the peoples of the earth will mourn because of him. So shall it be! Amen.” The final victory of Jesus Christ over all His enemies is certain.

How do the two themes of Revelation encourage and/or challenge you?

A second theme of Revelation is that only those who overcome evil in this life will inherit the Kingdom. The Lord inspired Revelation to encourage believers facing persecution. Satan was working through the Roman Caesars to oppose and draw worship away from God and the Lamb (deSilva 1997, 28). John makes it plain that each person must choose between the Lamb and the beast. No one can love both the world and God (1 John 2:15–17). Each person who chooses the mark of the beast will be tormented forever (Revelation 14:9–11). “This calls for patient endurance on the part of the saints who obey God’s commandments and remain faithful to Jesus” (14:12). God will give a crown of life to those who are faithful unto death (2:10). The heavenly kingdom is only for those who overcome by God’s grace.

Lesson 13.2 Understanding Revelation

Four Views for Interpreting Revelation

Evaluate four ways of interpreting Revelation.

Believers generally take one of four approaches to interpreting Revelation:

- The *past* or **preterist** view says that Revelation 1–18 happened in the first century (Horton 1991, 19). In other words, preterists maintain that the prophecies of Revelation were fulfilled as the first Christians struggled against Rome. They emphasize the past and believe that Revelation says little about the future.

What does the preterist view of Revelation teach?

It is true that some of Revelation applied directly to the early church. The city of Rome was built on seven hills (Revelation 17:9), and the Caesars or emperors were cruel to Christians. However, the preterist view seems to conflict with other passages of Scripture. It seems impossible to fit all of Revelation 1–18 into the first century. Although some scholars appear to make connections between first-century history and the events in Revelation, many of these historical identifications “are very subjective and precarious” (Horton 1991, 19).

How does the historicist view of Revelation differ from the preterist view?

- Christians who take the **historicist** or historical view also face the past, but they do not limit Revelation to the first one hundred years of the church. Instead, they try to match Revelation with historical events from the early church to the present. They emphasize key occurrences in history such as the rise of the Catholic Church and the Crusades. Moreover, the historicist viewpoint does not believe in a Great Tribulation at the end of the age. Those who ascribe to this view think the Tribulation and other events are spread over the history of the church.

The inherent problem with this view is that the interpretation is subjective rather than objective. That is, each generation interprets Revelation in a different way (Horton 1991, 18–19).

What does the idealist view teach about the Antichrist?

- Unlike the first two views, the *spiritual* or **idealist** view does not face the past. Individuals with this view believe Revelation is like a parable. That is, they say Revelation is about spiritual ideas, not real people or events. It did not happen and will not happen. To idealists, the book of Revelation emphasizes the concepts of spiritual warfare and God’s triumph over evil.

However, the idealist view contradicts other Scripture passages. For example, Paul does not say that the Antichrist is only an idea. He teaches that the Antichrist will be a real person (2 Thessalonians 2:3–12). We cannot accept any view, including the idealist approach, that does not agree with the rest of the Bible.

How does the futurist view of Revelation differ from the preterist view?

- Finally, multitudes of believers today take the **futurist** view toward Revelation. Futurists believe that the events in Revelation 4–22 will take place in the future. Specifically, they believe Revelation 5–19 will occur during a period of about seven years known as the Tribulation. Based on Daniel 9:27, the futurist view maintains that this seven-year period of God’s wrath and judgment will end with the return of Jesus Christ (Horton 1991, 19–20). Then Revelation 20–22 will follow.

There are fewer problems with the futurist view than with the other three views (Horton 1991, 20). Thus, throughout this chapter, we view Revelation as mostly about the future.

At the same time, we must not forget that prophecy is often fulfilled in two ways: It may have a historical fulfillment but also an end-time fulfillment. For example, in Matthew 24 Jesus prophesied many events. Some of these were fulfilled historically in AD 70, but the greatest fulfillment will come at the end of the age (Mounce 1998, 30). Similarly, John saw the Roman Empire as a great beast that hated the church. Still, in the last days, another beast like the Roman Empire will arise. This beast will persecute believers and rule during the final years of tribulation.

The Outline and Structure of Revelation

Divide Revelation into three parts based on Revelation 1:19. Note the chapters for each part.

Many Bible teachers use Revelation 1:19 as a natural outline of the book: “Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.” This verse suggests three parts to the book of Revelation:

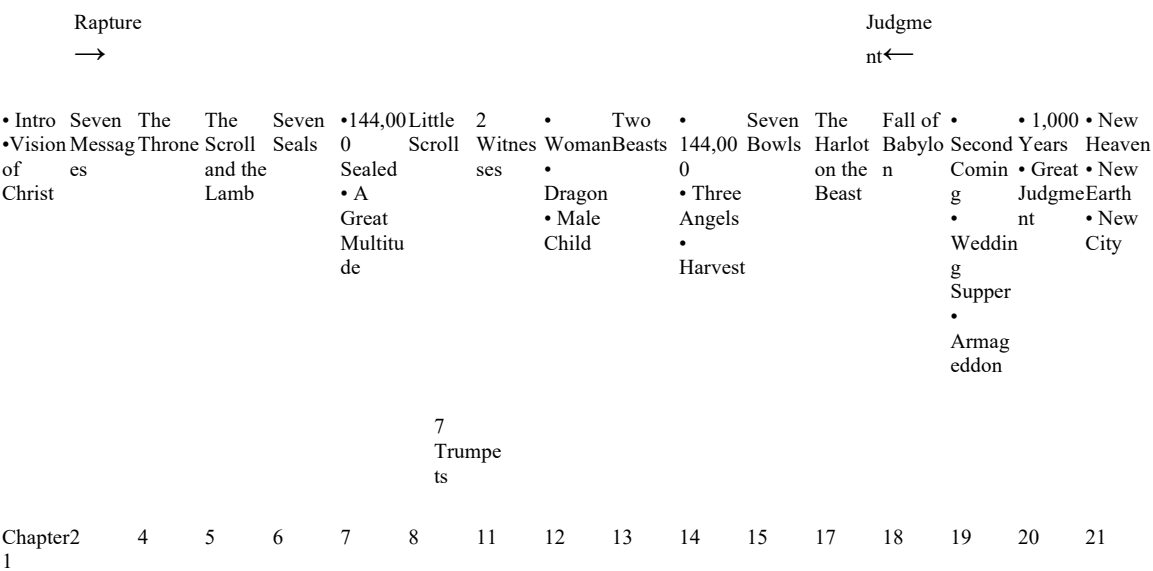
- *What you have seen* refers to the vision John saw of Christ (1).
- *What is now* refers to the seven churches in Asia Minor (2–3).
- *What will take place later* refers to the future (4–22).

How does Revelation 1:19 serve as an outline of the book? (Include chapters in your answer.)

No other outline seems to be easier or clearer than this one (Walvoord 1980, 47–48). Consider it as you study the following chart.

Overview of Revelation

Seven-year Tribulation



The Seven Seals, Seven Trumpets, and Seven Bowls

John writes about three groups of sevens: the seals, trumpets, and bowls. Each phase of judgment is worse than its predecessors. That is, the seals are less severe than the trumpets, and the trumpets are less frightening than the bowls (Kraybill 1999, 35). Together, the seals, trumpets, and bowls stretch from Revelation 5 to 16.

Pictures and Descriptions of Jesus in Revelation

Summarize five descriptions of Jesus in Revelation.

The greatest value of Revelation is not what it teaches about the dragon, the beast from the sea, or the beast from the earth. It is not what Revelation teaches about the new heaven, the new earth, or the new Jerusalem. The supreme value of Revelation is what the book teaches about Jesus. All of the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ (Colossians 2:3).

Which five things that Revelation reveals about Jesus mean the most to you? Why?

Revelation gives us insights about Jesus that no other book gives. In a unique way, it reveals the great glory and majesty of the Savior we serve. The list that follows is not comprehensive, but it provides a wealth of revelation about Jesus:

- The One “who is, and who was, and who is to come” (1:4, 8)
- The One who comes with the clouds, whom all the peoples of earth will see and mourn over (1:7)
- The Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End (1:8, 17; 2:8; 22:13)
- “Someone ‘like a son of man’ ” walking among the lampstands with white hair, eyes like fire, feet like bronze, and a voice like rushing waters; the One with a sword flashing from His mouth and a face shining like the sun (1:13–16; 2:1, 12, 18)
- The One who knows believers and their afflictions, who sees when they work hard, persevere, do not tolerate wicked men, and expose false apostles (2:2, 9)
- The first love of every believer (2:4)
- The One who calls the churches to repent (2:5, 16, 22; 3:3, 19) and urges us to hear what the Spirit says to the churches (2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:3, 6, 13, 22)
- The Encourager who tells us not to fear what we will suffer; the Covenant Maker who promises to give those who are faithful unto death a crown of life (2:10)
- The One who will not blot out the names of overcomers from the book of life but will confess their names to the Father (3:5; see also 2 Timothy 2:12)
- The One who is holy and true, who opens and shuts doors no one else can (3:7–8)
- The One who knows when a believer has only a little strength (3:8)
- The Savior who will keep patient believers from the hour of trial (3:10)
- The soon-returning King who warns believers not to lose their crowns (3:11)
- The One who will spit lukewarm believers out of His mouth (3:15–16)
- The One who rebukes and disciplines those He loves (3:19)
- The patient Knocker at the door of each lukewarm believer’s heart, wanting to restore the relationship (3:20)
- The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, and the Lamb who is worthy to take the scroll from the Father’s right hand and to open its seven seals (5:5–9; 6:1–12; 8:1)
- The Savior who sacrificed His own blood to purchase men for God, making them a kingdom and priests who will serve God as they reign on earth (5:9–10)
- The Lamb, the One whom the angels and every creature declare to be worthy of receiving power, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and praise (5:11–14)
- The One who, with the Father, will pour out wrath on the wicked of the earth (6:16–17)
- The Protector who is worshipped by the saints who come out of the Great Tribulation (7:9–17)
- The Lamb at the center of the throne (7:17)
- The Shepherd who leads believers to springs of living water (7:17)
- The King who will reign forever over the kingdom of the world (11:15)
- Israel’s Son who will rule the nations with an iron scepter (12:5; 19:15)
- The Lamb to whom the book of life belongs (13:8)
- The Son of Man seated on a cloud, wearing a gold crown, holding a sharp sickle (14:14–16)
- The One who overcomes the ten kings (17:14)
- The Bridegroom who will come for His bride (19:7)

- The theme of prophecy (19:10)
- The Rider who is called Faithful and True (19:11)
- The Word of God (19:13)
- The Warrior who leads the armies of heaven (19:14)
- The One who strikes down the nations with the sword from His mouth (19:15, 19–21)
- The One who treads the winepress of the wrath of God Almighty (19:15)
- The King of Kings and Lord of Lords (19:16; also 17:14)
- The One who reigns a thousand years (20:4)
- The temple and the lamp of the Holy City, the new Jerusalem (21:22–23)
- The One who will show us His face and put His name on our foreheads (22:4)
- The Savior who is coming soon (22:7, 12, 20)
- The One who blesses those who keep the words of Revelation’s prophecy (22:7; also 1:3)

All else is poverty compared to the wealth of knowing Jesus Christ. Studying the seven seals on the scroll is nothing compared to rejoicing over the One in heaven worthy to open the scroll (Revelation 5). Even as we read of the seven trumpets, the trumpet that means the most to us is the one that will announce the return of our beloved Savior (1 Thessalonians 4:15–18). Likewise, we may tremble at the severe judgment wrought as the seven bowls of God’s wrath are poured out (Revelation 15–16). Yet what is all of this compared to the depth of God’s love poured out for us on the Cross? We do not bow to a false christ. Rather, it is the true Christ returning on a white horse with His saints that lifts our spirits (19:11–16).

Lesson 13.3 Symbols, Characters, and Contrasts in Revelation

Symbols in Revelation

Explain John’s use of symbols and characters in Revelation.

Earlier, we noted that apocalyptic writings speak through symbols. God may have inspired John to use symbols to protect Christians since these symbols were discerned and understood only by believers. The enemies of Jesus could not use His parables to condemn Him. Likewise, the enemies of believers could not use Revelation to condemn believers.

Identify two possible reasons why John used symbols.

What are two examples that show that symbols give us powerful pictures?

However, John also used symbols for a greater reason: to give us word pictures that add emotion and value to truth. For instance, in Revelation 1:12–20, John could have simply said that Jesus walked among the seven churches. Yet using the symbol of a lampstand instead of the word *church* gives us a picture. The lampstand reminds us that the church is in the world to shine light in the darkness. In another example, John could have said that an evil leader would rise to rule the world. However, he used the symbol of a beast to emphasize how vile a leader the Antichrist will be. Again, instead of simply contrasting the church with a worldly system, John used the symbols of a pure bride and a **harlot** to express the contrast more vividly (Wiersbe 1989, 567). Symbols communicate truth in a powerful, emotional way.

It is important to allow Revelation to explain its own symbols when possible. The parables we understand best today are the ones Jesus explained. In the same way, the symbols we understand best in Revelation are the ones John explained to us. The following chart lists many of these symbols with their meanings, along with the corresponding Scripture references for each.

Symbols and Their Meanings in Revelation (Adapted from Walvoord 1980, 29–30) (continued)

Symbol	→	Meaning
Seven lampstands (1:12–13)	→	Seven churches (1:20)
Seven stars (1:16)	→	Seven messengers or pastors (1:20)
The morning star (2:28)	→	Jesus (22:16)
Key of David (3:7)	→	Power to open and close doors (3:7–8)
Seven lamps (4:5)	→	Sevenfold Spirit of God; the Holy Spirit (4:5)
The Lamb (5:6)	→	Jesus, Lord of lords and King of kings (17:14)

Seven eyes (5:6)	→	Sevenfold Spirit of God; the Holy Spirit (5:6)
Golden bowls full of incense (5:8)	→	Prayers of the saints (5:8)
Four horses and riders (6:1–8)	→	Conquest, war, famine, and death (6:1–8)
Fallen star (9:1)	→	An angel (9:1)
Woman and child (12:1–2, 5)	→	Israel and Christ (12:5)
Red dragon, old serpent (12:3; 20:2)	→	Satan, the devil (12:9; 20:2)
A third of the stars of heaven (12:4)	→	Fallen angels (12:7–9)
A time, times and half a time (12:14)	→	1,260 days = 3.5 years (12:6)
The beast out of the sea, with seven heads and ten horns (13:1–10; 17:8–12)	→	The beast (Antichrist) who is the eighth king, and his kingdom (17:11)
Seven heads of the beast (13:1; 17:3, 7)	→	Seven hills and seven kings (17:9–10)
Ten horns of the beast (13:1; 17:3, 7)	→	Ten kings with the beast who is the Antichrist (17:12–13, 16–17)
The beast out of the earth (13:11–17)	→	The false prophet (19:20)
The great harlot, Babylon the Great, who sits on a beast with seven heads and ten horns (17:1–7)	→	The great city that sits on seven hills and rules over the kings of the earth (17:9, 18)
The waters on which the woman sits (17:1)	→	The peoples of the world (17:15)
Fine linen (19:8)	→	Righteous deeds of the saints (19:8)

The Rider of the white horse →
(19:11–16)

Christ, King of kings and
Lord of lords (19:16)

The Root of David (22:16) →

Jesus (22:16)

Characters in the Story or Drama of Revelation

We have already noted many of the characters in Revelation. The following list summarizes most of them:

- *Jesus Christ*: The book reveals Him as: One “like a son of man” (1:13; 14:14), the “Lamb” (6:5–6), the “Lion” (5:5), a “male child” (12:5), the Rider on the white horse (19:11), and the One on the great white throne (20:11).
- *God the Father*: He is seated on the throne (4:1–11) and referred to throughout the narrative.
- *The Holy Spirit*: He is referred to as the sevenfold Spirit of God (1:4; 4:5; 5:6). John was in the Spirit on the Lord’s Day (1:10). The Spirit speaks to the seven churches (2:1–3:22) and is active throughout the book.
- *The apostle John*: He sees the visions and narrates the events for us (1:9–19). Also, he often shares his feelings and responses to the visions.
- *The seven churches*: Jesus speaks to these churches in Revelation 1–3, and they remain in the background for the rest of the book. All of Revelation was written for these churches and the churches they represent.
- *Satan*: He is the main enemy in Revelation and is referred to as the devil, Satan, and the dragon (12:3–13:1; 20:1–10).
- *The four creatures*: These appear often (4:6, 8; 5:6, 8, 14; 6:1, 6; 7:11; 14:3; 15:7; 19:4) and may represent all of creation.
- *The twenty-four elders*: The elders may represent all whom God has redeemed (4:4, 10; 5:8; 11:16; 19:4).
- *Angels*: Angels are active throughout the book. An angel brought the revelation to John (1:1). They worship God and the Lamb (4–5), declare judgment (10:1–20), and fight in heavenly warfare (12). They blow the seven trumpets (8:2) and pour out the seven bowls and seven plagues (15–16). An angel, perhaps the one of Revelation 1:1, showed John many things (22:8).
- *The two witnesses*: These dress in clothes of mourning and call sinners to repent. They prophesy and declare God’s judgment (11).
- *The Antichrist and beast*: The Antichrist is the ruler of the beast, which is his kingdom. Sometimes John refers to the Antichrist as the beast because a king and his kingdom are one. The beast has seven heads and ten horns (13). Five of these heads were in the past (17:10); we believe that they represent the world kingdoms of Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece. The sixth head of the beast—Rome—was present in John’s day. We believe that the seventh head is a revised form of the Roman Empire. The Antichrist is the horn that arises to rule over it. The ten horns on the head of the seventh beast are ten kings who reign a short time with the Antichrist (Cole and McGhee 2000, 200–229).

- *The false prophet*: This person represents the Antichrist as the Holy Spirit represents Christ. Satan, the Antichrist, and the false prophet form an unholy triad (16:13).
- *The harlot*: John tells us that the harlot is the capital city of the Antichrist (17:18) and represents the world and its values. In John's day, this capital city was Rome. John referred to it as Babylon to protect believers. Although Caesar was considered to be the Antichrist in John's day, we believe a final Antichrist will arise and rule the world from a great city.
- *The bride*: The bride is the church, the body of Christ (19:7–8). The bride includes those who are caught up in the Rapture (1 Thessalonians 4:13–18) and all those saved during the Great Tribulation (7:9–17). The bride is united with Christ when He comes to conquer evil.

The many other characters in Revelation include Jezebel (2:20–23), the riders on horses (6:5–8), the woman (12), the martyrs, kings, merchants, sailors, followers of the beast, faithful witnesses of the Lord, slaves, rich and poor people, the 144,000, a great multitude in white robes, all the dead who came to life, and people on thrones. In addition, Revelation describes things and creatures who act like humans: An eagle cries with a loud voice (8:13). The earth opens its mouth (12:16). An altar responds to God (16:7). The new Jerusalem comes as a bride (21:9–10). Finally, death and Hades are judged like God's other enemies. Thus, Revelation has a great and varied list of characters that all play a part in the story of God's final victory over evil.

Contrasts in Revelation

Identify some of the key contrasts in Revelation.

The book of Revelation is filled with contrasts, as seen in the following charts.

Identify at least three contrasts in Revelation 1–5 that describe God's character or nature.

Contrasts from Revelation 1–5

The *holy* Trinity: the Father, the Son, and the sevenfold Spirit (1:4–5) →

The *evil* triad: the devil, the Antichrist, and the false prophet (20:10)

The description of *Christ* (1:12–16) →

The description of the *Antichrist* (13:1–3)

The *rebukes* Christ gave five of the seven churches (2–3) →

The *good things* Christ said to six of the seven churches (2–3) →

Promises to overcomers in all seven churches (2–3) →

Our God who is *holy* and *eternal* (4:8) →

The *Creator* (4:11) →

He who *was*, and *is*, and *is to come* (1:8; 4:8) →

The Lamb who alone is *worthy* to open the scroll (5:7–10) →

The *lack of rebuke* to Smyrna and Philadelphia (2–3)

The *absence of any praise* to Laodicean believers (3:14–22)

Warnings to those who do not overcome (2–3)

The beast who is *evil* and *temporary* (13:5)

All *created things* (4:11)

The beast who *once was*, *now is not*, and *is going to destruction* (17:8, 11)

All in heaven, on earth, and under the earth who are *not worthy* to open the scroll (5:3)

What are your favorite three contrasts from Revelation 6–18? Why?

Contrasts in Revelation Based on the Tribulation (Revelation 6–18)

The white-horse rider with one temporary *stephanos* crown (6:2) →

The fifth seal: martyrs resting in heaven, praying, “*Avenge us!*” (6:9–11) →

The white-horse Rider with many permanent *diadem* crowns (19:11–12)

The sixth seal: sinners trembling on earth, saying, “*Hide us!*” (6:12–17)

The *silence* before the scroll
is opened (8:1) →

The *roar* of great multitudes
in heaven shouting,
“Hallelujah!” (19:1–6)

Three and a half years of
turmoil on earth with the →
Antichrist (11:2–3; 12:6, 14)

One thousand years of *peace*
on earth with Christ (20:2–6)

The *anger of the nations*
(11:18) →

The *wrath of God* (11:18)

Rewarding the prophets,
saints, and those who respect →
God (11:18)

Judging the dead and
destroying those who destroy
the earth (11:18)

The woman *out* of the
serpent’s reach (12:14) →

The woman’s children *within*
the dragon’s reach (12:17)

Those with the name or *mark*
of the beast on their hands or →
foreheads (13:16–17)

Those with the *name of God*
on their foreheads (14:1;
22:4)

The *lost who never find rest*,
tormented in the lake of fire →
(14:10–11)

The *saved who find eternal*
rest in the presence of God
(14:13)

The *vile* dress of the harlot of
the Antichrist (17:3–4) →

The *pure* dress of the bride of
Christ (19:7–8)

The city of *Babylon* in ruins
(18:2) →

The city of the *new*
Jerusalem (21:2)

The *sinful* citizens of
Babylon (18:4–5) →

The *holy* citizens of the new
Jerusalem (22:14–15)

Mourning of kings,
merchants, and sailors over →
Babylon’s fall (18:9–19)

Rejoicing of saints, apostles,
and prophets over Babylon’s
fall (18:20)

Contrasts in Revelation Based on Christ’s Return and Reign (Revelation 19–22)

The *Wedding Supper* of the
Lamb (19:9) →

The *great supper* of God
(19:17–18)

The *first* resurrection (20:5–6) →

Overcomers, children of God who *inherit the new Jerusalem* (21:7) →

Those who do shameful or deceitful deeds (21:27) →

Those who are *vile* and *do wrong* (22:11) →

Come (22:17) →

The *second* resurrection (20:12–13)

Cowards, unbelievers, the vile, murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic, idolaters, and liars who *inherit the lake of fire* (21:8)

Those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life (21:27)

Those who are *holy* and *do right* (22:11)

Depart (20:15)

Review of the New Testament

Now that you have completed a survey of the New Testament, take a few minutes to study the following chart. It will help you review what you have learned about each New Testament book.

Chart of books in the New Testament, arranged by dates from the first book to the last

Book	Author	Date (AD)	Place of writing	Theme
James	James, Jesus’ half-brother	45–49	Jerusalem	Faith that works in suffering, in salvation, and in holy living
Galatians	Paul	48–49	Antioch in Syria	We are saved by faith in Christ, not by obeying the law of Moses.

1 Thessalonians	Paul	51–52	Corinth	The second coming of Christ
2 Thessalonians	Paul	51–52	Corinth	The second coming of Christ
1 Corinthians	Paul	55–56	Ephesus	Church questions and answers, problems and solutions
2 Corinthians	Paul	55–56	Macedonia	The apostle Paul in contrast with false apostles
Mark	Mark	55–65	Rome	Jesus, the Servant
Romans	Paul	57	Corinth	Righteousness that comes by faith in Jesus
Philemon	Paul	60–62	Rome	Love reconciles; it brings enemies together as friends.
Colossians	Paul	60–62	Rome	Jesus is supreme and the head of the church.
Ephesians	Paul	60–62	Rome	The church is the body of Christ.
Philippians	Paul	60–62	Rome	Joy in living for Christ
Luke	Luke	60–63	Rome	Jesus, the divine Savior of all
1 Peter	Peter	60–63	Rome	Suffering as Jesus did
Matthew	Matthew	60–69	Antioch in Syria	Jesus, the Messiah and King of the Jews

1 Timothy	Paul	62–66	Macedonia	Teaching and managing the church; godly living
Titus	Paul	62–66	Nicopolis	Managing and teaching the church; godly living
Acts	Luke	63	Rome	The spread of the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome by the power of the Holy Spirit
2 Peter	Peter	66–68	Rome	Grow in grace; use the Scriptures against false teachers.
2 Timothy	Paul	67	Rome	Instructions to Timothy for the last days
Hebrews	Unknown	67–69	Unknown	Jesus is better.
Jude	Jude, Jesus' half-brother	70–80	Unknown	Fight for the faith; keep it pure from false teaching.
John	John	80–95	Ephesus	Believe in Jesus, the Son of God.
1 John	John	85–95	Ephesus	Children of God walk in light, know truth, and love others.
2 John	John	85–95	Ephesus	Love and truth
3 John	John	85–95	Ephesus	Be faithful to the truth and those

				who preach and teach it.
Revelation	John	95	Patmos	Jesus will return to conquer evil and rule over His kingdom.

Test Yourself

Click here to open Chapter Thirteen Test Yourself

Glossary

Chapter

Achaia	—	a Roman province in Greece that included cities such as Athens and Corinth	4
ambassador	—	a person who represents another person or nation. We are called <i>ambassadors of Christ</i> because we tell people His message.	6
Antichrist	—	against or in place of Christ. Refers to the person who will fight against and imitate Christ in the Tribulation. He is an evil ruler who will come out of the Abyss	8

		to reign on earth for a while (Revelation 17:8). Paul refers to him as the “man of lawlessness” (2 Thessalonians 2:8).	
Antioch	—	a large Syrian city about 300 miles (485 km) north of Jerusalem; the second largest city in the Roman Empire	4
Aramaic	—	the common language of Jewish people in Jesus’ time; the language of Babylon that the Jewish captives learned	2
Asia	—	in biblical times, the province whose capital was Pergamum. John wrote to the seven churches of Asia (Revelation 2–3).	4
Assyria	—	a strong nation northeast of Israel whose capital was Nineveh; took the ten northern tribes of Israel into exile in 722 BC. Babylon conquered Assyria in 612 BC.	1
Athens	—	a city in the province of Achaia that was famous for its philosophy and university; the intellectual capital of the Greek world	4

Babylon	—	the kingdom north of the Euphrates River that ruled the world from 612–539 BC. It was the head of gold in Daniel 2 and the lion in Daniel 7. Its first ruler was Nebuchadnezzar. Also, Babylon is a name used to represent Rome. It stands for all who love the world (see 1 John 2:15–17).	1
believe	—	to accept; to consider true or real; to have a firm conviction	3
chosen lady	—	refers to the church. John may have used this term because believers were being persecuted.	11
christocentric	—	focusing directly and primarily on Christ	4
Colossian heresy	—	the false teachings of Gnostics in Colosse that centered on rules, self-denial, worshiping angels, lowering Christ, and claims of secret knowledge	7
coming of the Lord	—	also called the <i>Second Coming</i> ; refers to either Christ's private return (the Rapture) or His public return	8

contend	—	to fight, wrestle, confront, or battle	12
Crete	—	an island southeast of Corinth in the Mediterranean Sea	9
Dalmatia	—	a Roman province northwest of Macedonia. Today, this area includes Serbia and Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Croatia.	9
Damascus	—	the capital city of Syria, about 150 miles (242 km) north of Jerusalem and about halfway between Jerusalem and Tarsus. Damascus was famous for business.	5
epilogue	—	the concluding section of a letter, play, or piece of music	3
filled with the Spirit	—	also called “baptized with the Spirit”; an experience after conversion with the outward, biblical evidence of speaking in a new language	4
firstborn	—	the first child born to a family, who received special rights and privileges because of birth order. Jesus is called the firstborn because He is first in rank. He is	7

		above all that He created.	
futurist	—	a view that focuses mostly on the future to interpret Revelation. It teaches that Revelation 4–22 will happen in the future.	13
Galatia	—	a province that included cities such as Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe	4
General Epistles	—	the seven letters after Hebrews that are named for their authors. All of them except 2 and 3 John are written to the church; that is, they are not written to a specific church.	1
Gnosticism	—	the teachings of the Gnostics. Gnostic false teachers claimed to have secret knowledge for salvation and taught that the body and all matter were evil.	11
Greeks	—	a people who, under Alexander the Great and his generals, ruled from 330–166 BC and spread their language and culture across the world	1
harlot	—	a prostitute; in Revelation, a symbol	13

		of Rome and the people with her values. The harlot represents all who love the world (see 1 John 2:15–17).	
high priest	—	the most important religious leader of Israel who entered the inner part of the temple once a year to make a sacrifice for the nation's sin	1
historicist	—	a view that focuses on the past and present to interpret Revelation. It matches Revelation with events of history from the early church to the present.	13
idealist	—	a view that says Revelation is about spiritual ideas, not real people or events. It interprets Revelation like a parable that did not and will not happen.	13
Jerome	—	a Catholic Church leader who made a list of books in the Apocrypha and translated the Bible into Latin. This famous translation is called the Vulgate.	12
Jews	—	those from the twelve tribes of Israel. A person who is not a Jew is called a <i>Gentile</i> .	1

Judaizers	—	Jewish believers who were Pharisees and taught that all believers must obey the law of Moses, thus emphasizing circumcision for Gentiles	5
Judea	—	the southern region of ancient Palestine, just north of the region of Idumea	4
justification	—	God's counting an individual as righteous	5
kingdom of heaven	—	the place where the King reigns. On earth, this is in the hearts of believers. The kingdom of heaven has an invisible and a visible phase.	2
Lamb	—	a title of Jesus emphasizing that He became the sacrifice to take away our sins	13
life	—	as used in John, <i>eternal</i> life. Life results from believing in Christ.	3
Macedonia	—	a province in northern Greece whose capital was Thessalonica; also included the city of Philippi	1
mediator	—	someone who goes between two people or groups of people	10

Messiah	—	(Hebrew) anointed one. The Greek word is <i>Christ</i> . The Jews believed that God would send a Messiah to deliver them.	2
parousia	—	(Greek) refers to the coming of Christ at the end of this age	8
perseverance	—	determination not to give up; resolution to continue in spite of hard situations	10
Pharisees	—	literally, the separate people; members of a Jewish group who strictly followed the law of Moses and Jewish religious customs. Many did not like Jesus because He did not follow all of their rules.	1
predestine	—	to choose in advance; to determine the destiny of something before it happens	7
prejudice	—	hatred or hostility toward someone who has different characteristics (usually based on skin color or religion)	4
preterist	—	a view that focuses on the past to interpret Revelation and teaches that Revelation 1–18	13

		happened in the first century	
prologue	—	the opening section of a letter, play, or piece of music (like an introduction)	3
Pseudepigrapha	—	a group of books with false authors written in between the Old and New Testaments	
reconcile	—	to bring into agreement; to settle differences	6
righteousness	—	state of being right with God and doing what is right; a gift of God based on Christ's death	5
Romans	—	people who conquered the Greeks and ruled from 63 BC to AD 486 from the western end of the Mediterranean Sea to the Euphrates River in the East	1
Sadducees	—	a group of powerful Jewish leaders that included the high priest and the leading officials of the Sanhedrin. They did not believe in the resurrection, angels, or spirits.	1
Samaria	—	the biblical area between Galilee and Judea. (A city called Samaria was also in	4

		this region.) The Samaritans were only partly Jewish and therefore hated by the Jews.	
sanctuary	—	a holy or sacred place; usually refers to a place of worship	10
sign	—	John’s word for miracle; a miracle showing that Jesus is the Messiah	3
Son of Man	—	a name that Jesus called himself, emphasizing that He was both God and man at the same time	2
tetrarch	—	ruler over a fourth of a province; a subordinate ruler	1
theocentric	—	relating to God; focusing on the idea of God	4
Theophilus	—	a common Greek name meaning “lover of God”; addressee of Luke and Acts	4

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