

Lectures in

THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES

A New Testament Introduction
for use in the training of men
for the Baptist Ministry

Pastor Robert J. Sargent

VOLUME TWO

Hebrews &
The General Epistles



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THE
NEW TESTAMENT
EPISTLES**



Robert J. Sargent

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PREFACE

A preacher is to be “*mighty in the scriptures*” (*Acts 18:24*) ... which happens to be more than the mere accumulation of proof texts and pat answers. To be mighty in the scriptures is to know the Word of God with an intimacy that cannot be gained through any cursory perusal. It is to feel its pulse, to be gripped by its passion, and, most of all, to know the mind of its Author. It is to literally stand in awe of God’s Word while mining its boundless treasures (*Psalms 119:161,162*). There are no shortcuts here. Understanding is directly proportional to the hours invested; it is the fruit of method and diligence — in short, it comes from applied study (*II Timothy 2:15*).

But to be mighty in the scriptures is more than gaining a wealth of Bible knowledge and understanding, however rich and deep and wonderful. It is also being able to use that knowledge effectively to “*mightily convince*” those who desperately need to hear and receive the Bible’s life-giving and life-changing message (*Acts 18:28*). The student must become a workman!

Shallow teaching and preaching can (and will) only produce shallow Christians who must then rely more upon men and motivationalism than their own spiritual maturity. God’s Truth is powerful; God’s Word has the answer to every human need and problem. The great need of the hour is for Baptist preachers — pastors and evangelists — who are able to “*help them much*” through the scriptures (*Acts 18:27*).

This course of study in the New Testament Epistles is designed to help Christ’s servants become mighty in the scriptures. Each sacred book is treated using an outline that follows a rather logical line of enquiry. Though it takes the form of a survey, the student will find far more than a brief overview. At the very least, this curriculum should provoke and provide direction toward further study.

The epistles are treated in chronological order within their groups. Thirteen epistles make up the Pauline Epistles group and seven comprise the General Epistles group, with the Epistle to the Hebrews in between. The lectures take a Bible-believing approach. The Word of God (the Authorized, King James Version) is believed, not corrected. A scholarly discipline such as New Testament Introduction is often riddled with naturalistic speculation and critical theories. Throughout this publication the doctrines of the divine inspiration and providential preservation of the Holy Scriptures are jealously guarded. The student’s faith will only be strengthened.

May the Lord’s richest blessings attend the use of this publication in private study and classroom lectures.

Pastor Robert J. Sargent
Oak Harbor, Washington
March 2008

THE BIBLE

This book is the greatest Book on earth
Unparalleled it stands
Its Author, God – its truth, divine
Inspired in every word and line
Though written by human hands.

This is the volume of the cross
Its saving truth is sure
Its doctrine pure, its history true
Its Gospel old, but ever new
Shall evermore endure.

This is the solid Rock of Truth
Which all attacks defy,
O'er every stormy blast of time
It towers with majesty sublime
It lives and never dies.

Though the cover is worn and pages are torn
And places bear traces of tears—
Yet more precious than gold is this Book worn and old,
It can shatter and scatter my fears.

When I prayerfully look in this blessed old Book
Many pleasures and treasures I see.
Many promises of love from the Father above
Who is nearest and dearest to me.

This Book is my guide, 'Tis a friend by my side
It will brighten and lighten my way.
And each promise I find soothes and gladdens my mind
As I teach it and preach it each day.

To this Book I will cling. Of its worth I will sing
Tho' great losses and crosses be mine.
For I cannot despair, tho' surrounded by care
While possessing this blessing divine.

I see my Lord in the Bible whenever I chance to look.
He's the theme of the Bible, the center and heart of the Book.
He's the Rose of Sharon, the Lily fair,
Whenever I open my Bible, the Lord of the Bible is there.
He, in the Book's beginning, gave the earth its form.
He's the Ark of safety, to bear the brunt of the storm.
The burning bush in the desert, the budding of Aaron's rod —
Whenever I open the Bible, I see the Son of God.

The Lamb upon Mount Moriah, the Ladder from earth to sky
The scarlet cord in the window, the serpent lifted high
The smitten Rock of the desert, the Shepherd with staff and crook
The face of my Lord I discover whenever I open the Book.

He's the Seed of the woman, the Saviour virgin born
He's the Son of David, whom men rejected with scorn.
The Lord of eternal glory whom John the apostle saw
The Light of the celestial city, the Lamb without spot or flaw
The Bridegroom coming at midnight for Whom His people look
Whenever I open the Bible, I see my Lord in the Book.

Therefore...
Think of it prayerfully — study it carefully
Deep in thine heart let its oracles dwell.
Ponder its mystery, slight not its history
None can e'er love it too fondly or well.

To The
Glory of God

and to
My Sweetheart
Vicki Lynn

without whose love, faithfulness,
encouragement, and patient
sacrifice over the years, very
little would get done.

— Proverbs 18:22 —

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HEBREWS

The book of Hebrews is the most unique of all the New Testament epistles. It rises like the high tower of a magnificent bridge that transports its readers from an old order to a new; from a land of shadows to a place of perfection. It is a stately theological and literary landmark that *explains* the Old Testament and *affirms* the New Testament. It has been called the fifth Gospel “because it tells of Jesus’ finished work on earth and His continuing work in Heaven.”⁽¹⁾

No other book in the New Testament compares to it. It is grouped with the epistles, yet it is more than an epistle. “*Hebrews begins like an essay, proceeds like a sermon, and ends like a letter.*”⁽²⁾ Some consider it to be an example of a typical Pauline synagogue address.

For all its obvious God-given authority and doctrinal importance to Christianity, the book of Hebrews is attended by several puzzling questions. “Who wrote the book?” “Where and when was it written?” “To whom was it written?” The answers to these important questions, though not critical to the book’s authority, have managed to elude Bible students down through the ages.

I. THE AUTHOR

God, the Holy Spirit — *II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 3:5.*

II. THE WRITER

Although most copies of the Bible title this book “The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews,” there is a long-running dispute as to the identity of its writer because no name is mentioned.

While the apostle Paul is considered by most to be the likely penman, other suggestions have included:

- Barnabas — suggested by Tertullian (160-230 A.D.).
- Luke — suggested by Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.).
- Clement of Rome — suggested by Origen (185-254 A.D.).
- Apollos — suggested by Luther (1483-1546 A.D.).

Practically everyone holds that, if it wasn’t the apostle Paul, it was certainly a close associate of his.

1 Jensen, I. L. Jensen’s Survey of the New Testament. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1981: pg.410.

2 Hiebert, D. E. An Introduction to the New Testament. Waynesboro, Georgia: Gabriel Publishing, 2003 (Three Volume Collection): Volume 3, pg.68 — citing: Rees, T. *Epistle to the Hebrews* in the ISBE, 2:1355b.

A. ARGUMENTS AGAINST A PAULINE ORIGIN:

1. In his thirteen epistles, Paul clearly identifies himself in the very first verse (and often elsewhere within the letter). In contrast, the book of Hebrews names no writer, nor mentions Paul anywhere.
2. The literary form of the book of Hebrews is different from the epistles that identify Paul as their writer. Because its style and use of different expressions differs from Paul's identifiable epistles, it simply cannot be his work.
3. Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles (*Romans 11:13*). Why, then, would he write such a lengthy treatise to Jewish Christians?

Response: Paul did preach to Jews, and had a great burden to win his own countrymen to Christ. He was also an ardent opponent of the error of Judaism.

4. The writer of Hebrews appears to have been a second-generation Christian (like Luke, *Luke 1:1,2*) who obtained his information from others.

"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was CONFIRMED UNTO US BY THEM THAT HEARD HIM" — Hebrews 2:3.

Paul claimed to have received his revelation directly from Christ (*Galatians 1:11,12*), not other eye- or ear- witnesses.

B. ARGUMENTS FOR A PAULINE ORIGIN:

1. Peter was the apostle to the Circumcision (*Galatians 2:8*), and in his second epistle (written to Jewish and Gentile Christians) he referred to a letter that Paul wrote to them:

"Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother PAUL also according to the wisdom given unto him hath WRITTEN UNTO YOU; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ..." — II Peter 3:15-18.

Note that this writing of Paul's:

- a. Was addressed to the same people Peter had written to (*verse 15b* — "written unto you").
- b. Was called "scripture" — *verse 16e*.

- c. Contained some things “hard to be understood” (verse 16), which is apropos of the book of Hebrews.

Peter’s plea in verses 16-18 is found throughout the book of Hebrews.

HEBREWS	II PETER
<p>“Of whom we have many things to say, and HARD TO BE UTTERED, seeing ye are dull of hearing” — 5:11.</p>	<p>“As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things HARD TO BE UNDERSTOOD, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction” — 3:16.</p>
<p>“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them SLIP” — 2:1.</p>	<p>“Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, FALL from your own steadfastness” — 3:17.</p>
<p>“But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, IF we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end” — 3:6.</p>	
<p>“Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it” — 4:1.</p>	
<p>“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man FALL after the same example of unbelief” — 4:11.</p>	
<p>“Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without WAVERING; (for he is faithful that promised)” — 10:23.</p>	
<p>“Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with GRACE; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein” — 13:9.</p>	<p>“But grow in GRACE, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” — 3:18.</p>

There is no other epistle of Paul (with the exception perhaps of Galatians) that could fit this description — other than the book of Hebrews.

2. The writer of the book of Hebrews was (or had been) in prison, Hebrews 10:34.

“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.”

Paul was in prison many times (II Corinthians 11:23).

3. The quotation from *Habakkuk 2:4* (“the just shall live by his faith”) in *Hebrews 10:38* is also found in Paul’s epistles to the Romans (1:17) and the Galatians (3:11). No other New Testament writer repeats this statement.

4. The writer of Hebrews had a close association with Timothy.

“Know ye that OUR BROTHER TIMOTHY is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you” — *Hebrews 13:23*.

Paul was intimately associated with Timothy. Though he often spoke of Timothy as his son, he also called him “our brother” in *II Corinthians 1:1* and *Philemon 1*.

5. Contrary to the opinions of some scholars, the book of Hebrews does cover some typically Pauline themes. For example:

The preëminence of Christ	<i>Hebrews 1:1-3</i>	<i>Colossians 1:14-19</i>
The self-emptying of Christ	<i>Hebrews 2:9-19</i>	<i>Philippians 2:5-11</i>
The blood atonement of Christ	<i>Hebrews 9:24-28</i>	<i>Colossians 1:14,20</i>
The intercessory work of Christ	<i>Hebrews 7:25</i>	<i>Romans 8:34</i>
The authentication of the apostles	<i>Hebrews 2:3,4</i>	<i>II Corinthians 12:12</i>
The importance of Faith	<i>Hebrews 10:38; 11:7</i>	<i>Romans 1:17</i>
The use of historic examples	<i>Hebrews 3:7–4:8</i>	<i>I Corinthians 10:1-11</i>
The passing of the Old Covenant	<i>Hebrews 8:1-13</i>	<i>II Corinthians 3:6-18</i>

6. The closing section of the book of Hebrews (13:18-25) is distinctively Pauline in character. For example:

“Pray for us” (13:18).	<i>Romans 6:19; Colossians 4:3.</i>
“a good conscience” (13:18).	<i>Acts 24:16; II Timothy 1:3.</i>
“God of peace” (13:20).	<i>Romans 15:33; Philippians 4:19; I Thessalonians 5:23.</i>
“I have written” (13:22).	<i>Romans 15:15; I Corinthians 5:11; Galatians 6:11.</i>
“Salute” (13:24).	<i>Romans 16:5,7,9-16,21,22; I Corinthians 16:19; II Corinthians 13:13; Philippians 4:21,22; Colossians 4:15; II Timothy 4:19; Titus 3:15; Philemon 23.</i>
“Grace be with you all” (13:25).	<i>Romans 16:24; I Corinthians 16:23,24; II Corinthians 13:14; Galatians 6:18; Ephesians 6:24; Philippians 4:23; Colossians 4:18; I Thessalonians 5:28; II Thessalonians 3:18; I Timothy 6:21; II Timothy 4:22; Titus 3:15; Philemon 25.</i>

7. Paul's extensive knowledge of the Old Testament (*Acts 22:3; Galatians 1:14*) would have suited him to pen the book of Hebrews.

C. **WHY NO WRITER IS NAMED:**

The only sure conclusion about the identity of the writer of the book of Hebrews is that he is anonymous. If Paul *was* the writer, there must have been a reason he did not include his customary salutation and identify himself. Three have been suggested:

1. Paul had a passion to win Jews to Christ (*Romans 9:3; 10:1*) and while at Rome spent much time explaining Christ and the Gospel to them (*Acts 28:17-30*). However, he was not generally appreciated by many Jews (e.g. *Acts 9:22,23; 13:45,50; 14:2,19; 17:5,13; 18:12; 20:3,19; 21:27-32; 23:12*), so to begin the epistle with his name would have been like "waving a red rag before a bull!" In order not to offend the Jews he left his name off the epistle.

Response: The epistle was written to Jewish believers who had one time shown great kindness to the writer (*Hebrews 10:24*). It was not directly addressed to the general Jewish populace.

2. In *Hebrews 3:1*, the Holy Spirit refers to the Lord Jesus Christ as the "Apostle of our profession." Because of this, some think that Paul would not use the title of himself.
3. The appeal of the book is not to apostolic authority, but to the Old Testament. Therefore, there was no need for Paul to state his apostleship.

III. **THE PLACE OF WRITING**

The only clue is found in the words, "*They of ITALY salute you*" (*13:24*). However this is somewhat ambiguous. Was the writer in Italy, sending greetings to the recipients of the letter from the saints there — or was the writer elsewhere (in the company of some expatriate Italians) sending their greetings on to the recipients of the letter in Rome?

It is impossible to know. If the writer was Paul, then based on his known whereabouts and Timothy's liberty (see below), a fair conclusion is that Paul was writing from Rome.

Another "prison" alternative with respect to Paul was that he wrote the epistle during his two-year confinement at Cæsarea (*Acts 23:33; 24:27*). The church there began with a membership of Italians — *Acts 10:1&c*. The difficulty with this view is that there is no record of Timothy being at Cæsarea, let alone being incarcerated there.

IV. THE ADDRESSEE

Identifying the addressee of the epistle is a context vital to interpreting the epistle — especially some of its more difficult passages.

Though no specific addressee is named, the letter is certainly not Catholic. The (plural) words “you,” “your,” or “yourselves” are used 37 times, indicating that it was written to a particular group of people.

If written from Rome, where was it written to? It is impossible to know.

However, from the text we can determine some facts about the people to whom the epistle was originally addressed. We know they were:

A. JEWS:

1. They were familiar with the Old Testament. See: *Romans 9:4,5*.
2. The letter begins with God, talks about the “time past,” the “fathers,” and the “prophets” (*Hebrews 1:1*) — all familiar to Jews.

B. CHRISTIANS:

They were:

1. Addressed as “brethren” — *Hebrews 3:1,12*. Also: *Hebrews 13:1*.
2. Addressed as “beloved” — *Hebrews 6:9*.
3. Said to be “partakers of the heavenly calling” — *Hebrews 3:1*.
4. Said to be “partakers of Christ” — *Hebrews 3:14*.
5. Exhorted to grow in the “things that accompany salvation” — *Hebrews 6:9*.
6. Had suffered for their faith in Christ — *Hebrews 10:32,33; 12:4*.
7. Reminded that God chastens His sons — *Hebrews 12:5-12*.

C. IMMATURE CHRISTIANS — *Hebrews 5:11-14*.

1. They had been saved for some time, and were possibly second generation Christians (*Hebrews 2:3*).
2. They were still “babes in Christ.”

D. “CHURCHED” CHRISTIANS:

They:

1. Were exhorted to be faithful to the assembly — *Hebrews 10:25*.
2. Were exhorted to submit to their pastors — *Hebrews 13:7,17*.

3. Had demonstrated Christian charity toward saints and servants of the Lord — *Hebrews 6:10; 10:37*.

E. WAVERING JEWISH CHRISTIANS:

They were in danger of wavering from the faith. There were three reasons for this:

1. Their own spiritual immaturity — “dull” and “slothful” (*Hebrews 5:11; 6:12*).
2. The inroads of Judaism — seeking to pull them back into the Jewish fold.
3. Their need to leave the Jewish “camp” and quit halting between two opinions — *Hebrews 13:13*.

F. KNOWN TO THE WRITER:

The writer was obviously personally familiar with the intended recipients of the letter.

“For YE had compassion of ME in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of YOUR goods...” — Hebrews 10:34.

“But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be RESTORED TO YOU the sooner” — Hebrews 13:19.

“Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I WILL SEE YOU” — Hebrews 13:23.

Exactly where this church was located is also a matter of speculation. Some common suggestions are:

- Rome — since there were many Jews in Rome (*Acts 28:17-29*), and they were generally more wealthy (*Hebrews 6:10*). However, there is no record of the believers there having suffered persecution before the reign of terror under Nero (64 A.D.). Jews had suffered during the reign of Claudius (*Acts 18:2*), but not for being Christians.
- Jerusalem — based on the descriptions of the temple and its service (*Hebrews 8–10*). Jerusalem or Palestine is the traditional view of the epistle’s destination. The reference to persecution in *Hebrews 10:32,33* fits the Jerusalem church, but the statement “ye have not yet resisted unto blood” (*Hebrews 12:4*) does not in the light of Stephen’s and James’ early martyrdom. Furthermore, the saints at Jerusalem were the recipients of benevolence rather than the dispensers of it (*Hebrews 6:10; Romans 15:25,26; I Corinthians 16:3*).
- Corinth — since the book of Romans was written from Corinth and contains greetings TO many believers in Rome. Hebrews is a reciprocal letter.

V. THE DATE OF WRITING

Based on the following considerations, the book of Hebrews was written by Paul from Rome in **63 A.D.**.

A. CLUES:

1. It is clear from the text that the epistle was written before the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem by the Romans in 70 A.D..

“But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of THIS building” — Hebrews 9:11.

The temple rituals are spoken of as still functioning:

“...seeing that there ARE [present tense] priests that offer gifts according to the law” — Hebrews 8:4.

“Now that which decayeth and waxeth old [the old covenant] is READY TO VANISH away” — Hebrews 8:14.

“And every priest STANDETH [present tense] daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins” — Hebrews 10:11.

2. It appears Paul was still in Rome (or at least in Italy)

“Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you” — Hebrews 13:24.

3. Timothy was at liberty — *Hebrews 13:23.*

“Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.”

There are two known (historical) possibilities for the timing of Timothy’s liberty:

- a. At the end of Paul’s first imprisonment in Rome, when he sent Timothy to Philippi — *Philippians 2:19,23*. This places the writing of Hebrews at 63 A.D..
- b. At the very end of Paul’s second Roman imprisonment, assuming Timothy made it to Rome as requested (*II Timothy 4:9,21*), and was imprisoned then released prior to Paul’s execution. This is less likely, and would place the writing of Hebrews at 67 A.D..

B. CHRONOLOGY:

The chronology is as follows:

1. 61 A.D.:

Following a momentous sea voyage from Palestine (Cæsarea) to Italy, Paul is placed under house arrest in Rome (*Acts 28:16,30*).

2. 63-66 A.D.
Paul is released and travels extensively in Asia, and Europe, possibly making an evangelistic journey to Spain.
3. 66/67 A.D.
Paul is arrested for a second time, and spends his last days in a Roman prison.
4. 67 A.D.
Peter penned his second epistle. Its recipients were familiar with most (if not all) of Paul's writings (*II Peter 3:15,16*), which included a certain letter of Paul's containing things that were "hard to be understood." This was probably the book of Hebrews.
5. c.67 A.D.
Paul is martyred.

VI. CANONICITY

Largely because of its anonymity, the book of Hebrews was listed among the antilogomena (disputed books). There was little question regarding its contents — they brim with divine authority.

A. IN THE WEST:

1. Clement of Rome (d.102 A.D.) quoted extensively from the book of Hebrews in his *Letter to the Corinthians*.
2. Justin Martyr (100-165 A.D.) wrote of Christ as an "apostle" (*Hebrews 3:1*).
3. With the "Novatian Schism" the book was rejected as canonical by the establishment "Church." Novatian (d.258 A.D.) was a Roman pastor who led the first "split" in Christendom (251 A.D.), largely over the issue of church discipline and what to do with the "lapsi" — those who renounced Christ during times of persecution, then sought restoration to the church once persecution abated. The Novatians (early Baptists) used the book of Hebrews to defend their denial of readmittance. See: Hebrews 6:6.
4. The Church of Rome rejected the book of Hebrews until the end of the fourth century A.D., when it was finally accepted as canonical.

B. IN THE EAST:

1. Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.) quoted from Hebrews frequently.
2. Origen (185-254 A.D.) quoted from Hebrews as authoritative.

The canonicity of the book of Hebrews (and its Pauline origin) was accepted by the Medieval “Church.” It wasn’t until the Protestant Reformation that the early doubts were revisited.

- Luther (1483-1556 A.D.) doubted its canonicity.
- Calvin (1509-64 A.D.) questioned whether Paul was the writer.

VII. OCCASION

The epistle was written to stem the drift away from the faith on the part of Jewish believers by reminding them of the superiority of Christianity and rallying their faith. It was written to “rekindle a dampening fire.”

A. THE THREE “PULLS” ON JEWISH CHRISTIANS:

The recipients of the epistle were being “torn” from three directions:

1. Customs — *see: Acts 21:20,21.*

It seems many Jewish believers struggled with the relationship between the Old and the New.

2. Persecutions — *see: Hebrews 10:32-37.*

Trials had shaken their faith and taken their eyes off the Lord.

3. Judaizers — those who attempted to “sew up the rent veil.”

These false teachers came nigh to the truth of the Gospel, but fell away or drew back — *Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:38,39.*

Faith (versus works) was the deciding issue. *See: Acts 15:1,5; Galatians 3:1-4; 5:1; Colossians 2:8-11,16,17; II Peter 2:1,2,17-22.*

These elements brought great pressure upon the weak Christians to return to the Jewish fold.

B. THE FIVE STEPS FROM FAITH TO APOSTASY:

There are five parenthetical warning passages in the book of Hebrews. These not only show the dangers, but also the downward progression into full-blown apostasy — a departure from the faith into Judaism.

NEGLECT — *Hebrews 2:1-4.*



UNBELIEF — *Hebrews 3:7-19.*



SLOTHFULNESS — *Hebrews 5:11–6:12.*



WAVERING/WEAKENING — *Hebrews 10:23-35.*



APOSTASY — *Hebrews 12:18-29.*

VIII. STYLE

In *Hebrews 13:22*, the book of Hebrews is called a “letter” (an epistle) and a “word of exhortation.” The exhortation comes as teaching and warning.

TEACHING

“God, who at sundry times and in divers manners SPAKE in time past unto the fathers by the prophets” — 1:1.

WARNING

“See that ye refuse not him that SPEAKETH...” — 12:25.

The book uses the Old Testament extensively, particularly the Pentateuch. “There are not fewer than eighty-six direct references to the O.T. in Hebrews, and these are traceable to at least one hundred O.T. passages.”⁽³⁾

IX. THE THEME

BETTER.

The word “better” is found 13 times in the epistle. It is a comparative adjective expressing the superiority of the New Testament over the Old.

- *Hebrews 1:4* — Christ is better than the angels.
- *Hebrews 6:9* — better things.
- *Hebrews 7:7* — the less is blessed of the better.
- *Hebrews 7:19* — a better hope.
- *Hebrews 7:22* — a better testament.
- *Hebrews 8:6* — better promises.
- *Hebrews 9:23* — better sacrifices.
- *Hebrews 10:34* — a better and an enduring substance.
- *Hebrews 11:16* — a better country.
- *Hebrews 11:35* — a better resurrection.
- *Hebrews 11:40* — some better thing.
- *Hebrews 12:24* — the blood ... that speaketh better things.

In addition to this word, the epistle uses the expression “*more excellent*” three times — in *Hebrews 1:4*; *8:6* and *11:4*.

Christ ...
 Outspeaks the prophets (*1:2*).
 Outranks the angels (*1:4*).
 Outlasts the creation (*1:11,12*).
 Outperforms the priests (*10:11,12*).
 Outshines the Law (*7:19*).
 Outdoes the sacrifices (*9:24-28*).

3 Scroggie, W. G. *Know Your Bible*. London, England: Pickering & Inglis, 1972. pg. 282.

Another key expression is “let us.” The 13 “heads of let us” are as follows:

- *Hebrews 4:1* — “Let us therefore fear...”
- *Hebrews 4:11* — “Let us labour therefore to enter...”
- *Hebrews 4:14* — “Let us hold fast our profession.”
- *Hebrews 4:16* — “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne...”
- *Hebrews 6:1* — “Let us go on to perfection...”
- *Hebrews 10:22* — “Let us draw near...”
- *Hebrews 10:23* — “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith...”
- *Hebrews 10:24* — “Let us consider one another...”
- *Hebrews 12:1* — “Let us lay aside every weight...”
- *Hebrews 12:1* — “Let us run with patience the race...”
- *Hebrews 12:28* — “Let us have grace...”
- *Hebrews 13:13* — “Let us go forth therefore unto him...”
- *Hebrews 13:15* — “Let us offer the sacrifice of praise...”

X. THE KEY VERSE

The “thematic” key verse of the book of Hebrews is *Hebrews 13:13*.

“Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.”

This summarizes the appeal of the book. The Jewish believers needed to totally separate themselves from the Jewish fold.

“Christianity is Christ, and Christ is final ... Christianity does not supplement Judaism — it displaces it.” ⁽⁴⁾

Another key verse that expresses the thrust of the book is *Hebrews 4:14*.

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.”

This verse states the book’s central teaching (Christ) and solicits a response (hold fast).

XI. ITS OUTLINE:

The epistle falls into two main divisions:



4 Scroggie, W. G. *The Unfolding Drama of Redemption*. London, England: Pickering & Inglis, 1970: Volume III, pg. 257.

A detailed outline of the book of Hebrews is as follows.

THE BOOK OF HEBREWS

I. THE SUPERIORITY OF CHRIST 1:1–8:5

A. Better than the Angels (1:4–2:18).

1. In PERSON — 1:4-6.
2. In POSITION — 1:7-14.
3. In PRONOUNCEMENT — 2:1-5.

❶ **First Parenthetical Warning — 2:1-4.**

4. In PERFECTING — 2:6-18.

B. Better than Moses (3:1–4:2).

1. Two Faithful MEN — 3:1,2.
2. Two Fantastic HOUSES — 3:3-6.
3. Two Factions of FATHERS — 3:7–4:2.

❷ **Second Parenthetical Warning — 3:7-19.**

C. Better than Joshua (4:3-13).

1. CREATION'S Rest — 4:3,4.
2. CANAAN'S Rest — 4:5-8.
3. CHRIST'S Rest — 4:9-13.

D. Better than Aaron (4:14–8:5).

1. In COMPASSION — 4:14–5:3.
2. In COMMISSION — 5:4-10.

❸ **Third Parenthetical Warning — 5:11–6:12.**

3. In CONFIRMATION — 6:13-20.
4. In CONTINUATION — 7:1-28.
5. In CONCLUSION — 8:1-5.

B. Better than Moses (3:1–4:2).

II. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE COVENANT 8:6–10:18

A. A Better Covenant (8:6-13).

1. Based upon Better PROMISES — 8:6-9.
2. Blessed with Better PROVISIONS — 8:10-13.

B. A Better Tabernacle (9:1-12).

1. An Earthly REFLECTION — 9:1-10.
2. A Heavenly REALITY — 9:11,12.

C. A Better Sacrifice (9:13-28).

1. The Blood of CREATURES — 9:13,16-22.
2. The Blood of CHRIST — 9:14,15,23-28.

D. A Better Atonement (10:1-18).

1. The FLEETING SHADOWS — 10:1-9.
2. The FINISHED SALVATION — 10:10-18.

III. THE SUPERIORITY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE 10:19–13:17

A. A Better Privilege (10:19-39).

1. The ENTITLEMENT of Hope — 10:19-21.
2. The ENTREATY of Hope — 10:22-25.

④ **Fourth Parenthetical Warning** — 10:23-35.

B. A Better Company (11:1–12:29).

1. The DEFINITION of Faith — 11:1-3.
2. The DEMONSTRATION of Faith — 11:4-40.
3. The DUTY of Faith — 12:1-3.
4. The DISCIPLINE of Faith — 12:4-14.
5. The DIRECTION of Faith — 12:14-17.

⑤ **Fifth Parenthetical Warning** — 12:18-29.

C. A Better Way (13:1-17).

1. The COMPASSION of Love — 13:1-3.
2. The CONDUCT of Love — 13:4.
3. The CONTENTMENT of Love — 13:5,6.
4. The CONSIDERATION of Love — 13:7.
5. The CONSISTENCY of Love — 13:8,9.
6. The CONVENING of Love — 13:10-14.
7. The COMMITMENT of Love — 13:15,16.
8. The COMPLIANCE of Love — 13:17.

IV. Conclusion

13:18-25

- A. The Writer's Appeal (13:18,19,22).
- B. The Writer's Benediction (13:20,21).
- C. The Writer's Connection (13:23-25).

XII. HOMILETIC APPEAL

The spiritual richness of the book of Hebrews and its practical applications of truth affords the preacher many homiletic gems. For example:

- The Preëminence of Christ — 1:1-4.
 - The Divine Articulation (2)
 - The Divine Architect (2)
 - The Divine Adjective (3)
 - The Divine Atonement (3)
 - The Divine Acclamation (3,4)
- How Shall We Escape? — 2:1-4.
- Death — 2:14,15.
 - Through death (14)
 - The Power of Death (14)
 - The Fear of Death (15)
- Heart Disease: It's Cause & Its Cure — 3:7-19.
- Our Powerful Bible — 4:12.
- The Privilege of Prayer — 4:14-16.
- Milk, Meat, & Maturity — 5:11-14.
- Will Your Anchor Hold? — 6:17-20.
- Saved to the Uttermost — 7:25-27.
- Nothing But the Blood — 9:13-22.
- The Three-Fold Work of Christ — 9:24-28.
 - He HATH Appeared — *the Application of the Blood* (26)
 - NOW to Appear — *the Efficacy of the Blood* (24)
 - He SHALL Appear — *the Expectation of the Blood* (28)
- But This Man — 10:11-14.
- Why Church is Important — 10:23-25.
- Faith (11). There are a multitude of sermons from this chapter!
- Looking Unto Jesus — 12:1-3.
- Whom the Lord Loveth He Chasteneth — 12:4-13.

- The Blight of Bitterness — 12:14,15.
- Why Wait for Marriage? — 13:4.
- The Abiding Presence of Christ — 13:5,6.
- Yesterday, Today, and Forever — 13:8.
- You and Your Pastors — 13:7,17.
- How to Take Hard Preaching (“suffer”) — 13:22.

XIII. KEY DOCTRINAL PASSAGES

The book of Hebrews is a doctrinal book first and foremost. Some of the major doctrinal passages are:

A. THE DOCTRINE OF THE SCRIPTURES:

1. Inspiration — 1:1; 3:7; 9:8; 10:15.
2. Efficacy — 4:12.

B. THE DOCTRINE OF CHRIST:

Jesus Christ is the central figure and theme of the book. Much is said concerning Him. *See: Hebrews 3:1.*

1. His Person.
 - a. Deity — 1:2-12; 5:5; 7:1-11; 13:8.
 - b. Humanity — 2:9,17,18; 7:14.
 - c. Sinlessness — 4:15; 7:26.
2. His Work.
 - a. Incarnation — 2:17; 5:8; 10:5-7.
 - b. Past Work of Redemption — 9:12-15,24-28; 10:10-14; 13:20.
 - c. Present Work of Intercession — 4:14,15; 5:6,10; 7:24,26; 9:24.
 - d. Prospective Work — 9:28.

Note: The Bible uses the term “begotten” of Jesus Christ in *Hebrews 1:5,6; 5:5*. This is a title showing His relationship with the Father — *not* a statement that Christ had a beginning. He was and is a begotten Son from eternity past. (The word is also used of Isaac in *Hebrews 11:17*, calling him Abraham’s “*ONLY begotten son.*” But Abraham had other sons — including Ishmael, who was born first.)

C. THE DOCTRINE OF SALVATION:

Faith is the operative word when it comes to salvation — *Hebrews 4:2*.

1. Faith Defined — *Hebrews 11:1-3*.

- a. Substance — something you can put your hands on.
- b. Evidence — of things not seen (e.g. creation, cross, celestial city).

Faith is believing the Word of God and acting upon it.

“Faith is not a leap into the dark; it is a leap into the Book.”

2. Faith Exercised.

- a. *Hebrews 10:38,39* speaks about the “step” of faith. When it comes to salvation, a line is drawn and the sinner has two choices:
 - Draw back — and remain lost.
 - Believe — and be saved.
- b. *Hebrews 11:13* gives the “steps” of faith (similar to those found in *II Timothy 1:12*).
 - Received the promises.
 - Persuaded of the promises.
 - Embraced the promises.
 - Confessed the promises.

3. Faith Increased.

The Hebrew Christians were rebuked for remaining stagnant in their faith. They were exhorted to grow — *Hebrews 6:1-3,9*.

The word “perfection” here does not mean kind of sinless perfection. It means “complete” and has to do with maturity. The following cross references define the word — *Hebrews 7:11,19; 9:9; 10:1,14; 12:23; 13:21*.

D. THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHURCH:

1. Christ sang in the Church (*Hebrews 2:12*) — showing that the first church was in existence before the day of Pentecost (*Matthew 26:30*).
2. A faithful church is the Lord’s house (*Hebrews 3:6*).
3. Faithful church attendance is enjoined (*Hebrews 10:25*).
4. Submission to pastoral oversight and leadership is expected (*Hebrews 13:7,17*).
5. There is a church in glory (*Hebrews 12:23*).

I. THE DOCTRINE OF ANGELS:

1. Their number — *Hebrews 12:22*.
2. Their position in relation to men — *Hebrews 2:6,7*.
3. Their position in relation to Christ — *Hebrews 1:4-7,13; 2:9*.
4. Their specific ministry — *Hebrews 2:2; Acts 7:53*.
5. Their general ministry to believers — *Hebrews 1:14; 13:2*.

J. THE DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS:

Hebrews 12:22-24 lists eight things we will see one day in Heaven's glory:

1. The New Jerusalem — the heavenly city (*Revelation 21:10-27*).
2. The Innumerable Company of Angels (*Revelation 5:11*).
3. The General Assembly — the saved (*Revelation 7:9*).
4. The Church of the Firstborn — the bride (*Revelation 19:7,8*).
5. God, the Judge (*Revelation 20:11*).
6. Old Testament Saints — the spirits of just men made perfect (*Hebrews 11:40*).
7. Jesus (*Revelation 5:6*).
8. The Blood (*Revelation 1:5*).

XIV. DIFFICULT PASSAGES

Two passages in the book of Hebrews have perplexed many and have been used to prove the possibility of falling from grace and losing one's salvation. They are:

*"For it is impossible for those who were once ENLIGHTENED, and have TASTED of the heavenly gift, and were made PARTAKERS of the Holy Ghost, And have TASTED the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall **FALL AWAY**, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame" — Hebrews 6:4-6.*

AND

"For if we SIN WILFULLY after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the

covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?” — Hebrews 10:26-29.

The KEY to understanding these passages is the context of the book of Hebrews:

- The epistle was written to Christians — those who “crossed the line of faith” and had believed to the saving of their soul. See: Hebrews 10:39.
- Their adversaries were unbelieving Jews and Judaizers — those who had “come up to the line of faith” and then drew back unto perdition. See: Hebrews 10:39.
- The problem was, the believers had not moved on and away from that “line” in Christian growth and maturity. When they looked ahead, they saw suffering; when they looked back, they saw the old life and customs.
- They were being pulled in both directions. They needed to hold fast and move on — hence *Hebrews 13:13.*

It is impossible for one who has received the gift of eternal salvation to ever lose that gift (*John 10:28,29; 1 Peter 1:5; etc.*) But it is also impossible for one who has heard the Gospel and rejected it to be saved without faith.

Hebrews 6:

This passage is best explained by what happened when Stephen preached to the Jews in Jerusalem — *Acts 7:51-54*. His hearers were “convicted, but not converted.” They were enlightened; they could even “taste” salvation; they were convicted by the Holy Ghost, but ... instead of believing, they drew back (“fell away”). To reject Jesus Christ makes it impossible for them to be saved through repentance and faith.

Hebrews 10:

To sin willfully (deliberately) after receiving the *knowledge* of the Gospel means to reject the Gospel, in which case there is no more (other) sacrifice available that can take away sin. There is no “plan of salvation #2!” To reject Christ is to crucify Him afresh, because sin nailed Him to the cross in the first place. To reject Christ is to despise the working of the Holy Spirit Who produces conviction of sin. The blood of Christ sanctifies in the sense that He died for EVERY man (*Hebrews 2:9*).

Note: If these verses did teach the possibility of losing salvation, they also teach the impossibility of ever getting it back!

EXERCISES

1. List all the references to the following words and their cognates found in Hebrews:

blood	covenant	eternal, everlasting
faith	for ever	heaven
high priest	hope	lest
love	ministry	more excellent
new	partaker	perfect, perfection
promises	sacrifice	therefore

2. List all the members of the “Hall of Faith.”
3. Explain the difference between the priesthood of Aaron (Levitical) and Melchizedek. What is the significance of this?
4. Explain how chastisement is a mark of salvation.
5. Explain how the parenthetical warnings in the book of Hebrews show a downward progression into apostasy.
6. Identify the Jesus of *Hebrews 4:8*.
7. What did the blood of animals do with respect to man’s sin, and what did the blood of animals not do with respect to man’s sin? Explain, citing scripture.
8. What is the message of the “rent veil?” Explain, with scripture.
9. List the names and titles of Jesus Christ found in the book of Hebrews.
10. Why does becoming bitter “fail” of the grace of God (*Hebrews 12:15*)?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Hebrews

1. Why has Hebrews been called the fifth Gospel?
2. Hebrews begins like an _____, proceeds like a _____, and ends like a _____.
3. What puzzling questions about Hebrews have eluded Bible students down through the ages?
4. List four arguments against a Pauline origin of Hebrews.
5. List seven arguments for a Pauline origin of Hebrews.
6. What are three possible explanations for the writer of the book of Hebrews being anonymous?
7. List the characteristics of the addressee(s) of Hebrews.
8. What clues point to Hebrews being written in 63 A.D.?
9. How did Peter in his second epistle refer to Paul's epistles?
10. The recipients of the epistle were being "torn" from what three directions?
11. List the five steps from faith to apostasy.
12. The epistle's "word of exhortation" comes in what two forms?

13. List the 13 “betters” that declare the theme of the book.

14. List the 13 “heads of let us” harvested from the book.

15. Write out the thematic key verse of the book.

16. List the two main divisions of the book.

17. Characterize the superiority of Christ in *Hebrews 1:1–8:5*.

18. Outline the superiority of the Christian life.

19. List the passages in Hebrews that deal with the doctrine of the scriptures.

20. List the passages in Hebrews that deal with the deity of Christ.

21. What is the definition of “faith” given in Hebrews?

22. List the eight things we will see one day in Heaven’s glory.

23. Respond to the claim that *Hebrews 6:4-6* teaches the possibility of falling from grace and losing one’s salvation.

24. Finish the sentence, “If [Hebrews Chapters 6 and 10] did teach the possibility of losing salvation, they also teach...

New Testament Epistles

The GENERAL EPISTLES

263 The General Epistles

265 First Peter

287 James

307 Second Peter

323 Jude

335 I John

357 II John

365 III John

THE GENERAL EPISTLES

The General Epistles are so-called because they are not addressed to any specific individual, church, or group of churches (with the exception of II & III John). In other words, they are more general in their addressee and more encyclical in nature.

They are also referred to as the “Catholic” Epistles, though not because of any relationship to the Roman Catholic religion. The Greek word καθολικός, *katholikos* means “universal.”

The most accurate designation is “Non-Pauline.” The epistle to the Hebrews is best set apart from the Pauline and Non-Pauline groups because of the uncertainty of its writer. (It also stands apart from these groups in its content.)

This group of seven General epistles is placed at the end of the New Testament. They constitute less than 6% of the New Testament.

Many scholars view the Word of God with a naturalistic mind set — i.e., they treat the sacred writings more as a product of men rather than the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit through men. They will speak of Paul as representing *Gentile Christianity*; James and Jude, *Judaic Christianity*; and Peter a *Mediating Christianity*. While the miracle of divine inspiration was a confluency that preserved the styles of the human writers, there is nonetheless a divine unity in the Word of God — and among all the New Testament epistles. James quoted from Paul (*James 4:5; Galatians 5:17*) and Peter (*James 4:6; I Peter 5:5*), and Peter referenced Paul’s writings (*II Peter 3:15,16*).

The General Epistles may be classified as follows:

JACOBEAN	James Jude
PETRINE	I Peter II Peter
JOHANNINE	I John II John III John

A comparison of the various epistolary writers is useful. It provides a helpful insight into their various emphases. The following chart⁽¹⁾ provides this:

1 Based on the analysis done by Scroggie, W. G. in **The Unfolding Drama of Redemption**. London, England: Pickering & Inglis, 1970: Volume III, pp.283,4.

PAUL	PETER	JOHN	JAMES	JUDE
Faith	Hope	Hope	Works	Zeal
Theological	Experiential	Expositional	Ethical	Exhortatory
The Scholar	The Enthusiast	The Mystic	The Moralist	The Loyalist
PAULINE	PETRINE	JOHANNINE	JACOBEOAN	
	NON-PAULINE			

FIRST PETER

The book of I Peter has been called the “Epistle of Hope” because of its prominent words (“hope,” “glory,” “joy,” and “rejoice”) that are found set within the context of trials and suffering. It is a practical epistle, instructing and strengthening all Christians who face suffering — written perhaps in response to *Luke 22:31,32*.

The epistles of I Peter and James form a group. They were both written around the same time, and they bear a number of similarities. For example, compare:

<i>James 1:1</i>	with	<i>I Peter 1:1</i>
<i>James 1:2-4</i>	with	<i>I Peter 1:6,7</i>
<i>James 1:18,21</i>	with	<i>I Peter 1:23</i>
<i>James 1:10</i>	with	<i>I Peter 1:24</i>
<i>James 5:20</i>	with	<i>I Peter 4:8b</i>
<i>James 4:6-10</i>	with	<i>I Peter 5:5-9</i>
<i>James 4:1</i>	with	<i>I Peter 2:11</i>

This in no way implies that Peter copied from James, or vice-versa. Both epistles are addressed to scattered believers who were facing many of the same issues and difficulties. (The Holy Spirit does not “re-invent” truth in order to make every epistle totally unique!)

I. THE AUTHOR

God, the Holy Spirit — *II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 3:5*.

II. THE WRITER

The writer was the apostle Peter:

“PETER, an apostle of Jesus Christ...” — I Peter 1:1.

This fact has been universally accepted from the earliest times.

A. INTERNAL EVIDENCE:

A comparison of the epistle with the Gospels and the book of Acts demonstrates that the writer was personally acquainted with:

1. The Life And Teachings Of Christ.

Some have counted over 30 passages in the epistle with equivalents in the life and words of the Lord Jesus Christ. For example:

THE GOSPELS	FIRST PETER
<i>"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you ... for my sake" (Matthew 5:11)</i>	<i>"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye" (4:14)</i>
<i>"And Peter followed afar off" (Luke 22:54)</i>	<i>"...who am also ... a witness of the sufferings of Christ..." (5:1)</i>
<i>John 21:15-17.</i>	<i>"Feed the flock of God which is among you..." (5:2)</i>
<i>Matthew 20:26-28.</i>	<i>"Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (5:3)</i>
<i>John 13:3-15.</i>	<i>"be clothed with humility" (5:5)</i>

Note that the writer uses "ye" rather than "we" in *I Peter 1:8*. This is because the writer had seen the Lord.

2. The Ministry Of Peter.

The writer repeats or alludes to statements made by Peter that are recorded in the book of The Acts. For example:

PETER'S WORDS RECORDED IN ACTS	FIRST PETER
<i>"But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his PROPHETS..." (3:18)</i> <i>"To him give all the PROPHETS witness..." (10:43)</i>	<i>"Of which salvation the PROPHETS have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" (1:10)</i>
<i>"And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the HOLY GHOST, whom God hath given to them that obey him" (5:32)</i>	<i>"... which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the HOLY GHOST sent down from heaven..." (1:12)</i>
<i>"Of a truth I perceive that God is NO RESPECTER OF PERSONS" (10:34)</i>	<i>"And if ye call on the Father, who WITHOUT RESPECT OF PERSONS judgeth..." (1:17)</i>
<i>"This Jesus hath God RAISED UP, whereof we all are witnesses ..." (2:32)</i> <i>"...whom God hath RAISED FROM THE DEAD..." (3:15)</i> <i>"Him God RAISED UP the third day, and shewed him openly" (10:40)</i>	<i>"...by the resurrection of Jesus Christ FROM THE DEAD" (1:3)</i> <i>"Who by him do believe in God, that RAISED HIM UP FROM THE DEAD, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God" (1:21)</i>

<p>"This is the STONE which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the HEAD OF THE CORNER" (4:11)</p>	<p>"... the STONE which the builders disallowed, the same is made the HEAD OF THE CORNER" (2:7)</p>
<p>"The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a TREE" (5:30) "... whom they slew and hanged on a TREE" (10:39)</p>	<p>"Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the TREE..." (2:24)</p>
<p>"And he commanded us to preach ... and to testify that it is he which was ordained of God to be the JUDGE OF QUICK AND DEAD" (10:42)</p>	<p>"Who shall give account to him that is ready to JUDGE THE QUICK AND THE DEAD" (4:5)</p>
<p>"...whereof we all are WITNESSES" (2:32) "And killed the Prince of life ... whereof we are WITNESSES" (3:15)</p>	<p>"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a WITNESS of the sufferings of Christ..." (5:1)</p>

B. OBJECTIONS:

The few (critical) objections to the Petrine origin of the epistle are based on:

1. The Quality Of Its Greek.

Greek scholars consider the Greek of the epistle to be remarkably excellent — something beyond the capability of an “unlearned and ignorant” (Acts 4:13) Galilean fisherman, they think.

Response:

- a. Galilee was multi-lingual. The other writers of the scriptures who came from Galilee (Matthew, John, James, and Jude) were capable of writing good Greek.
- b. The reference to Peter being unlearned and ignorant came from his Jewish (Hebrew) antagonists. It refers to the fact that he had not received any formal rabbinical training (from them) — “who was he to teach and preach?”!

2. The Historical Accuracy Of The “Fiery Trial.”

Some have contended that the trials and sufferings referred to in the epistle best match the persecutions that occurred during the reign of the emperor Trajan (r. 98-117 A.D.) — when it was illegal to be a Christian (viz I Peter 4:16) — thus removing it from the time of Peter.

Response:

A discussion of the nature of the trials referred to in I Peter is covered below under “The Occasion.”

C. WHO WAS PETER?

The apostle Peter is the most-mentioned man in the New Testament outside of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. His Name.

His birth name was Simon Barjona — Simon, the son of Jonas (*Matthew 16:17; John 1:42; 21:15-17*). The name Simon (Σίμων, *see'mone*) is an abbreviation of Simeon (*Acts 15:14*).

Jesus gave him the surname of Peter (Greek: Πέτρος, *pet'ros*) or Cephas (Aramaic: Κηφας, *kay'fas*). Both words mean a “rock” or, more particularly, a piece of a rock — a stone (*John 1:42*).

2. His Background.

- a. His father's name was Jonas (Jonah).
- b. His hometown was Bethsaida — *John 1:44*.
- c. He had a least one brother, Andrew — *John 1:40*.
- d. He was a fisherman, in partnership with James and John — *Luke 5:10*.
- e. He lived in Capernaum — *Mark 1:21,29*.
- f. He was married — *Mark 1:30; I Corinthians 9:5*.

3. His Ministry.

There are six distinct stages in the spiritual life and ministry of the apostle Peter:

- a. Conversion — Peter, like all the original apostles of Christ, was saved and baptized under the ministry of John the Baptist (see: *Luke 1:17; John 1:35,40; Acts 1:22*).
- b. Discipleship — the call to follow Christ (*John 1:40-42*). This occurred at Bethabara.
- c. Mentorship — the call to forsake all (*Matthew 4:19; 19:27; Mark 1:17,18*) and be trained by Christ on a full-time basis. (This call was given a second time in *Luke 5:1-11*.)
- d. Apostleship — the call to the office of an apostle (*Matthew 10:2; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14*). Peter is always listed first among the apostles. He also was part of the “inner circle” with James and John, and was often the spokesman for the apostles (e.g., *Luke 5:5; Mark 11:21; Matthew 19:27; John 6:68; Acts 5:29; etc.*).

- e. Leadership — presiding pastoral leadership of the church that Jesus left behind at His ascension (*John 21:15-17*; *Acts 1:15*; *Galatians 1:18*).
- f. Statesmanship — Peter became a very active preacher and evangelist, especially among the Jews. See: *Acts 2:14-38*; *8:14*; *9:31-42*; *10:23-48*.

Note: The last mention of Peter in the book of Acts is in *Acts 15:7,14*. By this time, James was the presiding pastor of the Jerusalem church. Peter's subsequent (embarrassing) visit to Antioch (*Galatians 2:11-14*) fits at *Acts 15:35* — just before Paul and Silas embarked on Paul's second evangelistic journey.

That Peter traveled extensively is evident from the church at Corinth's obvious acquaintance with him — *I Corinthians 1:12*; *3:22*; *9:5*. His first epistle places him in Mesopotamia (*5:13*).

4. His Death.

The only Biblical statements concerning Peter's death are the Lord's prophecy recorded in *John 21:18,19* (which indicates is that Peter would suffer an involuntary death as an old man) and the apostle's stated awareness of his impending martyrdom in *II Peter 1:13-15*.

The prevailing tradition (and only tradition) holds that Peter was martyred in Rome during the reign of Nero around 67,68 A.D.. Tradition also says that Peter was — by his request, considering himself to be unworthy to die as did his Lord — crucified upside down.

D. THE AMANUENSIS:

"BY SILVANUS, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I have written briefly..." — I Peter 5:12.

Silas penned the words of this epistle on behalf of Peter (which may be an indication of Peter's age or health).

Silas was originally a preacher in the church at Jerusalem (*Acts 15:22,27,32*). He remained with the church at Antioch (*Acts 15:34*) and then accompanied Paul on his second evangelistic journey (*Acts 15:40*). Silas remained with Paul until Corinth. After *Acts 18:5* he is no longer mentioned in the historical record. It is very possible he returned to and remained at Thessalonica for a time to help establish the fledgling church that was planted there.

The words, "a faithful brother unto you" in *I Peter 5:12* (reminiscent of *Colossians 1:7*) suggest that he was later personally involved in

ministering to (or planting) the churches located in the provinces mentioned in the salutation (Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia). Remember, he was with Paul when the Spirit forbade them to go into Bithynia — Acts 16:7.

III. THE ADDRESSEE

“...to the STRANGERS [παρεπίδημοις, “par-ep-idray-mois” = pilgrims] SCATTERED [διασποράς, “diasporas” = dispersed] throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, ELECT according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ...” — I Peter 1:1,2.

The description of those to whom the epistle was originally addressed has raised some questions as to their identity. The word “ELECT” indicates they were saved people. (A sovereign God has elected [chosen] to save all who willingly put their faith in His Son. Consequently, those who are saved are the elect.) The whole epistle attests to the fact that the addressees were believers. See: I Peter 1:3-5,8,9,18-23; 2:2,7,9,10,24,25; 3:15,16; 4:3,14,16 and 5:10,13.

The question is, what is meant by the “SCATTERED” “STRANGERS?”

Were they Jewish believers — as was the case with the scattered Christians addressed in the book of James (*James 1:1*)? Or, were they Gentile believers?

- There are three main reasons given as to why Peter was writing specifically to Jewish Christians. First, because he was the apostle to the Jews (*Galatians 2:7,8*); second, because the epistle has a marked Old Testament flavor that would be most familiar to Jews (e.g., *1:10-12; 1:18; 1:24,25; 2:5; 2:6-8; 2:9; 3:6; 3:20; 4:17*); and third, because the word “scattered” refers to the diaspora, which is a Jewish term. However...
- There are other statements in the epistle that are more applicable to Gentiles — notably *I Peter 1:14; 2:10; 4:2-4*.
- Solution: The people to whom Peter wrote were all Christians — both Jewish and Gentile. They were all “strangers” (sojourners, pilgrims) in the sense of *Hebrews 11:13-16; 13:14*. They were “scattered” (dispersed) around the provinces. (After all, the Jewish Diaspora did not really begin until after 70 A.D..)

This solution debunks the critical notions that Peter somehow represents a Jewish branch of Christianity and Paul a decidedly Gentile branch. The fact is that both men ministered to Jews and Gentiles and both men preached the same Gospel and doctrines.

IV. THE PLACE OF WRITING

The epistle indicates that it was written from Babylon.

“The church that is at BABYLON, elected together with you, saluteth you...” — I Peter 5:13.

There is considerable controversy over the identity and location of this Babylon. Three interpretations are offered:

- Babylon on the Nile (Old Cairo, Egypt) — the *Coptic* view.
- Babylon on the Tiber (Rome) — the *Catholic* view.
- Babylon on the Euphrates (Hillah, Iraq) — the *Correct* view.

Of these three views, the last two are the most commonly held.

A. ARGUMENTS FOR THE “ROME” VIEW:

1. Based on *Revelation 17:5,9*, it is asserted that Peter’s reference to Babylon was a cryptic reference to Rome. In support of this contention it is further pointed out that since Marcus was not literally Peter’s son (*I Peter 5:13*), the whole passage is symbolic.

Refutation:

- a. The book of The Revelation was written 25-30 years *after* the first epistle of Peter, so Peter could not have been referring to Revelation 17. Furthermore, John was revealing a mystery (*Revelation 17:5,9a*) — i.e., truth hitherto unknown.
 - b. While the father-son relationship between Peter and John Mark was not biological, it was nonetheless a real (not symbolic) relationship. (See: *I Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4; Philemon 10*).
 - c. The style of the epistle of I Peter is direct and literal. The list of Roman provinces in *1:1* is that of literal locations. A figurative statement at the end is out of character.
2. Early tradition claims that Rome was the place of writing. The historian Eusebius (260-339 A.D.) says this was the view of Papias (c.120 A.D.) and Clement of Alexandria (d. c.215 A.D.).⁽¹⁾ Other early Church Fathers who indicate that Peter was in Rome were Clement (d.102 A.D.), Ignatius (37-117 A.D.), Tertullian (160-230 A.D.), Origen (184-254 A.D.), and Jerome (340-420 A.D.). Claims for the primacy of the Roman church had not developed at such an early stage in Christian history — therefore, there must be something to it.

¹ Ecclesiastical History. 2.15. Cited in: Hiebert, D. E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Waynesboro, Georgia: Gabriel Publishing, 2003 (Three Volume Collection): Volume 3, pg. 120.

Refutation:

- a. Tradition is never a sure guide to truth. There is no historic or archæological evidence that Peter was ever in Rome.
- b. The church of Rome **was** indeed beginning to assert itself over Christendom at an early stage. For example:
 - As bishop of Rome, Victor (d. c.200 A.D.) excommunicated the churches of Asia Minor over a doctrinal issue.
 - Cyprian (200-258 A.D.) — the “Father of Corrupt Ecclesiology” — taught the superiority of Peter and that the bishopric of the Church of Rome was the chair of Peter, the fountain of priestly unity.
- c. If Peter did minister in Rome for over two decades, why then did Paul fail to acknowledge him when writing the book of Romans? There are 27 people mentioned in Romans 16 — but not Peter. Furthermore, Paul desired to go to Rome to minister there (*Romans 1:11-13*). If Peter was present, Paul’s planned ministry would have been in direct violation of his own evangelistic principles — *Romans 15:20*.

Central and crucial to the Roman Catholic dogma of the primacy of the Roman “Church” and the primacy of the pope over all of Christendom is the belief that the apostle Peter actually came to Rome and established the church there during a long (20+ years) ministry.

Support for this view is derived from an erroneous interpretation of *Matthew 16:18,19*.

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this ROCK I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto THEE the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

The standard Catholic interpretation of this passage is that:

- Peter is the ROCK upon which “The Church” is built.
- Peter is also the THEE, to whom the keys of the kingdom (and thus the ability to forgive and absolve sins) was given.

In July 2007, Pope Benedict XVI issued a document reaffirming that Christ established here on earth only one church, and that the other [Christian] communities cannot be called churches in the proper sense because they do not have apostolic succession (the ability to trace their bishops back to Christ’s original apostles through the unbroken chain of consecration) — and thus the means of salvation.

Peter's interpretation of Matthew 16:

- ★ Peter (πέτρος, petros) is a “pebble,” a little stone (*I Peter 2:5*). Christ (Πέτρα, Petra) is the ROCK (*I Peter 2:6-8*).
- ★ The antecedent of the “THEE” is the Lord’s church, not Peter. New Testament churches *corporately* have been given the Gospel, the key that unlocks the door of salvation.
- ★ There is no sacerdotal priestcraft established here. Peter himself declared that ALL believers comprise a “holy” and “royal” priesthood (*I Peter 2:5,9*).

B. ARGUMENTS FOR THE “MESOPOTAMIA” VIEW:

1. This is the literal interpretation. The Law of Direct Statement requires such an interpretation — unless it is patently obvious from its immediate context or the employment of obvious figures of speech that it bears another meaning.
2. Many Jews were transported to Babylon in the 6TH century B.C. (*II Chronicles 36:6-10,20*). The region became a major center of the Jews. Since Peter was the “apostle of the circumcision” (*Galatians 2:7,8*), it makes perfect sense that he would preach in Babylon.

Objections:

- a. There is no tradition connecting Peter in Mesopotamia.
Response: So?
- b. There is no record of any New Testament church existing in Babylon. Response: What about *I Peter 5:13*?
- c. History does confirm a large Jewish presence in Babylon until the time of Caligula (r. 37-41 A.D.). However, under this emperor, Roman persecutions (and a subsequent plague) caused most Jews to migrate to Seleucia, some 40 miles away.
Response: These events occurred more than 20 years before the penning of the epistle: Jews could easily have returned during this interval — just as they returned to Rome after their expulsion by Claudius (*Acts 18:2*).

Furthermore, there were Jews from Mesopotamia present in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost in Acts 2 — see: *Acts 2:9*.

V. THE DATE OF WRITING

Conservative scholars uniformly place the writing of the epistle at some point relative to the Romans persecutions under Nero. (These persecutions began in 64 A.D., following the burning of Rome, and ended with the emperor's suicide in 68 A.D..)

Gromacki	63-65 A.D.
Guthrie	64 A.D.
Hiebert	64 A.D.
Jensen	64 A.D.
Scofield	60 A.D.
Scroggie	64-67 A.D.
Thiessen	65 A.D.

The determination of the date of writing is dependent on three considerations:

A. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EPISTLE AND OTHER NEW TESTAMENT WRITINGS:

Some believe the epistle shows an acquaintance with other epistles of the New Testament — notably James, I Thessalonians, Romans, and (more significantly) with the prison epistles of Paul. For example:

<i>I Peter 1:1-3</i>	<i>Ephesians 1:1-3</i>
<i>I Peter 1:10-12</i>	<i>Ephesians 3:5</i>
<i>I Peter 1:12</i>	<i>Ephesians 3:10</i>
<i>I Peter 2:5</i>	<i>Ephesians 2:10,21</i>
<i>I Peter 2:18</i>	<i>Colossians 3:22</i>
<i>I Peter 3:1-6</i>	<i>Ephesians 5:22-24</i>
<i>I Peter 5:10,11</i>	<i>Philippians 4:19,20</i>

The argument is made that **if** Peter drew from any of the prison epistles of Paul (which were written between 62 and 63 A.D.), then his epistle could not have been written before these dates.

Consideration:

Peter indeed was familiar with the epistles of Paul — *II Peter 3:15,16*. However, none of the cross references are actual quotations. To suppose Peter “drew his material” from Paul is a naturalistic view.

The Spirit of God is capable of moving Peter, Paul, and James to each pen the same truth independently.

Of more particular concern is whether James quotes from I Peter. Compare the following:

*“But he giveth more grace. Wherefore **HE SAITH**, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” — James 4:6.*

“...God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble” — I Peter 5:5.

Where does God “saith” elsewhere in His Word? If James is in fact quoting from Peter, then I Peter had to have been written before 59/60 A.D.. (If James is not quoting from I Peter, then he must be referring to *Proverbs 3:34* — “Surely he scorneth the scorners: but he giveth grace unto the lowly” — in which case, Peter could be quoting from James!)

B. THE NATURE OF THE FIERY TRIAL:

The question to be answered here is whether the trials Peter addressed refer to the Neronian persecutions or some other trial. Accepting the view that they refer to the imperial persecutions under Nero fixes the date of the epistle at or after 64 A.D. (when they began).

Coupled with this is the tradition that Peter was martyred in 67/68 A.D. under Nero.

A discussion of the nature of these trials follows below.

C. THE MINISTRIES OF SILAS AND MARK:

Silvanus (Silas) and John Mark are associated with Peter at the time of the writing of the epistle — *I Peter 5:12,13*. Therefore, their movements will have some bearing upon the date of writing.

1. Silas.

Silas was with Paul until late 49 A.D. — at *Acts 18:5*. At some point he likely planted churches in the provinces listed in *I Peter 1:1*. This conclusion is based on the “unto you” of *I Peter 5:12a*, and the “them” of *I Peter 1:12* (showing Peter was not personally involved).

2. Mark.

a. Mark left Paul’s company earlier in 49 A.D. — at *Acts 15:39*. He then accompanied Barnabas to Cyprus.

b. He was with Paul in Rome c.62 A.D., (*Colossians 4:10*).

c. Mark was in Asia (possibly Colosse) in 66 A.D. when Paul called for him — *II Timothy 4:11*.

If John Mark was in some way associated with the ministry of Paul between his two Roman imprisonments (as the above facts suggest),

then it is more likely he was with Peter in Babylon before Paul's first imprisonment which began in 61 A.D..

This then argues for an early date for First Peter. The epistle was written **c.58/59 A.D.** At this time, Peter was not in Jerusalem.

VI. THE OCCASION FOR WRITING

As mentioned above, the exact nature of the “fiery trial” and the sufferings of the saints spoken about in the epistle is a key factor in deciding the date of writing and, to some extent, the place of writing.

The references are as follows:

“Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a SEASON, if need be, ye are in heaviness through MANIFOLD TEMPTATIONS: That the TRIAL OF YOUR FAITH, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” — I Peter 1:6,7.

“Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas THEY SPEAK AGAINST YOU as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation” — I Peter 2:12.

“For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and SUFFER for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God” — I Peter 2:20.

“And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? But AND IF ye SUFFER for righteousness' sake, happy are ye: and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled” — I Peter 3:13,14.

“Having a good conscience; that, whereas THEY SPEAK EVIL OF YOU, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye SUFFER FOR WELL DOING, than for evil doing” — I Peter 3:16,17.

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the FIERY TRIAL which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you” — I Peter 4:12.

“If ye be REPROACHED for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified” — I Peter 4:14.

“Yet if any man SUFFER AS A CHRISTIAN, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf” — I Peter 4:16.

“Wherefore let them that SUFFER according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” — I Peter 4:19.

“Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the SAME AFFLICTIONS are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have SUFFERED A WHILE, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” — I Peter 5:9,10.

The question to be answered is: Do these passages speak of the horrific imperial persecutions that broke out under Nero — or, do they refer to the

kinds of trials and persecutions believers are likely to face at any time in the course of their life here on earth?

It seems pretty obvious that the latter is the case.

- There is no reference to any martyrdom, banishments, property confiscations, imprisonments, or extreme cruelties that characterized the imperial persecutions.
- The trials spoken of here were not to be considered strange (4:12); they were in fact common (5:9).
- These trials could be characterized as slanderous (4:14). Believers were ridiculed because of their changed lives (3:17; 4:4). They may have been accused of sedition by their detractors (2:13-15).

The occasion for the epistle, then, was the outbreak of severe opposition and persecution upon the churches in the Anatolian provinces. The Christians were exhorted not to “ease up” in their Christianity, but to maintain a godly testimony as good citizens (*I Peter 2:11-16*).

In this regard, the epistle is akin to the book of James. See: James 1:2,3,12; 5:10,11. From the very beginning (*Acts 4:1*) believers and preachers have endured persecutions and afflictions at the hands of wicked men — religious and pagan.

This conclusion supports the early date given for the epistle’s writing.

VII. CANONICITY

The epistle of First Peter was universally received at an early date. Eusebius (260-339 A.D.) listed it among the homologoumena (books accepted by all).

It is referred to as an epistle of Peter’s in *II Peter 3:1*.

“This SECOND epistle, beloved, I now write unto you...”

In his *Against Heresies*, Irenæus (115-200 A.D.) quotes the book by name. The epistle is also quoted by Tertullian (160-230 A.D.) and Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.). It is alluded to by Clement of Rome (d.101 A.D.), Hermas (115-140 A.D.), and Polycarp (69-156 A.D.) — and in the *Epistle of Barnabas*.

The epistle is missing from the canons of the Muratorian Fragment and the docetist Marcion — but it is found in the Old Latin (c.150 A.D.), Old Egyptian (Sahidic Coptic, c.2ND cent. A.D.), and Old Syriac (c.157 A.D.) versions.

VIII. THE PREDOMINANT THEME

HOPE.

“Hope in the midst of suffering.”

IX. THE KEY VERSE

The key verse is *I Peter 1:7*.

“That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.”

X. THE STYLE OF THE BOOK

The style of First Peter has been described as direct, yet informal; vivid and energetic, yet heartfelt, and plain. It is exhortatory in nature. There are 34 direct commands given in the epistle (*see: I Peter 1:13,15,17,22; 2:2,13,17,18; 3:1,7,8,14,15; 4:1,7,12,13,16,19; 5:2,5,6,8,9*).

“He [Peter] speaks with the authority of an apostle, but with the gentleness of one who knew the power of temptation and the difficulty of steadfastness, with the humility of one who well remembered how he himself had fallen.” ⁽²⁾

The book is not a doctrinal treatise, though it is rich in doctrinal content. Peter comforts and strengthens the suffering saints on the basis of an assured (Bible-based) faith.

XI. AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK:

The book of First Peter begins with a beautiful doxology (1:3-12). This is followed by three sections, exhorting believers in the areas of salvation, submission, and suffering.

2 Caffin, B. C. *The First Epistle General of Peter*. The Pulpit Commentary, p.xi. Cited from: Ibid, pg. 122.

THE BOOK OF FIRST PETER

- I. **Salutation** *I Peter 1:1,2*
- II. **A GRAND CONFIRMATION OF SALVATION**
The Destiny of the Christian.
I Peter 1:3–2:10
- A. **Salvation** — 1:3-12.
Future Hope (3-5); Present Joy (6-9); Past Theme (10-12)
- B. **Sanctification** — 1:13–2:3.
Fruit (1:13-16); Cost (1:17-20); Agent (1:22–2:3)
- C. **Service** — 2:1-10.
New Temple (4-8); New People (9,10)
- Jesus Christ: The Good Shepherd (1:19)***
- III. **A GOOD CONSCIENCE THROUGH SUBMISSION**
The Duty of the Christian.
I Peter 2:11–3:12
- A. **In Society** — 2:13-25.
- B. **In the Home** — 3:1-7.
- C. **In the Church** — 3:8-12.
- Jesus Christ: The Great Shepherd (2:25)***
- IV. **A GREAT CONSOLATION IN SUFFERING**
The Discipline of the Christian.
I Peter 3:13–5:11
- A. **Conscience** — 3:13-17.
- B. **Christ** — 3:18-22.
- C. **Christian** — 4:1-16.
- D. **Church** — 4:17–5:11.
- Jesus Christ: The Chief Shepherd (5:4)***
- V. **Conclusion** *I Peter 5:12-14*

XII. HOMILETIC AND DOCTRINAL APPEAL

Suffering and affliction are part of the normal Christian life. Therefore the epistle of First Peter is extremely helpful in explaining God's purpose in allowing trials, as well as giving God's promises for times of suffering.

As mentioned above, the book is very practical and rich in doctrinal content. It is a great resource for the Baptist preacher.

A. SERMON SEEDS:

- The Blood of Christ.
- God's Work of Sanctification.
- Our Inheritance.
- Kept By the Power of God.
- The Trial of Your Faith.
- Unspeakable Joy.
- Be Ye Holy.
- The Incorruptible Word of God.
- God's Will for Baby Christians.
- Precious Things.
- The House of God.
- The Priesthood of the Believer.
- The Flesh.
- Christ: the Perfect Sacrifice.
- A Godly Christian Woman.
- Hindered Prayers
- Give an Answer.
- Things Are Different Now.
- Where Judgment Must begin.
- The Duty of Pastors.
- Resisting the Devil.

etc.

B. DOCTRINAL PASSAGES:

1. The Doctrine of the Scriptures.
 - *I Peter 1:10-12* — revelation, inspiration.
 - *I Peter 1:23-25* — preservation.

2. The Doctrine of Christ.

- *I Peter 1:19,20* — the plan of redemption.
- *I Peter 1:19; 2:22,23* — His sinlessness.
- *I Peter 2:24; 3:18* — His vicarious suffering.
- *I Peter 1:21; 3:21* — His resurrection.
- *I Peter 1:3; 3:22* — His ascension.
- *I Peter 1:7,13; 4:7,13; 5:1,4* — His second coming.

3. The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

- *I Peter 1:12* — present ministry.
- *I Peter 4:10,11* — spiritual gifts.

4. The Doctrine of Salvation.

- *I Peter 1:21-25* — means of it.
- *I Peter 1:18,19* — manner of it.
- *I Peter 1:2-4,8,9; 2:9,10,25* — meaning of it.
- *I Peter 1:5* — maintenance of it.

5. The Doctrine of the Church.

- *I Peter 2:5* — nature.
- *I Peter 4:7-11* — membership.
- *I Peter 5:1-5* — leadership.

6. The Doctrine of the Unseen World.

- *I Peter 1:12* — angels.
- *I Peter 5:8,9* — Satan.

XIII. PROBLEM TEXTS

Two passages in chapter three have been the subject of controversy and enquiry:

A. IS THERE A POSSIBILITY OF SALVATION AFTER DEATH?

“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: By which also HE WENT AND PREACHED UNTO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON; Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water” — I Peter 3:18-20.

“For for this cause was the GOSPEL PREACHED also TO THEM THAT ARE DEAD, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit” — I Peter 4:6.

These passages have been used to teach that, between His burial and resurrection, Jesus went to Hell and preached the Gospel to the lost souls held there. It has been used to support the unscriptural doctrine of Purgatory, or the notion of a second chance of salvation after death.

1. What The Bible Does Teach.

- a. Jesus went to the Paradise section of Hell (Hades/Sheol) after His death — *Luke 23:43; Psalm 16:10; Acts 2:27,31*.
- b. Paradise was separated from the place of torment by a “great gulf fixed” — *Luke 16:26*.
- c. Jesus led captivity captive (*Ephesians 4:8*) — i.e., He led the souls of the righteous to the new Paradise on high (*II Corinthians 12:1-4*).
- d. Since then, the soul and spirit of the believer goes to be with the Lord at death (*II Corinthians 5:6,8; Philippians 1:23*) — awaiting the resurrection of the body (*I Corinthians 15:42-54; Philippians 3:20,21*).
- e. Eternal destiny is fixed in this life — *Hebrews 9:27; I John 5:12*.

2. The Interpretation Of The Passages.

Jesus did not preach to the wicked dead in Hell. There are two keys to understand what is being taught:

a. Key #1 — “By which” (*verse 19*).

These words connect back to the last word of *verse 18* — the “Spirit.” This passage is not speaking about Christ preaching, but the Holy Spirit of God.

b. Key #2 — “in the days of Noah” (*verse 20*).

- Noah was a preacher of righteousness — *II Peter 2:5*.
- Noah preached for 120 years while building the ark — *Hebrews 11:7*.
- The Spirit of God gave witness to the Gospel through Noah’s preaching — *Genesis 6:3*.
- Prior to Noah, Enoch also preached — *Jude 14,15*.

Millennia beforehand, the Spirit that raised Christ from the dead empowered the preaching of Enoch and Noah. Men rejected their message and died in the flood. They are now “in prison” — the place of torments — awaiting the Great White Throne judgment and the Lake of Fire (*Revelation 20:12,13*).

B. DOES BAPTISM SAVE?

“The like figure whereunto even BAPTISM DOTTH ALSO NOW SAVE US (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ” — I Peter 3:21.

This passage is one of five “proof texts” for the heresy of baptismal regeneration or baptismal remission (the others being *Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38* and *Acts 22:16*).

I Peter 3:20 states that those who entered the ark with Noah were “saved by water.” The water was God’s judgment upon sin — there was life to those who believed God (faith) and entered the ark (a picture of Christ); there was death to those who rejected the good news of salvation through the ark.

There are two keys to correctly interpreting *I Peter 1:21*.

1. Key #1 — the “like *FIGURE*.”

Baptism is a figure — a picture, a likeness (*Romans 6:4,5*), a symbol.

What is it that baptism figures or pictures? The judgment of God upon sin! The death and resurrection of Christ that brings eternal life to those who believe the Gospel, and eternal damnation to those who reject it.

2. Key #2 — “not the putting away of the filth of the flesh”

The Holy Spirit placed an explanatory note in parentheses. It is not the water of baptism that saves! All that water can do is wash dirt off the body — it is the blood of Christ that cleanses the inside (*I John 1:7; Revelation 1:5*).

Baptism is the answer (response) of a good conscience. This presupposes a good conscience, which is only obtained through salvation in Christ (*I Peter 3:16*).

EXERCISES

1. How many times do each of the following words (and their cognates) appear in the book of I Peter?

suffer	hope
trial	revelation
glory	grace
precious	subjection
holy	joy

2. Prepare a Bible study or preaching outline on the subject of SUFFERING that is based solely on the book of I Peter.
3. List all the imperatives found in the epistle of I Peter?
4. Compile a Bible study, based solely on I Peter, showing how the outward testimony and life of a Christian ought to be before an unbelieving and even hostile world.
5. Explain the doctrine of the “Priesthood of All Believers” taught in I Peter 2.
6. What are the two metaphors for a New Testament church found in I Peter?
7. Explain how *I Peter* 5:1-5 teaches the threefold duty of a pastor to “Lead,” “Feed,” and “Heed.”
8. What is the key for a pastor to be a strong leader without becoming a “dictator?”
9. What Biblical counsel should be given to a wife with an unsaved husband?
10. List the weapons and tactics for spiritual warfare given in *I Peter* 5:5-11.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

First Peter

1. Because of its prominent words — “hope,” “glory,” “joy,” and “rejoice” — that are found set in the context of trials and suffering, what has the book of I Peter been called?
2. I Peter is a practical epistle, particularly useful to Christians facing what in their lives?
3. Approximately how many passages in I Peter equate to the life and words of the Lord Jesus Christ?
4. List and very briefly describe the six distinct stages in the spiritual life and ministry of the apostle Peter.
5. Who physically penned the epistle on behalf of Peter?
6. List the three main reasons some scholars claim I Peter was written specifically to Jewish Christians.
7. What evidence points to the epistle being written also to Gentile Christians?
8. Where was the epistle written? (Give name and specific location of the city.)
9. Provide two major arguments for the location of your answer to the previous question.
10. Do the fiery trials and sufferings of saints spoken of in the epistle refer to the persecutions under Nero, or the trials and persecutions that believers are likely to face at any time in their life here on earth? Why?

11. What is the predominant theme of I Peter?
12. Write out the key verse of the epistle.
13. Describe the style of the epistle.
14. The book of First Peter is roughly broken into sections exhorting believers in what three areas?
15. List six doctrines addressed in I Peter, with a reference for each.
16. Does *I Peter 3:18-20; 4:6* teach the possibility of salvation after death? Briefly explain your answer.
17. Does *I Peter 3:21* teach that baptism saves? Briefly explain your answer.

JAMES

The book of James has been called the “Proverbs of the New Testament” because of its many short to-the-point sentences, its cut-and-dried tone, and its rich use of illustrations. There are 54 direct commands and obligations given in the book.

It has also been called the “Amos of the New Testament” because of its use of “...imagery from nature and ... [its] stinging rebuke to social injustice.”⁽¹⁾

The book of James is a very forthright and practical book. Its emphasis is not upon doctrine but on Christian living. It deals primarily with ethics (right living).

I. THE AUTHOR

God, the Holy Spirit — *II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 3:5.*

II. THE WRITER

A. THE WRITER IS IDENTIFIED AS JAMES:

“James, a servant [δουλος, “doulos” = bond servant, slave] of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ...” — James 1:1.

James was a common name — it is the English form of “Jacob” (Ἰακωβος, “Iakōbos”).

A difficulty arises here because three James’ are mentioned in the New Testament:

1. James, The Son Of Zebedee (“Thunder”) — an apostle.

See: Matthew 4:21; 10:2; Mark 3:17.

He is sometimes called the “Quiet Apostle,” because the New Testament does not record a single word he spoke — although, with Peter and John he was part of the “inner circle” (*Matthew 17:1; Mark 5:37; 14:33*).

By comparing *Matthew 27:56* with *Mark 15:40* and *Mark 16:1*, we can determine that his mother’s name was Salome. He was the brother of the apostle John.

¹ Hiebert, D. E. An Introduction to the New Testament. Waynesboro, Georgia: Gabriel Publishing, 2003 (Three Volume Collection): Volume 3, pg. 32.

This James was martyred in 44 A.D. (*Acts 12:2*) — the third recorded man to lay down his life for the cause of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2. James, The Son Of Alphæus (Cleophas) — an apostle.

See: *Matthew 10:3*.

This James is the least-known of the twelve apostles. His name appears only on the apostolic lists; no particular word or deed is ascribed to him. He is referred to as “James the LESS” (μικρος, “micros” = *small*), which may refer to his stature or his order in the lists of the Twelve relative to the other James.

By comparing *Matthew 27:56*; *Mark 15:40* and *John 19:25*, we can determine that his mother’s name was Mary and that he had brothers named Judas and Joses. From *Mark 2:14*, it is possible he was also the brother of the apostle Matthew.

3. James, The Half-Brother Of Jesus Christ.

Following the supernatural virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, Joseph and Mary went on to have at least six other children (*Matthew 1:25*).

“Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, JAMES, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And his sisters, are they not all with us?” — Matthew 13:55,56.

“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of JAMES, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?” — Mark 6:3.

- a. James was the oldest of Jesus’ younger siblings, being mentioned first in these lists.
- b. James (along with his brothers) remained in unbelief (*John 7:5*) until he saw the resurrected Christ (*I Corinthians 15:7*).
- c. In the forty days between the Lord’s resurrection and the Day of Pentecost, James his brothers had become baptized members of the Lord’s church at Jerusalem, and were found gathered in the upper room (*Acts 1:14*).
- d. Sometime prior to 40 A.D., most of the apostles had moved away from Jerusalem, and James was serving in a leadership position in the church there — *Acts 9:26,27*; *Galatians 1:18,19*.
- e. In 44 A.D. James was the presiding elder (“senior pastor”) of the church — *Acts 12:17*. His leadership was again evidenced in *Acts 15:13*; *Galatians 2:9* (c.49 A.D.). See also: *Galatians 2:12*. By *Acts 21:17,18* (58 A.D.) it appears no apostles remained with the Jerusalem church. However, James was still there with the other pastors.

- f. This James is sometimes called “James the Just.” He is also referred to as “Old Camel Knees” because of his piety and the time he spent on his knees in prayer.
- g. Josephus says James was martyred around 62 A.D., stoned to death by order of the high priest Ananus II.

B. WHICH JAMES?

It is most probable (and generally accepted) that the writer of the Book of James was the half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ. Why?

- 1. Unlike Paul and Peter, the writer does not refer to himself as an apostle — which therefore tends to eliminate James the son of Zebedee and James the son of Alphæus.
- 2. There are notable similarities of style in the book of James and the letter of Acts 15 that was drafted (or at least overseen) by James.

ACTS 15	JAMES
<i>“The apostles and elders and brethren send GREETING unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia” — verse 23.</i>	<i>“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, GREETING” — James 1:1.</i>
<i>“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and BRETHREN, HEARKEN unto me” — verse 13.</i>	<i>“HEARKEN, my beloved BRETHREN...” — James 2:5.</i>
<i>“Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting YOUR SOULS...” — verse 24.</i>	<i>“Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save YOUR SOULS” — James 1:21.</i>
<i>“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did VISIT the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name” — verse 14.</i>	<i>“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To VISIT the fatherless and widows in their affliction...” — James 1:27.</i>

None of these observations are conclusive, but they tend to show a common mind at work.

- 3. The book of James has a strong Jewish flavor — James, the Lord’s brother was an intensely Jewish Christian (*Acts 21:18-21*).
- 4. Of the three James’ considered, only James the Lord’s brother had a well-known and lengthy ministry that would enhance the acceptability of the epistle.

III. THE ADDRESSEE

“...to the twelve tribes which are scattered [διασπορά, “diaspora” = dispersed] abroad...” — James 1:1.

That the epistle is addressed to Christian Jews is evidenced from the 15 references in the book to “my [beloved] brethren.”

The “diaspora” refers to the scattering of the Jews outside of Palestine. There are two possibilities here — one narrow and one broad.

A. THE NARROW VIEW:

James is writing to the brethren who were once members of the church at Jerusalem who were scattered abroad following the persecution led by Saul of Tarsus.

“And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered [διασπείρω, “diaspeirō”] abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles” — Acts 8:1.

“Therefore they that were scattered [διασπείρω, “diaspeirō”] abroad went every where preaching the word” — Acts 8:4.

“Now they which were scattered [διασπείρω, “diaspeirō”] abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen travelled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only” — Acts 11:19.

In this case, James was writing to brethren he probably knew personally or who had had a connection to the Jerusalem church.

B. THE BROAD VIEW:

James is writing more generally to Jews who were long scattered throughout the Roman world. Well before the dispersion of the church at Jerusalem, Jews were to be found throughout the Mediterranean world — Acts 2:5-10; 6:9; 9:22; 14:1; 17:1; 18:2,19; etc.

Peter wrote his first epistle to “the strangers scattered [διασπείρω, “diaspeirō”] throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia” (I Peter 1:1) from Babylon (I Peter 5:13).

In this case James was writing to Jewish believers, most of whom he would not have known. Yet from a human point of view, he could write with authority based upon the influence of the “mother church” established in the very center of Jewry and his own spiritual stature.

Note: The term Diaspora is applied today to refer to Jews living outside of the Holy Land, beginning with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

IV. THE DATE OF WRITING

The estimation of the date of writing is dependent upon determining who the writer was and to whom the epistle was originally addressed.

A. THE WRITER:

1. James, the son of Zebedee is discounted as the writer because he was martyred in the spring of 44 A.D. — too early it is thought for an encyclical like the book of James to have been written.
2. James the son of Alphæus is discounted because nothing is known of him outside of the listings of the Twelve.
3. Since we accept James the Just (the half-brother of Jesus Christ) as the true writer of the book of James, it follows that the epistle was written sometime between Acts 1 and his death — i.e., between 30 and 62 A.D.

One would expect that he wrote the book as the senior pastor (presiding elder) of the church at Jerusalem — narrowing the date of writing to between 44 and 63 A.D.

B. THE ADDRESSEE:

If James was writing to those who were scattered from the Jerusalem church (narrow view), the date could be earlier. Concern for the scattered Jews and new converts is expressed in *Acts 11:22*. This would give a possible date as early as 42 A.D. On the other hand, the book of James does not seem to be written to new converts; rather it seems to address older Christians who had somewhat “lost their way” (e.g., *James 1:26; 2:2-6; 3:9,10; 4:1-4; 5:9,19,20*; etc.)

If James was addressing the more widespread and established Jewish churches, a later date would seem more probable.

There are three factors that lead many to conclude that the epistle was written before 49 A.D.:

1. Its lack of reference to Gentile Christians — indicating that the letter was written before Acts 13 and beyond, c. 44,45 A.D.

The word “assembly” in *James 2:2* is the Greek word συναγωγή, “sunagogē” = synagogue, meeting place, or meeting. In the early years of Christianity, before it had fully separated from the Jewish fold, churches often met in Jewish religious edifices — *Acts 5:12; 9:2*.

2. Its lack of reference to any issues arising out of the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15. (However, Judaistic tendencies began back in Acts 11, c.41 A.D.)

3. Its lack of teaching on many distinctive Christian doctrines (as opposed to Old Testament teachings and terminologies).

Note: This kind of thinking tends to ignore the doctrines of divine revelation and inspiration. Many unbelieving scholars take the view that the distinctive features of Christianity were *developed* over the course of time. They also view Christianity as developing into two branches early on: Jewish Christianity (taught by James) and Gentile Christianity (taught by Paul).

James is a practical book, not a doctrinal book — but there are several key doctrines touched on, such as:

- a. The Lordship of Jesus Christ — *James 1:1; 2:1*.
- b. The new birth and its means — *James 1:18,21*.
- c. The kingdom of God — *James 2:5*.
- d. The indwelling Spirit — *James 4:5*.
- e. The imminent return of Jesus Christ — *James 5:8*.
- f. The church and church leadership — *James 5:14*.

C. A “LATE” DATE FOR JAMES:

James 4:5 is apparently quoting *Galatians 5:17*.

“Do ye think that the SCRIPTURE saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?” — James 4:5.

“For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” — Galatians 5:17.

If this is the case, then James could not have been written until after:

- c.48,49 A.D. — South Galatian theory (before the Jerusalem council)
- c.57,58 A.D. — North Galatian theory (after the Jerusalem council)

Since we accept the later date for Galatians (c.57/58 A.D.), it follows that the book of James was actually written toward the end of James’ life.

The main objection to this conclusion is that there is no mention or allusion to the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) in the book of James.

Could the letter have been written **after** the Jerusalem conference?

If it was:

1. It shows amazing solidarity between James and Paul (since James quoted Paul’s writings as “scripture.”) This refutes any liberal nonsense that James was written to correct Paul’s doctrine of justification by faith.
2. Its lack of reference to the controversy addressed by the Jerusalem conference shows that the issue was settled then and there — at least in Bible-believing circles.

James does not mention circumcision (*Acts 15:1*), he certainly does address:

- The true Law — *James 2:8-12*.
- Faith and works — *James 2:14-26*.

The letters sent to the Gentiles asked that they show deference to the customs of the Jews (*Acts 15:20,21*), but the book of James instructs us that Christianity is not Law-keeping, but the practical outliving of the Royal Law of Christ.

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem just prior to the feast of Pentecost in May or June of 58 A.D., James and the other pastors were thrilled to hear of the salvation of many Gentiles. There was no rivalry. However, because many Jewish Christians were still following their Jewish customs and traditions, there were some legitimate concerns (*Acts 21:17-22*). It was (apparently) a reverse scenario:

- In 48 A.D. — some Jews were forcing Gentile Christians to become Jews.
- In 58 A.D. — some Gentiles were accused of making Jewish Christians become Gentiles.

C. CONCLUSION:

The book of James was probably written sometime around **59/60 A.D.**

Most conservative scholars prefer an earlier date, between 45-50 A.D., thereby assigning it as the first New Testament book to be written.

The table below gives a survey of opinions regarding the date of James:

Hiebert	46-49
Thiessen	45-48
Scroggie	45-49
Scofield	45-50
Gromacki	45-50

V. THE PLACE OF WRITING

Clearly, this epistle was written from Jerusalem. James probably never left Jerusalem after the ascension of Christ (except perhaps for a short time, *Acts 8:1*).

The writer uses imagery well known in the Holy Land:

- Climate — *James 1:11; 4:14; 5:7*.
- Maritime — *James 1:6; 3:4*.
- Fresh and salt water — *James 3:11*.
- Cultivation — *James 3:12*.

VI. THE OCCASION FOR WRITING

There is no expressed reason or purpose for writing given in the epistle. Therefore, the occasion for writing must be deduced from the content.

The book of James was obviously written to correct several “faith deficiencies” found among early Christians. In the cycle of Baptist history, churches have invariably gone from “fervent fundamentalism” to “lifeless legalism” (dead orthodoxy) — e.g., *Revelation 3:8* versus *Revelation 3:1,15*.

A later date of writing would tend to fit in with the spiritual malaise that James addresses.

VII. CANONICITY

The book of James did not readily receive universal acceptance. Eusebius listed it among the Antilogomena, though he himself quoted it as scripture.

There were two reasons for this hesitation:

A. THE WRITER TEST:

James was not an apostle, and therefore the “writer” test for canonical authority was wanting in the minds of some.

B. THE ACCEPTANCE TEST:

Because the epistle was addressed to Jewish Christians, it did not receive as wide of a circulation among the increasingly numerous Gentile churches. Therefore the “acceptance” test for canonical authority was wanting in the minds of some.

The earliest complete listing of the 27 books of the New Testament is found in an Easter letter by Athanasius, dated 367 A.D. By the third Council of Carthage (397 A.D.) the book of James was universally recognized as part of the New Testament canon.

Doubts concerning the authority of the epistle were centered mainly in the West, although Hermas (c.115-140 A.D.) alluded to it. In later years, both Jerome (340-420 A.D.) and Augustine (354-430 A.D.) cited it.

In the East, it was included in the Peshitta Bible (from the Syriac, c.157 A.D.) and Origen (184-254 A.D.) quoted it as scripture. It was also accepted by Athanasius (293-373 A.D.), Gregory Nazianzus (325-390 A.D.), and John Chrysostom (354-407 A.D.).

Martin Luther (1483-1546 A.D.) referred to James as an “epistle of straw” and “without evangelical character” because of its perceived contradiction of the Pauline doctrine “the just shall live by faith.” He placed it at the end of his German New Testament and did not list it in the table of contents.

VIII. THE PREDOMINANT THEME

FAITH and WORKS.

“The faith that works is a faith that works.”

IX. THE KEY VERSE

The key verse is *James 1:22*.

“But be ye DOERS of the word, and not HEARERS only, deceiving your own selves.”

Hearing has to do with FAITH (*Romans 10:17*).

and

Doing has to do with WORKS.

“FAITH without WORKS is dead” — James 2:26.

X. THE STYLE OF THE BOOK

The book of James is rightly an epistle because it identifies the writer and contains an addressee — even though it has no postscript or any personal statements.

“James says less about the Master than any other writer in the New Testament, but his speech is more like that of the Master than the speech of any of them.” ⁽²⁾

In style, the book is more akin to a pastoral sermon.

2 Hayes, D. A. Epistle of James. Cited by: Irving L. Jensen, Jensen’s Survey of the New Testament. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1981. pg. 427.

James is the most Jewish of all the New Testament epistles, as evidenced by its many references and allusions to the Old Testament.

A. JAMES AND THE OLD TESTAMENT:

1. According to Scroggie, there are 57 references to Old Testament passages. ⁽³⁾
 These are to be found in Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Joshua, I Kings, I Chronicles, II Chronicles, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Joel, Amos, and Zechariah.
2. There are five direct quotations from the Old Testament:
James 1:11 — Isaiah 40:11
James 2:8 — Leviticus 19:18
James 2:11 — Exodus 20:13,14
James 2:23 — Genesis 15:6; II Chronicles 20:7; Isaiah 41:8
James 4:6 — Proverbs 3:24
3. James uses four Old Testament characters as illustrations — Abraham, Rahab, Job, and Elijah.
4. James uses a distinctive Hebrew Name of God — “the Lord of sabaoth” or “the Lord of Hosts” (*James 5:4*).

B. JAMES AND THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT:

The book presents a remarkable parallel to the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, especially those given in the so-called “Sermon on the Mount.”

For example:

<p><i>James 1:2 — “My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 5:10-12 — “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad...”</i></p>
<p><i>James 1:4 — “But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 5:48 — “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.”</i></p>
<p><i>James 1:5 — “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 7:7 — “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”</i></p>

3 Scroggie, W. G. The Unfolding Drama of Redemption. London, England: Pickering & Inglis, 1970: Volume III, pg.298.

<p><i>James 1:20 — “For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 5:22 — “But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment...”</i></p>
<p><i>James 1:22 — “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 7:24 — “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:”</i></p>
<p><i>James 2:10 — “For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 5:19 — “Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven...”</i></p>
<p><i>James 2:13 — “For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 5:7 — “Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.”</i></p>
<p><i>James 3:18 — “And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 5:9 — “Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.”</i></p>
<p><i>James 4:4 — “Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 6:24 — “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”</i></p>
<p><i>James 4:10 — “Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 5:5 — “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.”</i></p>
<p><i>James 4:11,12 — “Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 7:1-5 — “Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.”</i></p>
<p><i>James 5:2 — “Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are motheaten.”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 6:19 — “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.”</i></p>
<p><i>James 5:10 — “Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience.”</i></p>	<p><i>Matthew 5:12 — “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”</i></p>

James 5:12 — “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.”

Matthew 5:33-37 — “Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God’s throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

C. A NOTABLE LINGUISTIC STYLE:

James utilizes a style called *duadiplosis* — the repetition of leading words for effect (impact). Notice:

- | | | |
|-------------------|---|---------------------|
| Patience (1:3) | — | Patience (1:4) |
| Let him ask (1:5) | — | Let him ask (1:6) |
| Wavering (1:6) | — | Wavereth (1:6) |
| Temptation (1:12) | — | Tempteth (1:13,14) |
| Lust (1:14) | — | Lust (1:15) |
| Wrath (1:19) | — | Wrath (1:20) |
| [The] word (1:21) | — | The word (1:22,23) |
| Religious (1:26) | — | Religion (1:27) |
| Offend (3:2) | — | Offend (3:2) |
| Whole body (3:2) | — | Whole body (3:3,6) |
| Turn about (3:3) | — | Turned about (3:4) |
| Fire (3:5) | — | Fire (3:6) |
| Tamed (3:7) | — | Tame (3:8) |
| Wars (4:1) | — | War (4:2) |
| Fightings (4:1) | — | Fight (4:2) |
| Lusts (4:1) | — | Lust, lusts (4:2,3) |
| Ask (4:2) | — | Ask (4:3) |

XI. AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK:

The book of James does not yield a tidy outline. It has a number of themes that are presented in somewhat of an ad hoc fashion.

If we take the expression “*My brethren*” (found throughout the book) as the starting point for a particular subject we can develop a broad outline, as follows:

<u>THE BOOK OF JAMES</u>	
I. <u>SALUTATION</u>	James 1:1
II. <u>THE ASSAY OF FAITH</u>	James 1:2-18
A. <u>Profitable Temptation</u> (Trials) — 1:2-12.	
<i>The resource of prayer.</i>	
B. <u>Unprofitable Temptation</u> (Lusts) — 1:13-18.	
<i>The resource of God’s blessings.</i>	
III. <u>THE ARBITER OF FAITH</u>	James 1:19-27
A. <u>Receiving the Word of God</u> — 1:19-21.	
B. <u>Obeying the Word of God</u> — 1:22-27.	
IV. <u>THE APPLICATION OF FAITH</u>	James 2:1–5:6
A. <u>In Charity</u> — James 2.	
B. <u>In Speech</u> — James 3.	
C. <u>In Separation</u> — 4:1-12.	
D. <u>In Daily Life</u> — 4:13–5:6.	
V. <u>THE ASSOCIATIONS OF FAITH</u>	James 5:7-20
A. <u>Toward the Brethren</u> — 5:7-11.	
B. <u>In the World</u> — 5:12.	
C. <u>In the Church</u> — 5:13-15.	
D. <u>Toward the Backslider</u> — 5:16-20.	

XII. HOMILETIC APPEAL

James is a book dealing with practical, down-to-earth Christianity. Therefore it is a goldmine for a pastor, and should be taught and preached on a regular basis.

Some excellent “sermon seeds” are:

- God’s purpose in life’s trials.
- The mirror of God’s Word.
- The Royal Law of Christ.
- Sin is the transgression of the Law.
- Dead faith, demonic faith, and dynamic faith.
- The tongue.
- Worldliness.
- Why our prayers aren’t answered.
- True humility.
- The brevity of life.
- Faith healing.
- The power of fervent prayer.

etc.

XIII. PROBLEM TEXTS

A. PAUL VERSUS JAMES:

The main objection to the book of James has come because of its supposed conflict with the teachings of Paul over “faith” and “works.” This perceived contradiction has led some naturalistic critics to conclude that the book was actually written to correct or counterbalance Paul’s doctrine.

This perceived “disagreement” is seen by the following references:

PAUL

“Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” — Romans 3:28.

*“But to him that **worketh not**, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” — Romans 4:5.*

JAMES

*“But wilt thou know, O vain man, that **faith without works** is dead?” — James 2:20.*

Paul and James are not at odds at all. They are each looking a different side of the “faith coin.” Both sides of this coin can be seen in:

Ephesians 2:8-10

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: NOT OF WORKS [Paul’s emphasis], lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus UNTO GOOD WORKS, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them [James’ emphasis].”

Philippians 2:12,13

“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, WORK OUT your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which WORKETH IN you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

- Paul is looking at the root; James is looking at the fruit.
- James emphasizes conduct more than creed.
- James is addressing the work of God IN us, rather than the work of God FOR us.
- Together, both men are saying: “Works without faith are dead works; faith without works is a dead faith.”

We often speak of an “act of faith,” which is correct Bible terminology. Salvation — which is *by grace through faith in Christ* — requires an act. A sinner must believe, he must receive, he must commit, he must call, he must obey the Gospel, etc. — all of which refer to his appropriating the finished work of Jesus Christ to his soul. Salvation is not received imperceptibly through a process of osmosis.

There is no conflict!

JAMES

*“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world **rich in faith**, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” — James 2:5.*

PAUL

*“That they do good, that they be **rich in good works**, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.” — 1 Timothy 6:18.*

B. CONFESS WHAT?

The text of *James 5:16* has been butchered in many modern (per)versions of the Bible.

“Confess your FAULTS [παράπτωμα, paraptōma = side slip, fault, error, mishap] one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed...”

In the ASV, RSV, NRSV, NASB, NEB, NIV, TEV, etc., and all Roman Catholic bibles, the word “faults” has been changed to SINS. The New King James Version (NKJV) has “trespasses.”

Changes in these Protestant versions came via the Westcott & Hort critical text (1881). Using the corrupt Ⲛ (Sinaiticus), B (Vaticanus), and A (Alexandrinus) codices, these pro-Catholic scholars substituted the Greek word ἁμαρτία, harmartia = *sin(s)*. This, of course, provided cover for the blasphemous Roman teaching that *a priest can absolve another man’s sins in the confessional*. See: Mark 2:7.

EXERCISES

1. Read through the book of James and make a list of wrong attitudes and actions that were present among early Christians. How many of these are prevalent today?
2. How many times do each of the following words appear in the book of James?
faith
works
do
say
perfect
3. Write a Bible study or preaching outline on the subject of PRAYER that is based solely on the book of James.

NOTES

REVIEW QUESTIONS

James

1. Why has the book of James been called the “Proverbs of the New Testament?”
2. Why has the book of James been called the “Amos of the New Testament?”
3. Provide a brief biographical sketch of James, the half-brother of Jesus Christ.
4. Why is it generally accepted that James was written by the half-brother of Jesus Christ?
5. Distinguish between the narrow and broad interpretations of “*the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad...*”
6. List six key doctrines addressed in James.
7. Where was the epistle written?
8. Why was the epistle written?
9. What produced hesitation in accepting James into the canon of scripture?
10. What is the theme of the book of James?
11. Write out the key verse of the book of James.
12. Finish the sentence, “James says less about the Master than any other writer in the New Testament...”

13. James is the most _____ of all the New Testament epistles, with _____ references to the Old Testament.

14. List five parallels between James and the Sermon on the Mount.

15. Define the linguistic style, “duadiplosis,” providing four examples from James.

16. What is the main homiletic appeal of the book?

17. Respond to the charge that James conflicts with the teachings of Paul over “faith” and “works.”

18. The corruption of what passage in James provided cover for the blasphemous Roman teaching that a priest can absolve another man’s sins in the confessional?

SECOND PETER

The period between the martyrdom of the apostle Paul and the death of the apostle John (c.66 A.D.–100 A.D.) has been termed the “Age of Shadows,” because “*of all the periods of the history of the church it is the one about which we know the least.*”⁽¹⁾ It is also known as the “Period of Polemic.” (The word *polemic* means a “disputation;” a polemicist is one who engages in theological disputation or debate.)

By the latter part of the first century A.D., the two major errors of Judaism and Gnosticism (and their permutations) had become widespread and pervasive. It was on the cusp of this period that the second epistle of Peter was written, along with its counterpart in the epistle of Jude.

Of all the New Testament epistles, II Peter has the distinction of being the most disputed. Even many conservative scholars and critics regard it as a pseudopigraphon (false writing) — the work of some unknown author who used the name of Peter. (This matter will be examined under “Canonicity.”)

I. THE AUTHOR

God, the Holy Spirit — *II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 3:5.*

II. THE WRITER

The writer was the apostle Peter — *II Peter 1:1.*

“Simon PETER, a servant and an APOSTLE of Jesus Christ...”

While this fact has been disputed by the critics, there is actually more internal evidence that Peter was the writer than there is for his first epistle! For example:

- The writer spoke of the Lord’s earlier prediction of his death. See: *John 21:18,19.*

“Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me” — II Peter 1:14.

- The writer identifies himself as an eyewitness of the transfiguration of Christ. See: *Matthew 17:1-5.*

“For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were EYEWITNESSES of his majesty. For he received from God the Father

1 Hurlbut, J. L. Hurlbut’s Story of the Christian Church Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Winton, 1918: pg.41.

honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount” — II Peter 1:16-18.

- The writer was well acquainted with the apostle Paul and his writings.

“And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood...” — II Peter 3:15,16.

III. THE ADDRESSEE

“...to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” — I Peter 1:1,2.

This description of the intended recipients is even more general than that for the first epistle (which came with geographical boundaries). However, from *II Peter 3:1*, we know that the letter was meant to include those who had received Peter's first epistle.

“This SECOND epistle, beloved, I NOW write unto YOU; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance.”

The recipients of Peter's second epistle were also familiar with most, if not all, of Paul's writings (*II Peter 3:15,16*). Furthermore, Peter states that Paul had also written to them. The books of Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon all bore Asian destinations.

IV. THE DATE OF WRITING

It is difficult to determine the date of writing for this epistle with any exactitude. A reasonable (educated) guess will assign a date of writing at around **67 A.D.** This is based on the following:

A. BIBLICAL CLUES:

1. The First epistle of Peter was written c.58/59 A.D.. Therefore, the second epistle had to be written after this time (*II Peter 3:1*).
2. Peter wrote it as he was nearing the end of his life — *II Peter 1:13-15*. According to *John 21:18*, this would be when he was quite aged.
3. Paul had evidently written all or most of his epistles by this time (*II Peter 3:15,16*). The majority of Paul's letters were written by 63 A.D., and his last epistle (II Timothy) was written in the fall of 66 A.D..

4. The language of *II Peter* 3:15,16 suggests Paul was still living when Peter penned his second epistle — or, at the very least, Peter was unaware of his death. Paul was martyred in Rome in 67 A.D..
5. The epistle confronts the ever-encroaching tide of “damnable” heresies. As noted above, these errors became more and more prevalent in the latter third of the first century A.D..
6. Though the epistle cites several instances of divine judgment (2:4-6; 3:5-7,10-12), there is no reference to the fall and destruction of Jerusalem that occurred in 70 A.D..

These clues embrace a date of writing somewhere between 60-70 A.D..

B. TRADITION:

Tradition uniformly holds that Peter was martyred during the reign of Nero (who died June 9, 68 A.D.). This is a reasonable assumption. The most common date proffered for Peter’s death is sometime between 64 and 67 A.D..

Tradition also states that Peter died in Rome — although there is absolutely no hard evidence that he ever was in that city. ⁽²⁾ Acceding that Peter *was* in Rome leads to the designation of an earlier (pre-67 A.D.) date for the writing of *II Peter*. It is reasoned that, since Paul makes no mention of Peter in his last epistle (written from Rome), Peter had to have been martyred before him.

We simply do not know. Tradition must be viewed with suspicion in this instance. [See the discussion about Peter and Rome in the notes for *First Peter*.]

V. THE PLACE OF WRITING

Tradition says Peter wrote the epistle from Rome. Again, this is more wishful thinking than reality.

It is not possible to say where *II Peter* was written, although it was unlikely to be anywhere in Judæa. Why? Because the first Jewish-Roman War (that culminated in the destruction of Jerusalem and the diaspora) began in July 66 A.D., and there is no mention of this upheaval (or any persecutions) in the epistle.

There is no reason to suppose that the second epistle was not written from Babylon, as was the first.

² Even most conservative scholars nowadays accept that Peter was in Rome at some point, though they generally deny he was there for 20+ years.

VI. THE OCCASION FOR WRITING

The purpose for writing is stated in *II Peter 3:1,2*.

“This second epistle, beloved, I NOW WRITE unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: THAT YE MAY BE MINDFUL of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.”

Peter wrote this epistle to warn against, and to teach Christians how to counteract, the inroads of heresy.

A. FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF FALSE TEACHERS:

1. They work surreptitiously — 2:1,13 (“privily,” “feast with you”). See: Galatians 2:4; Jude 4.
2. They are covetous and self-seeking — 2:3a,15. They use religion for personal gain. (Forerunners of modern charismatic televangelists.)
3. They reject God-ordained authority — 2:10 (“despise government,” “self-willed,” “speak evil of dignities”). Particularly church authority and pastoral authority.
4. They will use truth — 2:20-22. They know the doctrines of the Bible, but only intellectually. They are “convinced, but not converted.”
5. They are lost — 2:10a,12-14,17,22. They appear saved, but have no heart acceptance of Jesus Christ. See: Matthew 7:15; Acts 20:29.

B. FIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF FALSE TEACHING:

Notice that the Bible refers to the teachings of these heretics as “damnable doctrines.” These are not mere differences of opinion or interpretation — they are teachings which, if believed, will damn a soul to the eternal Lake of Fire!

Such teaching will:

1. Deny the deity of Christ — “denying the Lord” (2:1). See: Jude 4.
2. Deny the blood atonement — “that bought them” (2:1).
3. Undermine the Word of God — 2:2; 3:4. See: Genesis 3:1c.
4. Beguile the unstable Christian — 2:14. How? see: II Peter 3:16d.
5. Allure the stable Christian — 2:18,19. This is done through:
 - a. Fleshly “worship” — versus true, spiritual worship.
 - b. Wantonness — a created desire for the things God prohibits.

- c. A false “liberty” — throwing off of godly standards, etc.

C. THE ANTIDOTE TO ERROR:

Peter does not instruct Christians to “hunker down” in the face of apostasy — he admonishes them to know the real truth of God’s Word.

The word “knowledge” and its variants is found 16 times in the epistle. See: II Peter 1:2,3,5,6,8,12,14,16,20; 2:9,20,21; 3:3,17,18.

When believers are grounded in the truth (1:12) they will be able to spot error “a mile away.”

VII. CANONICITY

The main issue facing the epistle of II Peter is its canonical authority. The dispute concerns the letter’s authorship and acceptance. As mentioned previously, most “scholars” (including some conservative writers) doubt that the epistle was actually written by Peter.

A. ARGUMENTS AGAINST AUTHENTICITY:

1. The Book Lacks Early Acceptance.

- None of the early (second century A.D.) Church Fathers commented on, quoted from, or cited II Peter.
- The first known reference to the the epistle’s content came in 256 A.D., in a letter from Firmilian, bishop of Cæsarea Cappodocia.
- Toward the end of the third century A.D., Methodius (bishop of Lycis) quoted *II Peter 3:18*.
- Origen (185-254 A.D.) acknowledged two epistles ascribed to Peter, but would not support the second one as being genuine, calling it “disputed.”
- Eusebius (260-339 A.D.) cast doubt upon the epistle’s apostolic credentials in his *Ecclesiastical History* — although he acknowledged that many read and studied it.
- II Peter was accepted as belonging to the New Testament canon at the Council of Laodicea (363 A.D.), the Council of Hippo (393 A.D.), and the third Council of Carthage (397 A.D.).
- Prominent fourth century Church Fathers — e.g. Athanasius (293-373 A.D.), Ambrose (340-397 A.D.), Augustine (354-430 A.D.), etc. — accepted the epistle as genuine.
- Jerome (340-420 A.D.) included II Peter in his Latin translation, though he expressed doubts about its authenticity.

- The epistle was disputed until the sixth century A.D. by the Syrian branch of Christendom (Antiochan).

2. The Book Is Stylistically Different From First Peter.

This fact is apparent to any reader. The writing style and vocabulary of II Peter is different from that of I Peter.

On this basis, the critics contend that it could not be the same Peter who wrote both epistles.

3. The Text Points To A Later Writer.

- No [Church] Fathers were deceased (in the context of *II Peter* 3:4c) at 67 A.D.. Therefore, the epistle must have been composed at a later time (by some pseudo-Peter in the second century A.D.).
- The first century was too early a time for the Pauline epistles to have been wrested in the manner described in *II Peter* 3:16.

B. ARGUMENTS SUPPORTING AUTHENTICITY:

1. Internal Evidence.

- a. The evidence from *within* the Word of God supports the Petrine origin of the book. (See: “The Writer.”)
- b. The epistle parallels the epistle of Jude — who was a contemporary of Peter.

2. Historical Acceptance.

- a. The argument from silence is not a sound argument against the authenticity of II Peter. All that can be said categorically is that the epistle did not receive wide, universal, acceptance until the end of the fourth century A.D.. (This acceptance refers to that given by the Church Fathers, not necessarily by Bible-believers!)
- b. One good reason for its lack of ready acceptance is that II Peter strongly warns against false prophets and damnable heresies. Since the second and third centuries A.D. were the periods when many Bible doctrines were being changed and perverted, why would the scholars of the day want to accept the epistle? It would be in their interest to suppress it. (This is the reason the epistle of Jude also was not readily received.)
- c. With the early attempts to elevate Peter to an exalted rank (ultimately as the first bishop of Rome, the pope!), a number of pseudepigraphal writings attributed to Peter surfaced at an early time (second century A.D.) — e.g., the Gospel of Peter, the Acts of

Peter, the Apocalypse of Peter. The existence of these false writings may have led some of that time to be suspicious of the authentic epistle.

- d. The councils of Hippo and Carthage (mentioned above) rejected the Epistle of Barnabas and the First epistle of Clement as canonical. This fact adds weight to their acceptance of II Peter.

3. Stylistic Differences.

The differences of style between Peter’s epistles can be explained by:

- a. The differing subject matter of the two books.

First Peter is an epistle of hope in the face of *external* trials and persecutions; Second Peter is a “call to arms” to stand against the *internal* attacks of reprobates. Furthermore, Peter is known to have been an impulsive and emotional man.

- b. The difference in time between the writing of the two books.

Second Peter was written seven to nine years after First Peter. People change and circumstances change over time. Peter may have been awaiting his execution when he penned his second epistle.

- c. The amanuensis.

The first epistle was written with the aid of a secretary (*I Peter 5:12a*), but there is no evidence this was the case with the second. This fact could also have had some bearing on style, although one must be careful here not to discount or diminish the Authorship of the Holy Spirit (*II Peter 1:21*).

It is helpful to consider both epistles of Peter together, and also to compare II Peter to other New Testament scriptures.

FIRST & SECOND PETER CONTRASTED	
I PETER	II PETER
Hope in the midst of suffering	Steadfastness in the face of error
The sufferings of Christ	The glory of Christ
Focus on the First Advent	Focus on the Second Advent
Consolation	Warning
Hope	Full Knowledge
Redemptive title: “Christ”	Title of dominion: “Lord”

It is interesting to note that (according to Bigg) there are 361 [Greek] words in I Peter that are not found in II Peter and 231 [Greek] words in II Peter that are not found in I Peter — yet (according to H. K. Ebright) “there are seven times as many rare words in 1 Peter as in the New Testament taken as a whole, and ten times as many in 2 Peter... The noticeable difference therefore, is not between the two Petrine epistles, but between these epistles and the rest of the New Testament.”⁽³⁾

There are also some similarities between the two letters:

FIRST & SECOND PETER COMPARED	
I PETER	II PETER
“PETER, an APOSTLE of JESUS CHRIST” (1:1)	“Simon PETER, a servant and an APOSTLE of JESUS CHRIST” (1:1)
“GRACE unto you, and PEACE, be MULTIPLIED” (1:2)	“GRACE and PEACE be MULTIPLIED unto you” (1:2)
“conversation” (1:15,18; 2:12; 3:1,2,16)	“conversation” (2:7; 3:11)
“without spot” (1:19)	“without spot” (3:14)
Noah and the flood — 3:20	Noah and the flood — 2:5; 3:6
Return of Christ — 1:5,7	Return of Christ — 3:12
Liberty — 2:16	Liberty — 2:19

Further confirmation that Peter was indeed the writer of the epistle may be observed by comparing his statements in the epistle with the Gospels.

SECOND PETER & THE GOSPELS	
THE GOSPELS	II PETER
“Then answered PETER, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three TABERNACLES” (Matthew 17:4)	“Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this TABERNACLE, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance; Knowing that shortly I must put off this my TABERNACLE” (1:13,14)
“decease” [ἐξοδος, “exodus” = way out] — Luke 9:31.	“decease” [ἐξοδος, “exodus” = way out] — 1:15.

3 Hiebert, D. E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Waynesboro, Georgia: Gabriel Publishing, 2003 (Three Volume Collection): Volume 3, pp. 145,6 — citing: Bigg, C. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, and Ebright, H. K. *The Petrine Epistles, A Critical Study of Authorship*.

<p><i>“Give not that which is holy unto the DOGS, neither cast ye your pearls before SWINE, lest they trample them under their feet, and TURN AGAIN and rend you” — Matthew 7:6.</i></p>	<p><i>“But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The DOG is TURNED TO his own vomit again; and the SOW that was washed to her wallowing in the mire” — 2:22.</i></p>
<p><i>“Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your LORD doth COME. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the THIEF would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up” — Matthew 24:42,43.</i></p>	<p><i>“But the day of the LORD will COME as a THIEF in the night” — 3:10.</i></p>
<p><i>“And as it was in the days of NOE, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that NOE entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of LOT; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that LOT went out of SODOM it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed” — Luke 17:26-30.</i></p>	<p><i>“And spared not the old world, but saved NOAH the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly; And turning the cities of SODOM and Gomorrha into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly; And delivered just LOT, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds — 2:5-8.</i></p>

VIII. THE PREDOMINANT THEME

FULL KNOWLEDGE (επίγνωσις, epignōsis).

“Full knowledge is the key to steadfastness.”

The Word of God presents a sure plan for dealing with error and false prophets (reprobates).

- Maturity — *“the best defense is a strong offense”* (chapter 1).
- Marking — *“to be forewarned is to be forearmed”* (chapter 2).
- Measuring — *“to know things as they are is better than to believe things as they seem”* (chapter 3).

IX. THE KEY VERSE

The key verse is *II Peter 3:18*.

“But grow in grace, and in the KNOWLEDGE of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

X. AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK:

The book of Second Peter divides naturally into its chapter divisions.

<u>THE BOOK OF SECOND PETER</u>	
I. <u>PRESENT TRUTH</u>	II Peter 1
<i>"...be established in the present truth."</i>	
A. <u>Our Abundant Provision</u> — verse 1-5.	
B. <u>Our Active Progress</u> — verses 6-15.	
C. <u>Our Authoritative Proof</u> — verses 16-21.	
Holiness	
II. <u>PERVERTED TRUTH</u>	II Peter 2
<i>"...of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of."</i>	
A. <u>Their Doctrine Defined</u> — verses 1-3a.	
B. <u>Their Destruction Declared</u> — verses 3b-13.	
C. <u>Their Deeds Described</u> — verses 14-22.	
Heresy	
III. <u>PROSPECTIVE TRUTH</u>	II Peter 3
<i>"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise..."</i>	
A. <u>Truth Assailed</u> — verses 1-4.	
B. <u>Truth Attested</u> — verses 5-10.	
C. <u>Truth Applied</u> — verses 11-18.	
Hope	

XI. HOMILETIC AND DOCTRINAL APPEAL

Second Peter is a doctrinal epistle. One subject that pervades the epistle is the doctrine of the scriptures. The practicality of the epistle affords numerous preaching topics as well.

A. SERMON SEEDS:

- Precious Things (with those mentioned in I Peter).
- The Divine Nature.
- Add to Your Faith.

- How to be a Fruitful Christian.
- Don't Forget Where You Came From.
- Preventing a Fall.
- The Marks of a False Prophet.
- A Just Man Vexed.
- Convinced, But not Converted.
- Where is the Promise of His Coming?
- The Day of the Lord.
- Not Willing that any Should Perish.
- Grow in Grace.
- The Holy Scriptures.
 1. The Sufficiency of Scripture — 1:3,4.
Deuteronomy 29:29; II Timothy 3:17.
 2. The Sanctuary of Scripture — 1:12.
I Timothy 4:6; Psalm 119:9,11.
 3. The Superiority of Scripture — 1:19.
I Corinthians 14:37. The written Word is superior to any
“Mount of Transfiguration” experience!
 4. The Sovereignty of Scripture — 1:20.
Supercedes all private interpretation.
 5. The Supernaturalness of Scripture — 1:21.
II Timothy 3:16.

etc.

B. DOCTRINAL PASSAGES:

1. The Doctrine of the Scriptures.
 - *II Peter 1:16* — divine revelation.
 - *II Peter 1:15,21; 3:1* — supernatural inspiration.
 - *II Peter 3:1,15,16* — canonization.
 - *II Peter 3:2* — providential preservation.
 - *II Peter 1:3,4,8,12; 3:17,18* — practical application.
2. The Doctrine of Salvation.
 - *II Peter 1:1,2* — through God.
 - *II Peter 1:4* — the divine (new) nature.
 - *II Peter 3:9* — repentance.

3. The Doctrine of the Angels.
 - *II Peter 2:4* — fallen angels.
 - *II Peter 2:11* — power of.
4. The Doctrine of the Church.
 - *II Peter 2:13* — spots and wrinkles.
 - *II Peter 2* — false prophets & heresy.
5. The Doctrine of Last Things.
 - *II Peter 3:3,4* — the Last Days.
 - *II Peter 2:9; 3:7* — the Day of Judgment.
 - *II Peter 3:10,12* — the Day of the Lord.
 - *II Peter 3:3* — the new heaven and earth.
 - *II Peter 1:5* — maintenance of it.

XII. DIFFICULT TEXTS

One passage in *II Peter* gives rise to a number of questions. It concerns the “angels that sinned” — *II Peter 2:4*.

“For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.”

A. WHO ARE THESE ANGELS?

The Word of God does not say exactly who these spirit beings are. What we do know is:

1. Satan is a fallen cherub — *Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:15-17*.
2. Satan has a kingdom — *Ephesians 6:12*.
3. Satan has angels — *Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:7-9*.
4. While the Bible does not tell us when the kingdom of darkness came into being, we assume it was associated with the fall of Lucifer, before the creation of the world. *Revelation 12:4* (in the light of *Judges 5:20*) may indicate one-third of the angelic host joined Lucifer in his prideful rebellion.
5. Fallen angels may account for the evil spirits (devils, demons) that are part of this realm of darkness.
6. These “angels that sinned” are those that “kept not their first estate” (*Jude 6*). What this means is nowhere explained.

Note: Some believe they were the “sons of God” who cohabited with the “daughters of men” and brought about the Flood (*Genesis 6:1-6*). The reference to Noah in *II Peter 2:5* is taken as further support for this view.

B. WHERE ARE THESE ANGELS NOW?

While their exact sin is not mentioned, we are told that these spirit beings are bound in chains of darkness.

The word translated “hell” in *II Peter 2:4* is τάρταρῶ, “tar-tar-o’-ō” (“Tartarus”) — considered to be the deepest abyss of Hell.

The judgment of angels will occur along with the Great White Throne judgment — see: *Matthew 25:46*; *I Corinthians 6:3*; *Revelation 20:10,11*.

EXERCISES

1. How many times do each of the following words (and their cognates) appear in the book of II Peter?

knowledge remembrance
these things judgment

2. Match the following references from the Old Testament that are mentioned in II Peter:

Genesis 1 — II Peter
Genesis 6,7 — II Peter
Genesis 19 — II Peter
Numbers 22 — II Peter
Isaiah 65 — II Peter

3. Compile a Bible study detailing and elaborating on the “steps to maturity” that are given in *II Peter 1:5-10*.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Second Peter

1. List two names given to the period between the martyrdom of the apostle Paul and the death of the apostle John (c.66 A.D.–100 A.D.).
2. Of all the New Testament epistles, II Peter holds what distinction with regards to its canonicity?
3. List three examples of internal evidence that Peter was the writer of the epistle.
4. What is a reasonable date to assign the writing of the epistle? Why?
5. What was the occasion for Peter to write his second epistle?
6. List five characteristics of false teachers found in the epistle.
7. List five characteristics of false teachings/damnable doctrines found in the epistle.
8. What enables believers to spot error?
9. One good reason for its lack of ready acceptance is that II Peter gives strong warnings in what two areas?
10. Provide a three-point response to the charges that stylistic differences between Peter's epistles point to different writers.
11. What is the predominant theme of II Peter?

12. Write out the key verse of the epistle.

13. What is the main theme outlined for each chapter of the book?

14. What doctrinal subject permeates the epistle?

15. List five doctrines addressed in II Peter, with a reference for each.

JUDE

The book of Jude has been called the “Acts of the Apostates” and the “Vestibule of the book of The Revelation.” The epistle belongs with II Peter in the Polemic Group, and is the more vehement of the two in addressing the grave problem of apostasy.

I. THE AUTHOR

God, the Holy Spirit — *II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 3:5.*

II. THE WRITER

A. THE WRITER IS IDENTIFIED AS JUDE:

“JUDE [Ιουδάς, “Ioudas”], the servant [δοῦλος, “doulos” = bond servant, slave] of Jesus Christ, and brother of James...” — Jude 1.

Jude, or Judas, was a common name. It comes from the Hebrew Judah (“praise”) or Jehudah (“the Lord be praised”).

A difficulty arises here because six men mentioned in the New Testament bear the name Jude or Judas. They are:

1. Judas, the Brother of James — an apostle.

See: Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13.

By a process of elimination, we learn that this particular Judas is also called Lebbæus Thaddæus (*Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18*) and “Judas, not Iscariot” (*John 14:22*).

He is the brother of James, the son of Alphæus — otherwise known as “James the Less.”

2. Judas Iscariot — an apostle, the betrayer of Jesus.

See: Matthew 10:4; 27:3-10; Mark 3:19; Luke 6:16; John 6:71; etc.

3. Judas, the Half-Brother of Jesus Christ.

Following the supernatural virgin birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, Joseph and Mary went on to have at least six other children (*Matthew 1:25*).

“Is not this the carpenter’s son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and JUDAS? And his sisters, are they not all with us?” — Matthew 13:55,56.

“Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of JUDA, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us?” — Mark 6:3.

- a. Judas (along with his brothers) remained in unbelief (*John 7:5*) until he saw the resurrected Christ (*I Corinthians 15:7*).
- b. In the forty days between the Lord’s resurrection and Pentecost, Judas had become a baptized member of the Lord’s church at Jerusalem, and was in the upper room meeting (*Acts 1:14d*).
- c. Jude was apparently married and may have traveled somewhat as a preacher — *I Corinthians 9:5*.

“Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and AS THE BROTHERS OF THE LORD, and Cephas?”

4. Judas of Galilee — *Acts 5:37*.

This man was an insurrectionist of an earlier period.

5. Judas of Damascus — *Acts 9:11*.

A member of the church at Damascus who lived on Straight Street.

6. Judas Bärshabas — *Acts 15:22,26,27,32*.

A preacher and leader (pastor?) of the church at Jerusalem in the middle of the first century A.D.. He is called a prophet.

B. WHICH JUDE?

Of the six Judes listed above, only three are qualified to be the writer, and only two are known to have a brother named James — Judas Lebbæus Thaddæus (the brother of James the Less) and the half-brother of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The writer of the epistle of Jude was Judas, the half-brother of our Lord. Why?

1. The writer does not refer to himself as an apostle — which tends to eliminate Judas Lebbæus Thaddæus. In fact, the writer seemingly distinguishes himself *from* the apostles in *Jude 17,18*.

“But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that THEY [not “we”] told you...”

2. The writer does refer to himself as the “brother of James.” If the writer was the half-brother of Jesus, then this James was the well-known and respected presiding elder (pastor) of the church at Jerusalem and writer of the book of James. If, on the other hand, the writer was the apostle, his brother James the Less is an “unknown.” (His name only appears in the apostolic lists; nothing else is said about him. He is the least-known of all the apostles.)

- The similarity of style between the epistles of James and Jude (direct, poetic, vivid, referencing of nature) connects the writers.

Identifying Jude as the half-brother of the Lord Jesus is the commonly accepted conclusion as to the writer of this epistle.

III. THE ADDRESSEE

“...to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ, and called...” — Jude 1.

The epistle is a general epistle, addressed to all Christians — Jews and Gentiles. This is further reinforced by *Jude 3*:

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the COMMON [κοινός, “koinos”] SALVATION...”

Compare this statement with *Acts 10:14,15,28; 11:8,9*.

IV. THE DATE OF WRITING

The similarities between II Peter and Jude are obvious, and a debate continues among scholars over the question of which epistle was written first. (This question only arises out of the naturalistic supposition that one writer copied from the other. “Did Peter copy from Jude and omit some things, or did Jude copy from Peter and elaborate on some things?”)

The Holy Spirit is the Author of both epistles. Whether the two men ever saw each other and/or either of the epistles is of no consequence.

However, when comparing the two epistles, the progression in the text of Jude — its focus and sense of urgency — would lead to the conclusion that it was written after II Peter. This conclusion is based on the fact that *“evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse” (II Timothy 3:13)*.

II PETER	JUDE
<p><i>“...even as there <u>SHALL</u> be false teachers among you, who privily <u>SHALL</u> bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction. And many <u>SHALL</u> follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of” — 2:1,2.</i></p>	<p><i>“For there <u>ARE</u> certain men crept in unawares” — 3.</i></p>
<p><i>“Knowing this first, that there <u>SHALL</u> come in the last days scoffers [εμπαίκτης, “empaiktēs” = derider], walking after their own lusts” — 3:3.</i></p>	<p><i>“But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there should be mockers [εμπαίκτης, “empaiktēs” = derider], in the last time, who should walk after their own ungodly lusts” — 17,18.</i></p>

While not quoting from II Peter, *Jude 18* is a direct reference to *II Peter 3:3*, because there is no other statement like it found anywhere in the Bible.

A consideration of the age of Jude is helpful. If his elder stepbrother (Jesus) was born in 5 B.C., then Jude could not have been born until 1 B.C. (allowing one year between each of Mary's children) and possibly as late as 1 or 2 A.D., after his parents and Jesus had returned from Egypt (c.3 B.C.). Adding the normal life span of 70-80 years (*Psalms 90:10*) would bring the end of his life at around 70 A.D..

All this being said, it is most likely that Jude was written fairly soon after Peter's second epistle had been circulated — probably somewhere between 68-70 A.D., but before the destruction of Jerusalem (since that catastrophic event is not mentioned in conjunction with *verses 5-7*).

We will adopt a date of **69 A.D.**

V. THE PLACE OF WRITING

It is not possible to determine the place of writing.

The last-known whereabouts of Jude was in Jerusalem (*Acts 1:14*) — in the late spring/early summer of 30 A.D., almost 40 years before his epistle was written.

I Corinthians 9:5 indicates Jude traveled about as a preacher — but where he went, no one knows. (One can only speculate that this reference meant he was personally known to the Corinthians.) Tradition places Jude in Alexandria and in Palestine (Jerusalem).

VI. THE OCCASION FOR WRITING

Jude initially intended to write about the “*common salvation*” — *verse 3a*.

However, it became necessary to write a “*call to arms*” to believers, urging them to “*earnestly contend for the faith*” — *verse 3b*.

VII. CANONICITY

Like II Peter, the epistle of Jude did not enjoy immediate universal acceptance — though it was received more readily.

There are some apparent allusions to Jude in the writings of some Church Fathers of the second century A.D.. Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.) quotes from Jude, as does Origen (185-254 A.D.). Eusebius (260-339 A.D.) lists the epistle with the *antilogomena* (disputed books), but Jerome (340-420 A.D.) includes it in the canon. It is listed in the Muratorian Canon, and appears in the Old Latin Bible (c.150 A.D.).

The Syrian (Antiochan) branch of Christendom did not readily receive the epistle of Jude. The epistle was not included in the Old Syriac Bible.

The epistle of Jude was universally accepted as canonical by the Councils of Laodicea (363 A.D.) and Carthage (397 A.D.).

Modern critics cast doubt upon the authenticity of Jude by pointing to:

A. THE WRITER OF THE BOOK:

The fact that Jude was not an apostle has led some to dispute its place in the sacred canon.

Response:

John Mark, Luke, and James were also not apostles. They were, however, New Testament prophets (Note: Ephesians 3:5).

B. THE CONTENTS OF THE BOOK:

Critics argue that the epistle of Jude was written by some unknown author well beyond the apostolic age (c.150 A.D.). They contend that:

1. “*The Faith*” (verse 3) refers to the ancient creeds of “The Church” that were formulated and published in a later age.
2. The book’s reference to “*the apostles*” (verse 17) suggests its writer was looking back to a bygone generation.
3. The text is confronting a fully-developed Gnosticism, thus placing it well into the second century A.D..

C. THE REFERENCES TO NON-CANONICAL WRITINGS:

Some believe Jude is quoting from non-canonical writings, namely:

1. The Assumption of Moses.

This legendary writing purports to consist of secret predictions passed on by to Joshua by Moses just before he died. It is believed to be Jewish literature written in the first century A.D., although the only known copy of it is in Latin that dates to the 6TH century A.D..

Critics contend that Jude quotes from this pseudepigraphon:

“Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee” — Jude 9.

To believe this would cast serious doubts upon the authority of Jude. “Why would he resort to using spurious writings as a source?”

Response:

- Jude does not quote anything in verse 9. He is simply stating a hitherto unrevealed fact.

- Even if the Assumption of Moses was authentic, all that can be said is that it and Jude mention the same event.
- The fact is, the Assumption of Moses is more likely to be spurious literature that was composed in the post-apostolic age, possibly to provide “credibility” to Jude’s statement about what happened after Moses died.

2. The Book of Enoch.

This so-called Book of Enoch is one of three legendary Jewish writings ascribed to the antediluvian patriarch. Most scholars think they were written between 200 B.C. and 50 A.D.. It survives today as an Ethiopic text.

Jude, it is claimed, quotes from I Enoch 1:9 — “And behold! He cometh with ten thousands of His holy ones to execute judgment upon all, and to destroy all the ungodly; and to convict all flesh of all the works of their ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, and of all the hard things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him.”

This supposed quote is found in *Jude 14,15*.

“And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.”

Response:

- Again, Jude is not quoting anything. He is simply stating a fact that lines up with other scriptures — *Genesis 5:18-24; Hebrews 11:5*. The name Methuselah (Enoch’s son) means “when he is dead it [God’s judgment] will come.” For 300 years Enoch knew a day of judgment was coming. He became a preacher, warning the ungodly around him. The day Methuselah died (969 years old), the Flood came.
- Even if the Book of Enoch was authentic, all that could be said is that both writings mention the same actual event.
- The fact is, is it more likely the text of Jude was included (or added) into Enoch (if it existed) in an unnecessary attempt to provide “credibility” to Jude’s revelation of what Enoch really preached.

This question goes beyond the issue of the canonical authority of the book of Jude. The Church of Rome has seized upon Jude’s [purported] use of non-canonical writings to justify its inclusion of The Apocrypha

into the Word of God. Their argument is that, if the Bible quotes from a non-canonical book, it is validating the authenticity of that book as authoritative scripture.

The Author of the Holy Bible is well able to move a writer to record information personally unknown or understood by that writer — either future events (*Daniel 12:8*), present matters (*Job 42:3*), or past events. For example, in *II Timothy 3:8*, the Holy Spirit revealed the names of the two magicians who 1,500+ years earlier had withstood Moses and Aaron at Pharaoh's court.

Paul cited, and Luke recorded, a pagan poet (Aratus) in *Acts 17:28*, and later he quoted a Cretan poet in an epistle (*Titus 1:12*). Doing this in no way conferred divine authority upon their poetry.

VIII. THE PREDOMINANT THEME

CONTEND.

“The Faith: Once Delivered, Oft Defended.”

We are to contend, but not be contentious (*II Timothy 2:24; Jude 9*).

The history of Christianity is the history of this struggle. As Baptist churches departed from the ONE faith (*Ephesians 4:5*) they evolved into the multiplicity of human religious organizations that exist today under the general banner of “Christianity” that no longer believe or practice God's Word.

IX. THE KEY VERSE

The key verse is *Jude 3*.

“Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.”

The Greek word translated “contend” is *επαγωνίζομαι*, “*exagōnizomai*.” It literally means to “agonize over,” or “struggle.”

X. THE STYLE OF THE BOOK

As mentioned above, the epistle of Jude exhibits a similar style to that of the book of James. It is colorful, to the point, and has a poetic quality to it. Like James, Jude uses the imagery of nature — clouds, winds, trees, waves, and stars (*verses 12,13*).

Another notable feature is Jude's predilection for triplets:

Jude, servant, brother — *verse 1*.

sanctified, preserved, called — *verse 1.*
mercy, peace, love — *verse 2.*
defile, despise, speak evil — *verse 8.*
gone, ran, perished — *verse 11.*
Cain, Balaam, Core — *verse 11.*
Holy Ghost, Jesus Christ, God — *verses 20-25.*

XI. AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK:

Because the epistle of Jude is a small book, the outline is straightforward, following the text.

<u>THE BOOK OF JUDE</u>	
I. <u>Introduction</u>	verses 1-4
A. <u>The Acclamation</u> — <i>verses 1,2.</i> <i>God's part — our position (1) & our privilege (2).</i>	
B. <u>The Admonition</u> — <i>verses 3,4.</i> <i>Our part — the duty (3) & the danger (4).</i>	
II. <u>EXPOSITION OF THE DANGER</u>	verses 5-16
A. <u>Remembering Past Apostasy</u> — <i>verses 5-7.</i> <i>Unbelieving Israel, fallen angels, Sodom & Gomorrah.</i>	
B. <u>Recognizing Present Apostates</u> — <i>verses 8-16.</i> <i>Their conduct (8-11), character (12-13), curse (14-15), cause (16).</i>	
III. <u>EXHORTATION TO THE DUTY</u>	verses 17-23
A. <u>Remember</u> — <i>verses 17-19.</i>	
B. <u>Reinforce</u> — <i>verses 20,21.</i>	
C. <u>Reach Out</u> — <i>verses 22,23.</i>	
IV. <u>Doxology</u>	verses 24,25
A. <u>Praise of God's Power</u> — <i>verse 24.</i>	
B. <u>Praise of God's Person</u> — <i>verse 25.</i>	

XII. HOMILETIC AND DOCTRINAL APPEAL

While the brevity of the book may limit the *quantity* of sermons that can be taken from the text, the contents of the book are jam-packed with truth!

A. FOR PREACHING:

Some excellent “sermon seeds” are:

- The Common Salvation.
- The Way of the Wolves.
- God’s Plan for Spiritual Maturity.
- Making a Difference.
- Reaching Souls with the Gospel.

etc.

B. FOR TEACHING:

While not a doctrinal treatise *per se*, the epistle covers a wide range of the cardinal doctrines of “The Faith.” For example:

- Of the Scriptures — *verses 5,14,17.*
- Of God — *verses 1,24,25.*
- Of Jesus Christ — *verses 4,21.*
- Of the Holy Spirit — *verses 19,20.*
- Of Man — *verse 11.*
- Of Sin — *verses 7,23.*
- Of Salvation — *verses 1,2,3,4,24.*
- Of the Church — *verses 3,4,12,22,23.*
- Of the Unseen World — *verses 6,9.*
- Of Last Things — *verses 6,7,13-15.*

EXERCISES

1. How many times do each of the following words (and their cognates) appear in the book of Jude?

beloved	remembrance, remember
these	judgment
keep	ungodly

2. Compare the parallel passages of II Peter and Jude. Produce a side-by-side chart showing your findings.
3. Find and list the Old Testament references that match the following verses:

<i>Jude 5</i>	—
<i>Jude 6</i>	—
<i>Jude 7</i>	—
<i>Jude 11</i> (Cain)	—
<i>Jude 11</i> (Balaam)	—
<i>Jude 11</i> (Core)	—
<i>Jude 14</i>	—

4. What is the main “turning point” in the epistle of Jude?
5. What was the “gainsaying of Korah,” and how does it relate to the question of authority?
6. What was the “way of Cain,” and how does it relate to the doctrine of salvation?
7. How did Balaam bring God’s curse upon Israel?
8. Using *Jude 20-23*, develop a seven-point plan for effective discipleship.
9. Using the word “these,” list Jude’s description of the false teachers (giving a brief explanation).
10. What insight does the book of Jude give concerning soul winning and evangelism?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Jude

1. List two nicknames given the book of Jude.
2. Jude belongs with II Peter in the Polemic Group, but is the more fervent of the two in addressing what issue?
3. What does the name Jude mean?
4. Of the six men mentioned in the New Testament that bear the name Jude or Judas, which one wrote this epistle, and why?
5. Who was Jude written to?
6. Was Jude likely written before or after the similar epistle II Peter? Why?
7. What is a reasonable date to assign the writing of Jude?
8. What was the occasion for Jude to write the epistle?
9. Respond to the criticism that Jude should not be included in the sacred canon because Jude was not an apostle.
10. Respond in a general sense to the criticism that Jude quoted from the non-canonical writings “The Assumption of Moses” and “The Book of Enoch.”
11. What is the predominant theme of Jude?
12. Write out the key verse of the epistle.
13. Jude is similar in style to what other New Testament epistle? Describe the style.

14. Aside from the introduction and closing, list the two main sections outlined in the epistle.

15. List ten doctrines addressed in Jude, with a reference for each.

FIRST JOHN

This beautiful epistle of “Light and Love” is characterized by its two prominent words — “*know*” and “*love*” and their cognates. It has been called the “really and truly epistle.”

The word “know” (35+ times) embodies the book’s defense of the true faith against the rising error of Gnosticism (“higher knowledge”).

The word “love” (40+ times) epitomizes the epistle’s call for the believer to live above the world, in obedience to the Lord’s command to love one another.

Knowledge of the truth and love for God and the brethren provide the basis and the evidence of full assurance.

I. THE AUTHOR

God, the Holy Spirit — *II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 3:5.*

II. THE WRITER

This epistle is anonymous. However, it is universally acknowledged that it was written by the apostle John — and for good reasons.

To reach this conclusion however, it is necessary to consider two questions ... in the following order:

One. Who was the writer of the fourth Gospel?

and

Two. What is the connection between the fourth Gospel & the first Epistle?

A. THE FOURTH GOSPEL:

The writer of the fourth Gospel is also unnamed, but is unanimously identified as the apostle John. This identification is based on the following facts:

1. The writer of the Gospel was an eyewitness of Jesus Christ and His ministry (see: *John 1:14; 19:35; 21:24*), leading to the conclusion that he was most likely an apostle.

- The writer of the Gospel calls himself “that disciple” whom “Jesus loved” (see: *John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2*). By process of elimination, this has to be John.

“Then Peter, turning about, seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved following; which also leaned on his breast at supper ... THIS IS THE DISCIPLE which testifieth of these things, and WROTE these things: and we know that his testimony is true” — John 21:20,24.

- Three of Christ’s apostles were intimately associated with Him, and made up the “inner circle” — Peter, James, and John (see: *Matthew 17:1; 26:37; Luke 8:51*).
- Peter can be eliminated from consideration, because he is associated with the beloved disciple (see: *John 13:24; 20:2-4; 21:7,20*).
- James can be removed from any consideration because he was martyred at an early date (44 A.D.) — *Acts 12:1,2*.

This leaves only John — to whom the Lord entrusted the care of His mother (*John 19:26,27*).

B. THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE FOURTH GOSPEL AND THE EPISTLE:

When the Gospel of John and the epistle are compared, the similarities are too numerous to ignore or to arrive at any other conclusion other than that the writer of both books was the same person.

Consider the following:

- Both books begin with similar passages declaring who Jesus Christ is.
John 1:1-18 *I John 1:1-4*
- Both books exhibit similarities in style. They read like the same man penned both.
- There are over 50 textual resemblances and parallels between the two books. For example:

GOSPEL	EPISTLE	GOSPEL	EPISTLE
1:14; 20:27	1:1	3:11; 19:35	1:2
17:21	1:3	16:24	1:4
1:5,19	1:5	3:21; 8:12	1:6
8:37	1:10	14:16	2:1
13:33	2:1,12,18,28	15:15	2:3
14:21	2:5	15:5	2:6
13:34	2:7,8	1:9	2:8

11:9	2:10	8:12; 12:35	2:11
5:38	2:14	16:13	2:20
15:23	2:23	14:23	2:24
17:2	2:25	16:13	2:27
1:29	3:5	8:34	3:8
1:13	3:9	8:44	3:10
15:18	3:13	5:24	3:14
10:10-15	3:16	15:19; 17:14	4:5
14:17; 15:26	4:6	3:16,18	4:9
1:18	4:12	4:42	4:14

4. There are a number of key phrases that are common to both books. For example:

The Word	<i>John 1:1</i>	<i>I John 1:1; 5:7</i>
Only begotten	<i>John 1:14,18</i>	<i>I John 4:9</i>
New Commandment	<i>John 13:34</i>	<i>I John 2:7,8</i>
Children of God	<i>John 11:52</i>	<i>I John 3:2</i>
Overcome	<i>John 16:33</i>	<i>I John 5:4</i>
Abide	<i>John 15:4</i>	<i>I John 2:6,4:13</i>
Of the world	<i>John 8:23</i>	<i>I John 4:5</i>
Of the Devil	<i>John 8:44</i>	<i>I John 3:8,10</i>
Death to life	<i>John 5:24</i>	<i>I John 2:14</i>
Walk in darkness	<i>John 8:12; 13:35</i>	<i>I John 1:6; 2:11</i>

5. There are several common topics in both books. For example:

love	light	life	witness
believe	abiding	truth	sin

Even the most cursory comparison reveals the commonality of the two books. The obvious conclusion is that the writer of First John was the writer of the fourth Gospel, and the writer of the fourth Gospel was the apostle John.

To further corroborate this fact, it is clear that the writer of the epistle knew Jesus Christ personally:

“That which was from the beginning, which we have HEARD, which we have SEEN with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have HANDLED, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have SEEN it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have SEEN and HEARD declare we unto you” — I John 1:1-3.

Note: The apostle John is acknowledged to be the writer of the Gospel of John, I John, II John, III John, and The Revelation — though only the book of The Revelation actually names John as its writer (*Revelation 1:1,4,9*). The other books are anonymous, but point clearly to John for the abovementioned reasons.

C. THE STORY OF JOHN:

The Greek name translated “John” is Ἰωάννης, Iōannēs — from the Hebrew Johanan (“Yo·chan’an”) = *Jehovah is Gracious*.

There are five men named John in the New Testament. They are:

- John the Baptist — the herald of Christ.
- John Mark — the preacher of the “second chance.”
- An acquaintance or relative of Annas (*Acts 4:6*).
- Jonas (Ἰωάννης) — the father of Simon Peter.
- John, the son of Zebedee — an apostle of Christ. It is this John who wrote the epistle.

The following is an overview of John’s life and ministry:

1. His Background.

- a. His father: Zebedee — *Matthew 4:21*.
- b. His mother: Salome (determined by comparing *Matthew 27:56* with *Mark 15:40; 16:1*).
- c. His brother: James — who was undoubtedly the eldest, because he is always mentioned first when both brothers are listed.
- d. His birthplace: one of the towns around the north end of the Sea of Galilee — possibly Bethsaida (cf. *John 1:44*).
- e. His profession: a fisherman; with his brother, in partnership with Peter and Andrew — *Luke 5:10*.
- f. His social status: reasonably prosperous. Why?
 - The family business had hired servants — *Mark 1:20*.
 - Salome was a benefactress of Jesus — *Mark 15:40,41; Luke 8:3*.
 - Salome brought spices to prepare the body of Jesus for burial — *Mark 16:1*.
 - John knew the high priest, who was usually a member of the upper class of Jewish society — *John 18:15*.
- g. John was most likely the youngest of the apostles — probably in his latter teens when the Lord called him.

2. His Salvation and Apostleship.

The New Testament outlines three main stages in the spiritual preparation of John:

- a. Conversion — John, like all the original apostles of Christ, was saved and baptized under the ministry of John the Baptist (see: Acts 1:22).
- b. Mentorship — the call to forsake all (*Matthew 4:21,22*) and be trained by Christ on a full-time basis. (This call was given a second time in *Luke 5:10,11*.)
- c. Apostleship — the call to the office of an apostle (*Matthew 10:2; Mark 3:17; Luke 6:14*).

Jesus nicknamed John and his brother “Boanerges,” meaning the “sons of thunder” (*Mark 3:17*). This was most likely due to their disposition. John had an explosive temper. The two brothers exhibited the following negative character traits:

- Jealousy — *Mark 9:38-41; Luke 9:49,50*.
- Intolerance — *Luke 9:51-56*.
- Prideful ambition — *Mark 10:35-45; Matthew 20:20-28*.

By the time the Lord was through with him, John became the “apostle of LOVE.” He learned love by being loved (compare *John 15:13* with *I John 3:16; 4:10a*). He was captivated by Christ’s love (*John 21:7*), and learned humility through Christ’s example (*Matthew 20:28*).

3. His Experiences During Christ’s Passion.

- a. The First Supper — *John 13:23-25*.
- b. Gethsemane — *Matthew 26:36,37*.
- c. Christ’s arrest — *John 18:15; Matthew 26:56*.
- d. Christ’s resurrection — *John 20:1-5*.

Note: John outran Peter to the tomb (*John 20:4*). This is indicative of his young age.

4. His Subsequent Ministry.

The apostle John was:

- a. Present with the Jerusalem church during the Lord’s post-resurrection ministry — *Acts 1:2-4,12-14*.
- b. Involved in the great Day of Pentecost ministry of preaching and baptizing — *Acts 2:4,37,41*.

- c. Active as a leader in the church at Jerusalem — *Acts 3:1-4; 4:1-3,13-19*.
 - d. In Samaria with Peter organizing a church there — *Acts 8:14*.
 - e. Present at the Jerusalem council (*Acts 15*), when Paul called him an apparent “pillar” — *Galatians 2:9*. This was in 49 A.D..
 - f. Not included with the leaders of the church at Jerusalem in 58 A.D. (*Acts 21:18*). He may have left Jerusalem after the death of Mary, the mother of Jesus. (If she lived to age 70, she would have gone to be with her Son around 50 A.D.).
 - g. Next heard of exiled on the isle of Patmos (*Revelation 1:9*). Patmos is a rugged island in the Aegean Sea, about 30 miles off the coast of Asia Minor.
5. Tradition Concerning John’s Later Years.

John was acquainted with the churches of Asia Minor because he penned the book of The Revelation to them while on Patmos (*Revelation 1:11*).

- a. Tradition holds that John was exiled to Patmos during the second imperial persecution under the emperor Domitian (r.81-96 A.D.). These persecutions began in 95 A.D..
- b. Tradition places John at Ephesus before (and after?) his exile on Patmos. If this is the case, he must have arrived there after Paul’s death in 66 A.D. because Paul makes no reference to him in any of his soteriological epistles (written 57,58 A.D.), in his address to the pastors of the church at Ephesus (*Acts 20:17*), or in his letter to the Ephesians (written 62 A.D.).
- c. Tradition says that John died a natural death in Ephesus at a very old age (100) — c.96 A.D..

The witness to this tradition is plentiful, distinct, and persistent. Taken together with the Biblical fact of John’s exile and the suggestiveness of Christ’s statement concerning John’s end (*John 21:21-24*), it is a reasonable conclusion to affirm.

The language of *II John 8* (“*that WE lose not those things which WE have WROUGHT*”) suggests John engaged in a church-planting ministry after he left Jerusalem. This was probably quite extensive, perhaps covering a 30 to 40 year span.

We also see from *II John 12* and *III John 14* that John was still capable of traveling, c.90 A.D.. We should not think of him as an aged patriarch, pontificating over the Asian churches.

III. CANONICITY

The authenticity of the first epistle of John is widely attested by the early church fathers. They used the epistle, held it as scripture, and attributed it to the apostle John.

- A contemporary of John — Polycarp (69-145 A.D.), bishop of Smyrna — used quotations and expressions from I John in his *Epistle to the Philippians* (c.115 A.D.).
- Papias (d.120 A.D.), bishop of Hierapolis, quoted from I John and was the first to identify John as the writer of the epistle.
- Irenæus (115-200 A.D.) quoted extensively from the epistle, stating that it was written by John.
- Well-known early church fathers such as Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.), Tertullian (160-230 A.D.), and Eusebius (260-339 A.D.) all accepted the epistle as holy scripture. Eusebius included it in his list of homologoumena.
- The Muratorian Canon (c.170 A.D.) included I John, and acknowledged John as the writer.
- Marcion (d.160 A.D.) rejected the epistle — but he was a Gnostic.

IV. THE ADDRESSEE

There is no specific addressee mentioned at the beginning of this epistle. For this reason, some have contended that it is not an epistle (letter), but rather a homily (sermon).

However, it is obvious that John had definite people in mind when he wrote.

“I write unto YOU, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name’s sake. I write unto YOU, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I write unto YOU, young men, because ye have overcome the wicked one. I write unto YOU, little children, because ye have known the Father. I have written unto YOU, fathers, because ye have known him that is from the beginning. I have written unto YOU, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” — I John 2:12-14.

(The fact that these particular believers are not identified reveals the divine Author’s prerogative to keep the book general for all believers.)

That the book is not a sermon is understood by John’s use of the word “write” or “written” — *I John 1:4; 2:1,7,8,12,13,14,21,26; 5:13*. It is a letter.

The location of these believers is unstated, but tradition points to them as belonging to the churches of Asia, among whom the aged apostle lived and ministered. The epistle is in the form of a cyclical (circular) letter.

The lack of any reference to the Old Testament and John's final warning about idols (*I John 5:21*) suggests these believers were converted pagans rather than Jewish believers.

V. THE DATE OF WRITING

The actual date is unknown. An approximate date can be established through three considerations:

1. Tradition — which consistently places John in Asia Minor (Ephesus) in the latter part of the first century A.D., and on Patmos during the persecutions under Domitian (95,96 A.D.).
2. The Revelation — the *final* book in the Word of God (*Revelation 22:18*); written in exile. This means the epistle of I John had to have been written before 95 A.D..
3. Silence — there is no mention of persecution (looming or raging), suggesting the epistle was written at least a few years before 95 A.D..

The date for the epistle can be set at anywhere from 80-95 A.D.. The intimacy John had for his readers ("beloved" five times) suggests a later, rather than earlier, date. We will adopt a date of 90 A.D.

VI. THE PLACE OF WRITING

Based on John's known whereabouts when he penned the book of The Revelation, the traditional view that he wrote the epistle in Asia Minor (Ephesus) is reasonable.

VII. THE OCCASION FOR WRITING

There are four stated reasons for the writing of this epistle:

"And these things write we unto you, THAT YOUR JOY MAY BE FULL" — 1:4.

"My little children, these things write I unto you, THAT YE SIN NOT" — 2:1.

"These things have I written unto you concerning them THAT SEDUCE YOU" — 2:26.

"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; THAT YE MAY KNOW THAT YE HAVE ETERNAL LIFE, and THAT YE MAY BELIEVE on the name of the Son of God" — 5:13.

John wrote to give the believers both ASSURANCE and WARNING in the face of the gnostic heresy that was assailing them.

A comparison between John's Gospel and this first Epistle is interesting:

GOSPEL OF JOHN	FIRST EPISTLE OF JOHN
Written that men might believe (20:31).	Written to men who have believed (5:13).
Showing the WAY to eternal life (14:6)	Giving the ASSURANCE of eternal life (5:11,12).
Gives the foundation of the believer's FAITH.	Gives the foundation of the believer's LIFE.
Key word: "BELIEVE."	Key word: "KNOW."

This relationship points to the Gospel being written first.

VIII. THE PREDOMINANT THEME

ASSURANCE.

"You can know that you have eternal life."

The positive assurance given throughout the epistle is in stark contrast to the seeds of doubt sown by gnostic philosophy ("how can you *really* know if you don't have the higher knowledge?").

The phrases "*we know*," "*know we*," and "*we have known*" occur 14 times in the epistle. The verb "to know" in all its forms appears at least 38 times.

A. GNOSTICISM:

The term "gnosticism" comes from the Greek verb γνῶσκω (gnōskō = "to know"). It is applied to various systems of belief that developed from a blending of philosophy (Hellenistic and/or Persian) and Bible Christianity.

The gnostic cults all promised salvation through a higher (occultic) knowledge that was revealed to them alone. (Mere Bible-believers were considered to be deprived and second-class Christians.)

The gnostic systems were also generally characterized by the dualistic belief that matter was evil and spirit was good.

B. EARLY Gnostic CULTS:

There were two early gnostic sects.

1. The Docetists.

Believing all matter (the flesh) was evil, the Docetists argued that a perfect, sinless Christ could not have had a material body. This led them to teach that Christ only appeared (δοκέω, dokeō = "to seem") to have a human body.

2. The Cerinthians.

Named after Cerinthus (c.100 A.D.). In their attempt to explain away the material body of the Lord Jesus Christ, these gnostics taught that the supreme æon (Logos, the Word) descended into the man “Jesus” at his baptism and left Him again before the cross — thereby denying the doctrines of the incarnation and the atonement.

The epistle pointedly asserts the real (material) body of the Lord. John assures the believers that Jesus Christ is all that the Bible declares Him to be.

“That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our HANDS HAVE HANDLED, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you” — I John 1:1-3.

As time progressed, gnosticism developed into a variety of more sophisticated systems of belief.

IX. THE KEY VERSE

The key verse is *I John 5:13*.

“These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.”

If anyone questions his or her salvation, this is the book to read!

X. THE STYLE OF THE BOOK

The style of this epistle is eminently unique. It is remarkably simple and yet very profound and authoritative. Farrar said: *“It is to a great extent intelligible to the youngest child, to the humblest Christian; yet to enter in to its full meaning exceeds the power of the deepest theologian.”*⁽¹⁾

The epistle is like a “gentle giant” who has serenely dealt a mortal blow to the enemy, all the while countenancing a sweet smile.

The following descriptions have been given to describe and characterize the style of First John:

- Short, simple, straightforward, picturesque sentences⁽²⁾ — a typical Hebraistic style.

1 Hiebert, D. E. An Introduction to the New Testament. Waynesboro, Georgia: Gabriel Publishing, 2003 (Three Volume Collection): Volume 3, pp. 195 — citing: Farrar, F. W. *The Early Days of Christianity*, pg.618.

2 Jensen, I. L. Jensen’s Survey of the New Testament. Chicago, Illinois: Moody Press, 1981: pg. 469.

- Abundant use of parallelisms (Light and Darkness; Truth and Error; Love and Hate; Life and Death; Love of the World and Love of the Father; Children of God and Children of the Devil; Doing Righteousness and Doing Sin; Sin unto Death and Sin on unto Death).⁽³⁾ Truth expressed both positively and negatively sticks in the mind and the memory. Scroggie calls these “moral antagonisms.”
- Mellow, meditative, rhythmical and sometimes lyrical — yet with an authoritative finality. John does not argue: he affirms and he declares (*I John 1:3,5*). Still waters run deep!
- Its truths are not speculative, but final. “*The writer is not concerned with propositions, but with principles.*”⁽⁴⁾

XI. AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK:

Because the writer of I John does not follow a logical (linear) train of thought, the epistle of I John is actually quite difficult to outline. This is not to suggest that the book is merely a collection of disconnected “ramblings.” To the contrary.

Its structure has been described as cyclical. It begins with a basic declaration (1:1-4), then, like a funnel cloud, broadens as it spirals ever upward — repeating truth and adding further truth. (A fitting description for a “son of thunder!”)

Most outlines of the epistle are topical or thematic. For example:

- I. GOD IS LIGHT — chapters 1–2.
I John 1:5.
- II. GOD IS LOVE — chapters 3–5.
I John 4:8.

Scroggie⁽⁵⁾ takes three thoughts from the book — light, love, and life — to construct his outline, as follows:

- I. The Christian’s ADVANCE in the LIGHT Divine — 1:5–2:27.
 - A. Conditions of Walking in the LIGHT — 1:5–2:11.
 - B. Hindrances to Walking in the LIGHT — 2:12–27.
- II. The Christian’s ATTITUDE toward the LOVE Divine — 2:28–4:21.
 - A. The Evils which Negate LOVE — 2:28–4:6.
 - B. The LOVE which Negates Evil — 4:7–21.

3 Scroggie, W. G. The Unfolding Drama of Redemption. London, United Kingdom: Pickering & Inglis, 1970. Volume III, pg.335.

4 Ibid. pg.337.

5 Ibid. pp.337,338.

III. The Christian's AFFINITY with the LIFE Divine — 5:1-20.

- A. The Possession of Eternal LIFE — 5:1-12.
- B. The Confidence of Eternal LIFE — 5:13-20.

Another outline (suggested by Scofield) gravitates around the expression “my little children,” as follows:

- I. Little Children and FELLOWSHIP — 1:3-2:14.
I John 2:1.
- II. Little Children and FOLLY — 2:15-28.
I John 2:18.
- III. Little Children and the FAMILY — 2:29-3:10.
I John 3:7.
- IV. Little Children and FEELINGS — 3:11-24.
I John 3:18.
- V. Little Children and FALSEHOOD — 4:1-6.
I John 4:4.
- VI. Little Children and the FAITH — 4:7-5:21.
I John 5:21.

THE BOOK OF FIRST JOHN

- I. Prologue 1:1-4**
- A. The Affirmation — 1:1,2.
 - B. The Aspiration — 1:3,4.
- II. ASSURANCE THROUGH FELLOWSHIP 1:5–2:17**
- A. The Basis for Fellowship — 1:5.
 - B. The Barriers to Fellowship — 1:6-10.
 - C. The Bolstering of Fellowship — 2:1-17.
- III. ASSURANCE THROUGH CONFLICTS 2:18–4:6**
- A. Between Truth & Error — 2:18-28.
 - B. Between the Children of God & the Devil — 2:29–3:12.
 - C. Between Love & Hate — 3:13-24.
 - D. Between the Spirit of Truth & the Spirit of Error — 4:1-6.
- IV. ASSURANCE THROUGH LOVE 4:7–5:5**
- A. The Provider of Love — 4:7-16.
 - B. The Perfection of Love — 4:17-5:5.
- V. ASSURANCE THROUGH THE RECORD 5:6-15**
- A. The External Witnesses — 5:6-10.
 - B. The Written Witness — 5:11-15.
- VI. Conclusion 5:16-21**
- A. Praise of God's Power — verse 24.
 - B. Praise of God's Person — verse 25.

XII. HOMILETIC AND DOCTRINAL APPEAL

The epistle is a rich book to teach and preach from, partly because it touches on a wide range of subjects pertinent to the believer.

A. FOR PREACHING:

Some excellent “sermon seeds” are:

- You Can Know.
- Real Fellowship.
- God Is.
- Walking in the Light.
- The Blood of Jesus Christ.
- God’s “Bar of Soap” (*I John 1:9*).
- The Perfect Defense.
- Levels of Spiritual Maturity.
- Worldliness.
- Unashamed at His Coming.
- Do you *Really* Believe Jesus is Coming?
- Two Kinds of People.
- Put Them to the Test.
- Who’s the Greatest?
- Faith is the Victory.
- Full Assurance.
- Praying with Confidence.
- The Sin unto Death.
- Keep Yourselves from Idols.

etc.

B. FOR TEACHING:

The following key doctrines are touched on in this epistle:

- The doctrine of the Scriptures — 1:4; 2:1,14,25; 5:11,12.
- The doctrine of God — 1:5; 4:8,12,16,20; 5:7.
- The doctrine of Jesus Christ — 1:1,7,9; 2:1,2,6,22,28,29; 3:2,5,7,8,16; 4:9,10,13,14; 5:6,7,20.
- The doctrine of the Holy Spirit — 2:20,27; 3:24; 4:2,4,6,13; 5:6-8.

- The doctrine of Man — 2:16.
- The doctrine of Sin — 1:8,10; 2:1,9,11,25; 3:4,8; 5:16,17.
- The doctrine of Salvation — 1:7,9; 2:2,12;
3:1,2,9,10,14,22,23; 4:13,15,19; 5:1,2,4,10-16.
- The doctrine of the Church — 1:7; 2:19; 3:16,17.
- The doctrine of the Unseen World — 2:13,14,22; 3:8,10,12;
4:1,3; 5:18,19.
- The doctrine of Last Things — 2:18; 3:2,3; 4:3.

There are two key passages found in I John. They are:

1. The Classic Passage on Worldliness — *I John 2:15-17*.

In studying this passage, it is important to understand that:

- a. The “world” (κόσμος, “kosmos”) does not refer to the physical creation of God, but to the world system or arrangement.
- b. The “flesh” does not refer to the physical substance that constitutes much of a man’s body, but to the Adamic nature that seeks to gratify the senses.
- c. *I John 2:15b* isn’t teaching that a “worldly Christian” is not saved. It is a restatement of the truth of *Luke 16:13* and *James 4:4*.
- d. Worldliness is defined as lust and pride. The “lust of the flesh” (having), the “lust of the eyes” (seeing), and the “pride of life” (being) categorize all sin.
- e. The temptation of Christ embraced these three aspects — flesh (*Matthew 4:3*), eyes (*Matthew 4:8*), and pride (*Matthew 4:6*). Christ resisted the Devil through the Word of God (“*it is written*”).
- f. The lust of the eyes has gotten many people into trouble. For example: Eve (*Genesis 3:6*), Lot (*Genesis 13:10*), Achan (*Joshua 7:20,21*), David (*II Samuel 11:2*), Peter (*Matthew 14:30*), etc.

2. The Classic Passage on Assurance — *I John 5:11-13*.

This scripture should be shared with every newborn soul. The key words in the greater passage are “record” (*verses 7,10,11*) and “witness” (*verses 6,8,9,10*). They are both translated from the same Greek word, μαρτυρία (“*marturia*”).

Assurance of salvation is not based upon our feelings, but upon a sure record. *Verse 9* speaks of:

a. The witness of men.

This is the “*witness in earth*” (*verse 8*) — the:

- Spirit — *John 1:32-34*. Note the word “record.”
 - Water & blood — *John 19:34,35*. Note the word “record.”
- b. The witness of God.
This is the “*witness in heaven*” (*verses 6,7*) — the:
- Father — *Matthew 3:17; 17:5*.
 - Word (Jesus Christ) — *John 8:13,14*.
 - Holy Spirit — *Matthew 3:16; John 19:34,35*.

Since none of us were present at our Lord’s baptism or His crucifixion, the witness of God is greater. This witness is now the WRITTEN Word of God — *I John 5:13* (“written”). Assurance of salvation must always come from the written witness, the Bible.

XIII. DIFFICULT TEXTS

Two passages in the epistle have been the subject of much interest.

A. SINLESS PERFECTION:

Many within the Holiness Movement appeal to *I John 3:9* in support of their peculiar doctrine sometimes referred to as “the second blessing,” “entire sanctification,” or “perfect love” (*4:17,18*).

“Whosoever is born of God DOTH NOT COMMIT SIN; for his seed remaineth in him: and HE CANNOT SIN, because he is born of God.”

Countless others have struggled with this verse. They know are born again — and yet they surely sin as a Christian. What does it mean?

It is important to understand the operation of salvation:

1. A lost person is dead, meaning *spiritually* dead — *Ephesians 2:1-3*.
2. A lost person’s nature is Adam’s nature. It is carnal, capable *only* of sinning — *Romans 7:18; Ephesians 4:17-19*.
3. At the moment of salvation a believer is made partaker of the divine nature — *II Peter 1:4*. (His old nature is not “revamped.”)
4. A Christian has two natures — the old (Adamic, fleshly), and the new (spiritual, divine).
5. That which is born of God — i.e., the new, divine nature — CANNOT sin. Why? because God cannot sin.
6. Every believer experiences a conflict between the two natures — *Romans 7:17-24; Galatians 5:17; James 4:5*.
7. God has made victory possible — *I John 5:4*. See: *Romans 6*.
8. If and when we do sin — *I John 1:9; 2:1*.

B. THE JOHANNINE COMMA:

The so-called “Johannine Comma” is a widely disputed passage contained in *I John 5:7,8*. The bold capitalized words indicate the “comma:”

*“For there are three that bear record **IN HEAVEN, THE FATHER, THE WORD, AND THE HOLY GHOST: AND THESE THREE ARE ONE. AND THERE ARE THREE THAT BEAR WITNESS IN EARTH,** the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one.”*

Almost every modern translation (perversion) of the New Testament omits the “comma” — usually distributing the leftover text to give an impression that nothing is missing. Even the Old Scofield Reference Bible (AV1611) has the marginal note, “*It is generally agreed that v. 7 has no real authority and has been inserted.*” ⁽⁶⁾

The passage is missing from many Greek manuscripts. None of the ancient uncial manuscripts have it. It is not found in any minuscules dated earlier than the 14TH century A.D.. It is missing from many of the early translations, and none of the early Church Fathers quote or refer to the passage.

The controversy goes back to Erasmus (1466-1536 A.D.), the great renaissance scholar who produced a Greek New Testament in 1516 A.D. that helped pave the way for the Protestant Reformation. This great work was the basis (and practically the substance) of the Greek text that later came to be called the “Textus Receptus,” from which the Authorized, King James Version of 1611 was translated.

1. The History of the Johannine Comma.

- a. It is found in the Latin Vulgate — the “bible of the Dark Ages.”
- b. It was omitted by Erasmus in the first edition of his Greek text because it was not in any of the Greek manuscripts he used.
- c. Erasmus’ omission of the passage caused such an outcry among the Catholic scholars of the day that he asked for and received a Greek manuscript containing the disputed text. He had known about this manuscript from his previous research. It was minuscule manuscript 61, dating from the 15TH century.
- d. Erasmus included the disputed passage in the third edition of his Greek text (1522 A.D.). It has remained in the Textus Receptus ever since, and of course, in the Authorized Version.

- e. The inclusion has been hotly disputed by critics since the publication of the critical Greek texts on the grounds that it is not found in the most ancient of manuscripts — or the majority of Greek manuscripts, period!
- f. The standard explanation about this passage is that it was “inserted” to promote or defend the doctrine of the Trinity.

2. External Evidence for the Johannine Comma.

- a. It is found in the Latin Vulgate, thus in a large number of Latin manuscripts.
- b. It is found in the 15TH century Greek minuscule 61 (the Montfort Manuscript).
- c. It is found in the Greek Codex Ravianus (88 and 629).
- d. It is found in the Speculum (m).
- e. It is found in r. (Old Latin Bible, from the 5TH century A.D.).
- f. It was cited by Tertullian (160-230 A.D.).
- g. It was cited by Cyprian (200-258 A.D.).
- h. It was quoted by Priscillian (d.385 A.D.).
- i. It was quoted by Cassiodorus (480-570 A.D.).
- j. It was used by several African Latin writers to defend the doctrine of the Trinity against Arian Vandals, 5TH century A.D..
- k. It is found in the Tepl Bible (Codex Teplensis), an ancient Waldensian Bible.

The preservation of this particular text came through the Latin stream, rather than the Byzantine stream. Latin “Christianity” did uphold the Nicene position that Jesus Christ is God.

3. Grammatical Evidence for the Johannine Comma.

Perhaps the most convincing reason for the authority of the “comma” is the difficulty that arises with the grammar **if** it is left out. The passage in Greek (with the comma underlined) reads:

ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τοῦ οὐρανοῦ ὁ πατὴρ ὁ λόγος καὶ τὸ ἅγιον πνεῦμα καὶ οὗτοι οἱ τρεῖς ἐν εἰσὶν καὶ τρεῖς εἰσὶν οἱ μαρτυροῦντες ἐν τῇ γῆ τοῦ πνεύματος καὶ τοῦ ὕδατος καὶ τοῦ αἵματος καὶ οἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσὶν.

If the “comma” is removed, the text would then read:

ὅτι τρεῖς εἰσιν ὁἱ [HOI] μαρτυροῦντες τὸ πνεῦμα [PNEUMA] καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ [HUDOR] καὶ τὸ αἷμα [HAIMA] καὶ ὁἱ τρεῖς εἰς τὸ ἓν εἰσιν.

The article “hoi” is masculine, but the nouns “pneuma,” “hudor,” and “haima” are all neuter in gender. This is an error in Greek syntax: “*Neuter subjects do not take a masculine antecedent.*”

Sense is only made when the disputed words are left intact. Then, the masculine numeral (τρεῖς, “treis” = three), the article (ὁἱ, “hoi”), and the participle (μαρτυροῦντες, “marturountes” = witness) relate correctly to the masculine nouns πατήρ, “pater” (Father) and λόγος, “logos” (Word). The rule is then satisfied: “*The masculines among the group control the gender over a neuter connected with them.*”

If the “comma” is omitted, the flow of words gives a meaningless repetition from *verse 6* to *8* and the passage seems incomplete.

If the disputed words are omitted, the literal translation of *verse 8* (“*and the three to **the one** are*”) begs the question, “who or what **one**?” Without the “comma” there is no antecedent.

Furthermore, if the “Johannine Comma” was inserted by some Trinitarian scribe to support or bolster his belief, why didn’t use the standard Trinitarian formula of “Father, **Son**, and Holy Ghost”? Why use the term “Word?”

I John 5:7 is the strongest direct statement on the doctrine of the Godhead (Trinity) found in the Word of God. The earliest theological controversies in Christendom were Trinitarian in nature (Arianism), denying the full deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Little wonder deceitful scribes edited it out of the text. Nevertheless, God has preserved His Word — as He promised!

EXERCISES

1. How many times do each of the following words (and their cognates) appear in the epistle of I John?

believe	beloved	children	darkness
fellowship	know	light	love
sin	son	Spirit	write
2. According to *I John 1:9*, what is specifically required of a Christian if he is to be forgiven and cleansed after he has sinned? How does this differ from the common approach to God by Christians struggling with recurring sins?
3. Referencing the book of I John, comment on the statement: “*Truth is the foundation of our life with God; Love is the natural expression of our life with God.*”
4. What does this epistle teach about fellowship? How is your conclusion seen with the “fellowship” mentioned in *Acts 2:42; I Corinthians 1:9; II Corinthians 8:4; Philippians 1:5; 2:1; 3:10*?
5. How does the epistle of I John show the vital relationship between the Word of God and the Spirit of God with the believer? Explain.
6. Compile a list showing how the epistle of I John describes the false teachers (antichrists).
7. Look up the following references in I John — *1:3,4; 1:5-8; 2:3,5; 2:17; 2:29; 3:3; 3:14; 3:18-21; 3:22; 3:24; 4:13; 5:1,2; 5:12*. From these, make a “check list” of questions that someone who wonders whether he or she is truly saved should be asking.
8. What does the word “propitiation” (*I John 2:2; 4:10*) mean?
9. The Greek word translated “advocate” in *I John 2:1* is παράκλητος, “paraklētos” = *paraclete, Comforter*. Is there a contradiction with *John 14:26*? Explain.
10. Explain *I John 3:6,9* and *I John 5:18* in the light of Christian experience. What is the difference between sinning and habitually sinning?
11. What is the difference between the “sin not unto death” and the “sin unto death” (*I John 5:16,17*)? Can you give a Biblical example for both?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

First John

1. This beautiful epistle of “Light and Love” is characterized by what two prominent Words?
2. What is another name that has been given this epistle?
3. The extensive use of the word “know” indicates the book’s combat against what rising error?
4. Give two major reasons we are confident the human writer of the fourth Gospel was the apostle John.
5. What is the connection between the fourth Gospel & the first Epistle?
6. List the five New Testament men named John, indicating which one wrote I John.
7. Outline the three main stages in the spiritual preparation of John.
8. Contrast John’s negative character traits with his nickname as an apostle.
9. Where does **tradition** place John in his later years?
10. Based on the lack of Old Testament references and John’s final warning about idols, what was the likely makeup of the epistle’s recipients?
11. Where did John likely pen the letter?
12. What are the four stated reasons for the writing of this epistle?
13. What is the epistle’s predominant theme?

14. What verb appears at least 38 times in the epistle?
15. The term “Gnosticism” comes from what Greek verb, and blends what two belief systems?
16. List the two early Gnostic sects, briefly explaining their beliefs.
17. Write out the key verse of the epistle.
18. Describe the style of the epistle.
19. Describe the structure of the epistle, and explain why it is difficult to outline.
20. List nine doctrines addressed in I John, with a reference for each.

21. What are the two key passages found in I John?
22. Respond to the claim by some within the Holiness Movement that I John 3:9 teaches the doctrine of “the second blessing” / “entire sanctification” / “perfect love.”
23. What is the “Johannine Comma,” and is it true that it was inserted to promote or defend the doctrine of the Trinity, without any manuscript evidence?
24. In a general sense, what is the most convincing reason for the authority of the “comma?”

SECOND JOHN

The “twin sister” epistles of II & III John have the distinction of being the shortest books in the Bible. III John is actually the shortest, as shown by the following table:⁽¹⁾

	<u>II John</u>	<u>III John</u>
AV1611	13 verses 298 words	14 verses 294 words
TR (Greek)	249 words	219 words

Both epistles are personal letters that warn about apostates (II John) and schismatics (III John). They give valuable insight into the state of Bible-believing Christianity at the close of the apostolic age and the first century A.D. — in much the same way as does Paul’s earlier epistle to Philemon.

The second epistle’s emphasis on truth and love helps define Christian love, clearly showing that it does not extend to a maudlin acceptance of error for the sake of “Christian” unity or tolerance (see: verse 10).

I. THE AUTHOR

God, the Holy Spirit — *II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 3:5.*

II. THE WRITER

The writer identifies himself simply as “*The elder*” — *verse 1*. It is widely accepted that he was the apostle John — a conclusion based primarily on the similarities in style, phraseology, and tone between II John and I John (and, in turn, the Gospel). More than half of the second epistle’s contents is found in the first epistle.

A. A COMPARISON WITH FIRST JOHN:

Consider the following:

FIRST JOHN	SECOND JOHN
“the truth” — 1:6,8; 2:4,21; 3:19.	“the truth” — verses 1,2.
“new commandment” — 2:7,8.	“new commandment” — verse 5.

1 Obadiah is the shortest book in the Old Testament.

"joy may be full" — 1:4.	"joy may be full" — verse 12.
"from the beginning" — 1:1; 2:7,13,14,24; 3:8,11.	"from the beginning" — verses 5,6.
"abide, abideth" — 2:6,10,14,17,27,28; 3:6,14,24.	"abideth" — verse 9.

B. OBJECTIONS TO THE JOHANNINE ORIGIN:

Based on the identification of the writer as "the elder" (ὁ πρεσβύτερος, "presbuteros"), some have questioned whether John was the writer. Why did he not refer to himself as an apostle?

Answer:

The apostles also served as elders (pastors). Peter referred to himself as both an apostle (*I Peter 1:1*) and an elder (*I Peter 5:1*). So might have John, who at one stage was a pastor of the church at Jerusalem (*Galatians 2:1,9; Acts 15:2-6*).

Note: The title "elder" can also have reference to age. The word πρεσβύτερος ("presbutēs") means an "old man," and is used as such in *Luke 1:18; Philemon 9; and Titus 2:2*. Some believe John used the term "elder" in this sense. He was, after all, an old man — and, he highlighted age descriptions in *I John 2:12-14*.

There is no historical evidence for another Christian leader of the times known as John the Elder.

C. THE STORY OF JOHN:

Refer to the notes under First John.

III. CANONICITY

Largely because of its brevity and personal nature, the second epistle of John was not readily received into the canon of scripture. Eusebius (260-339 A.D.) listed it with the antilogomena, but only as disputed (not spurious).

- Irenæus (115-200 A.D.) twice referred to the epistle. He wrote: "John, the disciple of the Lord, has intensified their condemnation, when he desires us not even to address to them the salutation of 'good-speed.'"⁽²⁾
- Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.) spoke of I John as "John's longer epistle" — indicating there was a shorter one.

2 Hiebert, D. E. *An Introduction to the New Testament*. Waynesboro, Georgia: Gabriel Publishing, 2003 (Three Volume Collection): Volume 3, pp. 195 — citing: Irenæus. *Against Heresies*, I.16.3.

- Early church fathers such as Origen (185-254 A.D.), Cyprian (200-258 A.D.), and Dionysius of Alexandria (d.264 A.D.) each make various references to the epistles (plural) of John.
- The Muratorian Canon (c.170 A.D.) refers to “two [other] epistles” of John.
- The epistle was missing from the Old Syriac version (c.200 A.D.), but it does appear in the early Coptic versions (Bohairic and Sahidic) of around the same date.
- The epistle was recognized as canonical at the Council of Carthage (397 A.D.).

IV. THE ADDRESSEE

The addressee is enigmatic.

“...unto the *elect lady* [εκλεκτή κυρία, *eklektē kuria*] and her children...”
— *verse 1*.

Two possibilities as to the identity of the “elect lady” have been suggested:

1. She Was an Actual Woman.
 - a. Someone personally known to John.
 - b. Who was living some distance away — *verse 12*.
 - c. One who raised godly children — *verse 4*.
 - d. One who was given to hospitality — *verse 10*.

Note: Some believe the word “kuria” is an actual name (Kyria). While it is true that the word was on occasion used as a personal name, the term “elect sister” (αδελφής, “adelphēs”) in *verse 13* suggests otherwise.

2. It is Used Figuratively of a Church.
 - a. A metaphor for a true New Testament church is the feminine “bride of Christ” — *Ephesians 5:23-32; II Corinthians 11:2; John 3:29; Revelation 19:7-9; 22:17*.
 - b. Churches are to reproduce themselves. In this sense, there are “mother churches” and “sister churches.”

There is no warrant for interpreting this verse in a figurative way. Therefore, the conclusion is that the epistle was addressed to some godly Christian lady who was known personally to the aged apostle.

Note: Some ancient writers attempted to identify the woman as Peter’s wife, or Martha of Bethany, or even Mary the mother of Jesus — all without any sound foundation.

V. THE DATE OF WRITING

The actual date is unknown. It is commonly accepted that it was written around the same time as John's first epistle — **c.90 A.D.**. There is no reason to doubt this.

Some believe the letter may have been written as a personal note to accompany the first epistle that was meant to be circulated around the churches.

It might be reasonably deduced that II John was written after I John by comparing *I John 2:19* (“they went out from us”) with *II John 9* (“if there came any unto you”).

VI. THE PLACE OF WRITING

The traditional view is that John penned the epistle in Asia Minor, probably Ephesus. However, one should take into consideration that John was engaged in some travel — *verse 12; III John 14*.

VII. THE OCCASION FOR WRITING

The reasons for John's writing of this epistle are:

- Commendation — *verses 1-6*.
- Identification and Admonition — *verses 7-11*.
- Information — *verses 12,13*.

VIII. THE PREDOMINANT THEME

TRUTH.

“A love of the truth requires a hatred for error.”

The word “truth” is found five times in this epistle; the words “commandment” and “doctrine” three times each.

IX. THE KEY VERSE

The key verse is *II John 2*.

“For the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever.”

X. THE STYLE OF THE BOOK

The letter is an example of personal correspondence that was perhaps intended to make application the larger and general epistle of John to a specific situation.

XI. AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The outline is simple, as follows:

<u>THE BOOK OF SECOND JOHN</u>	
I. <u>Salutation</u>	verses 1-3
II. <u>TRUTH: THE BASIS OF FELLOWSHIP</u>	verses 4-6
A. <u>Walk in Truth</u> — 4.	
B. <u>Walk in Love</u> — 5,6.	
III. <u>TRUTH: THE BASIS OF SEPARATION</u>	verses 7-11
A. <u>Apostates Described</u> — 7.	
B. <u>Apostates Dispatched</u> — 8-11.	
IV. <u>Conclusion</u>	verses 12,13

XII. HOMILETIC APPEAL

Some suggested “sermon seeds” are:

- What is Truth?
- A Parent’s Greatest Desire.
- How to Receive Your Reward.
- When the Cults Come Knocking.

Note: *II John 8* gives an understanding of the consequences of false doctrine if it should ever take hold in a church. There are two great losses:

- The work of God (wrought by evangelistic and pastoral ministry) can be lost. Churches can cease to remain New Testament churches. *See: II Corinthians 11:1-3.*
- The rewards given at the Judgment Seat of Christ can be diminished. *See: Hebrews 13:17.*

EXERCISES

1. How many times do each of the following words (and their cognates) appear in the epistle of II John?

abide
love

commandment
truth

doctrine
walk

2. Should a Christian be passive when it comes to doctrinal error? What do the epistles of II Peter, Jude, I John, and II John say about the believer's attitude and actions toward false teaching and false teachers?

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Second John

1. The “twin sister” epistles of II & III John hold what distinction?
2. Written as a personal letter, what does II John warn about?
3. What verse in the epistle clearly teaches we are not to accept doctrinal error in the name of “Christian” unity or tolerance?
4. What are the main reasons for concluding that the apostle John was the human writer of II John?
5. More than half of II John’s contents is found in what other book of the Bible?
6. Why did the writer refer to himself as “The elder,” and not as an apostle?
7. Why wasn’t II John readily received into the canon of scripture?
8. Which of the two suggested possibilities for the identity of the “elect lady” is most likely correct, and why?
9. Tradition holds that II John was written in Asia Minor, but why would we not necessarily tie it to Ephesus?
10. What is the epistle’s predominant theme?
11. Write out the key verse of the epistle.
12. Describe the style of the epistle.

13. Fill in the blanks from the book's outline.

Verses 4-6 = Truth: The Basis of _____.

Verses 7-11 = Truth: The Basis of _____.

14. What are the two great losses listed in *verse 8* regarding the consequences of false doctrine if it should ever take hold in a church?

THIRD JOHN

The third epistle of John is the shortest book in the Bible. It is a personal letter penned by the aged apostle John to another Christian leader of the late first century A.D.. It forms a trilogy with the first two epistles, and is doctrinally and expressively united with the fourth Gospel. In *John 14:6*, the Lord Jesus Christ referred to Himself as the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The epistles of John follow this, as follows:

- I John — Jesus the Life (1:2)
- II John — Jesus the Truth (2)
- III John — Jesus the Way (11)

All three epistles are polemic in nature because they confront error and ills that were infiltrating the Lord's churches. II John warns about apostates (those from without), whereas III John confronts schismatics (those from within). *See: Acts 20:29,30.*

I. THE AUTHOR

God, the Holy Spirit — *II Peter 1:21; II Timothy 3:16; Ephesians 3:5.*

II. THE WRITER

As with II John, the writer identifies himself as "*the elder*" (*verse 1*). For the same reasons set forth in the study of II John, it is accepted with good reason that the writer was the apostle John. This conclusion is arrived at by comparing the epistles. For example:

SECOND JOHN	THIRD JOHN
"The elder unto" — verse 1.	"The elder unto" — verse 1.
"whom I love in the truth" — verse 1.	"whom I love in the truth" — verse 1.
"I rejoiced greatly" — verse 4.	"I rejoiced greatly" — verse 3.
"walking in truth" — verse 4.	"walkest... walk in truth" — verses 3,4.
"many things to write" — verse 12.	"many things to write" — verse 13.
"paper and ink" — verse 12.	"ink and pen" — verse 13.
"I trust ... face to face" — verse 12.	"I trust ... face to face" — verse 14.

Both epistles address the receiving of preachers into one's home — one in a negative way (II John), the other in a positive way (III John).

III. CANONICITY

Because the epistle is a private correspondence, it did not enjoy as wide a circulation as most other New Testament epistles. Because the epistle is very brief, it did not afford a large reservoir for quotations by the later Christian writers.

For these reasons, the third epistle of John (like the second) was not immediately received by all into the canon of scripture. Origen (185-245 A.D.) and Eusebius (260-339 A.D.) classified the epistle with the antilogomena. Nevertheless, by the time of the Council of Carthage in 397 A.D., its canonical authority had been universally recognized.

The following early Church Fathers quoted or alluded to the epistle:

- Irenæus (115-200 A.D.).
- Clement of Alexandria (150-215 A.D.).
- Dionysius of Alexandria (d.264 A.D.).
- Cyprian (200-258 A.D.).
- Cyril of Jerusalem (315-386 A.D.).

IV. THE ADDRESSEE

“...unto the wellbeloved GAIUS, whom I love in the truth” — verse 1.

Gaius (the Greek form of the Latin *Caius*) was a common name. Thus it is not possible to identify this particular man. Three other men named Gaius are mentioned in the New Testament:

1. Gaius of Corinth — *I Corinthians 1:14; Romans 16:23.*
2. Gaius of Macedonia — *Acts 19:29.*
3. Gaius of Derbe — *Acts 20:4.*

It might be possible that the Gaius John wrote to was one of these (who were all saved under Paul’s ministry), but John’s reference to him as [one of] “my children” makes it more likely he was converted to Christ under John’s ministry.

From the text, we learn that this particular Gaius was:

- Widely known and well loved by many (*verse 1*).
- Known as an ardent Bible-believer (*verse 3*).
- Noted for his charity (*verse 6a*).
- Particularly engaged in a ministry of hospitality (*verses 5-8*).

A late tradition says Gaius was the “bishop” of Pergamos. However, the text seems to indicate he was a faithful church member. (John wrote another letter to the church (*verse 9a*), which would have gone to the pastors.)

V. THE DATE OF WRITING

As with the other epistles of John, the actual date of writing is unknown but commonly accepted as c.90 A.D.. There is no valid reason to dispute this.

VI. THE PLACE OF WRITING

The traditional view is that John penned the epistle in Asia Minor, probably Ephesus. While this is probably so, one must take into consideration that at the time John was still engaged in (or contemplating) travel — *verse 14*.

VII. THE OCCASION FOR WRITING

The reasons for John's writing of this epistle are:

- Confirmation of Gaius — *verses 5-8*.
- Condemnation of Diotrephes — *verses 9-11*.
- Commendation of Demetrius— *verse 12*.

Diotrephēs (Διοτρεφής) means “strengthened or nourished by Zeus.”

Demetrius may well have been the Ephesian silversmith of *Acts 20:24-27*. (If so, how marvelous is the grace of God!)

VIII. THE PREDOMINANT THEME

WALKING IN TRUTH.

“Truth lived out produces good works.”

The word “truth” is found six times in this epistle; the words “walk” and “walkest” two times; and the words “do,” “doeth,” and “doest” six times.

Walking in truth is demonstrated by servanthood. See: Matthew 20:26-28.

IX. THE KEY VERSE

The key verse is *III John 4*.

“I have no greater joy than to hear that my children WALK in TRUTH.”

X. THE STYLE OF THE BOOK

The letter is an example of personal correspondence that shows the nature, extent, and warmth of Christian love being practiced in the early years of Christian history.

XI. AN OUTLINE OF THE BOOK

The outline is based upon the three men named in the epistle:

THE BOOK OF THIRD JOHN

- | | |
|---|---------------------|
| I. <u>Salutation</u> | <i>verses 1-4</i> |
| II. <u>GAIUS: THE “MISSIONARY BAPTIST”</u> | |
| <i>verses 5-8</i> | HOSPITABLE |
| III. <u>DIOTROPHES: THE “HARDSHELL BAPTIST”</u> | |
| <i>verses 9-11</i> | HAUGHTY |
| IV. <u>DEMETRIUS: THE “BIBLE-BELIEVING BAPTIST”</u> | |
| <i>verse 12</i> | HUMBLE |
| V. <u>Conclusion</u> | <i>verses 13,14</i> |

XII. HOMILETIC APPEAL

Some suggested “sermon seeds” are:

- Have a Prosperous New Year. (Excellent New Year’s message.)
- What Do Others Say about You?
- My Greatest Joy. (Excellent message on the home.)
- Taking Care of Evangelists.
- Who Deserves the Preeminence?
- Don’t Be a Dictator.
- The Importance of a Good Report.

This small epistle contains significant church truth. The word “church” is mentioned three times, and the church is central to the story behind the letter. Notice:

1. The testimony concerning Gaius was reported to the church where John was writing from (*verse 6a*).
2. John wrote to the church that Gaius was a member of (*verse 9a*).
3. There is key instruction concerning the responsibility of a church to provide hospitality to traveling evangelists (*verses 6b-8*).
4. The accreditation of preachers by their reputation *and* doctrine is critical (*verse 12*).

EXERCISES

1. How many times do each of the following words (and their cognates) appear in the epistle of III John?
church evil good receive truth walk
2. Is there a connection between physical well-being and our spiritual condition? Why do you say that?
3. How does the epistle describe the evangelist? (What is he called? What does he do? How is he to be supported?)
4. Considering *verse 5*, should a visiting preacher be treated any differently than a pastor of the church? Explain.
5. Does a pastor have any right to “forbid” traveling evangelists (church planters) from coming to the church? If so, on what basis?
6. What weight should a report given on behalf of an evangelist or itinerant preacher by another well-respected pastor have?
7. What does John’s reaction to Diotrephes’ antics have to say about a pastor “protecting” or “standing up for” the evangelists sent out from his church?
8. Does a pastor have the right to discipline a church member? Why do you say that?
9. Do you think John had the right to discipline Diotrephes for his actions? Why do you say that?
10. What was the threefold report concerning Demetrius? How does this translate into a church approving men as preachers?

NOTES

REVIEW QUESTIONS

Third John

1. The third epistle of the apostle John forms a trilogy with the first two epistles, and is doctrinally and expressively united with what other New Testament book?
2. Show how John's epistles relate to *John 14:6*.
3. Compare and contrast II John and III John within the context of their nature and warnings.
4. Why wasn't III John readily received into the canon of scripture?
5. What can we learn about "*the wellbeloved Gaius*" from the epistle?
6. What is the commonly accepted date of writing for this epistle?
7. What are the three reasons for John's writing of this epistle?
8. What is the epistle's predominant theme?
9. Write out the key verse of the epistle.
10. Describe the style of the epistle.

11. Fill in the blanks from the book's outline.

Gaius: The "_____ Baptist" — *verses 5-8* — Hospitable

_____: The "Hardshell Baptist" — *verses 9-11* — Haughty

Demetrius: the "Bible-Believing Baptist" — *verse 12* — _____

12. This small epistle contains significant truth about what institution?

A SUMMARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT EPISTLES

In their Chronological Order of Writing

EPISTLE	WRITER	DATE	PLACE	THEME	Key Verse
ESCHATOLOGICAL Anticipative					
I Thessalonians	Paul	Spring 50 A.D.	Corinth	Rapture	5:23
II Thessalonians	Paul	Fall 50 A.D.	Corinth	Revelation	3:5
SOTERIOLOGICAL Controversial					
I Corinthians	Paul	Spring 57 A.D.	Ephesus	Church Order	14:40
II Corinthians	Paul	Fall 57 A.D.	Macedonia (<i>Philippi</i>)	The Ministry	4:1
Romans	Paul	Winter 58 A.D.	Corinth	Righteousness	1:16,17
Galatians	Paul	57/58 A.D.	<i>Troas</i>	Christian Liberty	5:1
ETHICAL Exhortatory					
I Peter	Peter	58/59 A.D.	Babylon	Hope	1:7
James	James	59/60 A.D.	Jerusalem	Faith & Works	2:22
CHRISTOLOGICAL Contemplative					
Colossians	Paul	62 A.D.	Rome	Fullness	2:9,10
Philemon	Paul	62 A.D.	Rome	Forgiveness	1:27
Ephesians	Paul	62 A.D.	Rome	The Church	3:21
Philippians	Paul	63 A.D.	Rome	Joy	4:4
Hebrews	<i>Paul</i>	63 A.D.	Italy (<i>Rome</i>)	A Better Way	13:13
ECCLESIOLOGICAL Administrative					
I Timothy	Paul	63/64 A.D.	Macedonia	Behavior	3:15
Titus	Paul	65 A.D.	<i>Corinth</i>	Pattern	2:7
II Timothy	Paul	Fall 66 A.D.	Rome	Endure	4:5
POLEMICAL Combative					
II Peter	Peter	c.67 A.D.	unknown	Full Knowledge	3:18
Jude	Jude	c.68-70 A.D.	unknown	Contend	1:3
I John	John	c.90 A.D.	Asia (<i>Ephesus</i>)	Assurance	5:13
II John	John	c.90 A.D.	Asia (<i>Ephesus</i>)	Truth	1:2
III John	John	c.90 A.D.	Asia (<i>Ephesus</i>)	Walking in Truth	1:4

Items in *italic* are conjectured.

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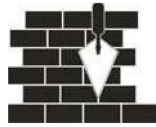
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