## Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Understanding the Background of the New Testament</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>An Introduction to the Canon &amp; Text of the New Testament</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>An Introduction to the Four Gospels</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>A Harmony of the Gospels – Part 1</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>A Harmony of the Gospels – Part II</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>A Harmony of the Gospels (Part III) and an Introduction to Acts</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The Book of Acts (part II), Galatians, and 1 Thessalonians</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Second Thessalonians and First Corinthians</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Second Corinthians and the Prison Epistles</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>The Prison Epistles (part 2), Pastoral, and General Epistles (part 1)</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>The General Epistles (part 2) and Revelation</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I. What is the New Testament

A. The New Testament Canon
   1. The 27 Books of the New Testament
   2. Definition of "canonization"
      "coming to understand this collection of works as uniquely inspired and God breathed."

B. The Genres of the New Testament
   1. The Gospels (Biography)
      b. Definition of Gospel:
         "good news"
      c. The Content of the Four Gospels
      d. The Reason for Having Four Gospels
      e. The Order of the Four Gospels

Christians…believed [Scripture] to be God’s very word to humanity and thus making it crucial for followers of Christ to understand it, to apply it, and to obey it.
2. Acts of the Apostles (History)
   b. Definition:
      "we may think of it…more along the lines of the broader history
      writing of the ancient Mediterranean world."
   c. The Content of Acts

3. Letters (Epistles)
   a. Paul's Letters
      i. Books: Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians,
         Philippians, Colossians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2
         Timothy, Titus, Philemon, and maybe Hebrews
      ii. The Order of the Pauline Epistles
   b. General Epistles
      i. Definition:
         "they were at one time believed to have been written to more
         than one single church"
      ii. Books: maybe Hebrews, James, 1 & 2 Peter, 1, 2, & 3
          John, and Jude
      ii. The Order of the General Epistles:
4. Apocalypse
   a. Definition: "revelation"
      "a highly symbolic description of present and future events in light of
      questions about the way the world will end."
   b. Books: Revelation
   c. The Content of Revelation

II. Why Study the New Testament?

A. The Literary Reason

B. The Historical Reason

C. The Contemporary Reason

D. The Academic Reason

E. The Personal Reason

F. The Professional Reason
III. How Should We Study the New Testament?

A. Questions of Background

Who wrote it? To whom? When? Under what circumstances? Why was it written?

B. Questions of Interpretation

How should the book be outlined? What is its overall structure? What are its main points? What is clear? What is disputed? What are the best solutions?

C. Questions of Theme

What are the key themes overall? Is there a unifying or central topic? Are there any problems or difficulties with these main themes?

D. Questions of Application

What are some key points that can be applied to life and ministry today?

IV. What Are the Possible Viewpoints on the New Testament?

A. Three Main Perspectives

1. The Religious Viewpoint

2. The Irreligious Viewpoint

3. The Christian Viewpoint
B. Diverse Christian Perspectives

1. The Conservative Evangelical Perspective

2. The Liberal Perspective

3. Denominational Perspectives

4. The Eastern Orthodox Perspective

5. The Roman Catholic Perspective

6. The Protestant Perspective

C. Other Perspectives (e.g., Mormon, Jehovah's Witness, etc.)
V. Should We Evaluate the New Testament from Our Perspective?

A. We should critically analyze the text and weigh the evidence.

B. We should search the Scriptures.

C. We should be open to learning something new.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Why might it be important to understand the different "genres" of the New Testament? What difference might it make in how we read the various books of the New Testament?

2. This study identified a number of different reasons for learning about the New Testament. Which of these reasons comes closest to the reason that you are learning about the New Testament? Can you think of any other reasons? How might you use some of these reasons to encourage someone else to learn more about the New Testament?

3. The study identified four different kinds of questions that should be addressed in studying the New Testament. Why are these all important? Which of these interests you the most? Why?

4. Why is it important to understand the different "perspectives" that people bring with them when they read the New Testament? What is your perspective? How might it influence the way you read the New Testament? How might this be a good thing? How might it be a bad thing?
I. The Historical & Political Background of the New Testament

A. The Four Eras of Political Influence

1. The Persian Era (425-330 BC)

2. The Greek Era (331-160 BC)
   a. The Spread of the Greek Language
   b. The Spread of Greek Religions

3. The Hasmonean (Maccabean) Era (142-63 BC)
   a. The Jewish Revolt
   b. The Growing Tension between Jew & Gentile

4. The Roman Era (63 BC – 3rd century AD)
   a. The Roman Culture
      i. A Common Language
      ii. An Empire Wide Transportation/Communication System
      iii. The *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace)
   iv. Roman Law
II. The Religious Background of the New Testament

A. The Greek Religions

B. The Imperial Cult

C. The Mystery Religions

D. Greek Philosophical Systems
   1. The Epicureans
   2. The Stoics
   3. The Cynics/Skeptics
III. The Jewish Background of the New Testament

A. The Pharisees (and Scribes)

B. The Sadducees

C. The Essenes

D. The Zealots

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Why is it important for us to understand the historical and political context in which the New Testament books were written? Do you think it will make a difference in how you understand the New Testament? Why?

2. Did you find it helpful to reflect on the religious background of the New Testament? Read Acts 17:18. How does understanding these religious perspectives help us understand the groups mentioned in these verses?

3. What have you learned about the Pharisees and Sadducees? Read Acts 23:6-8. How does understanding the Jewish background of the New Testament help you understand this passage? Why is that important?
I. How was the Old Testament Canon Determined?

A. What is "Canon"?

Canon deals with "how the various books were measured or analyzed in order to determine what would be considered uniquely sacred."

B. The Apocryphal Books

C. The Pseudepigrapha

II. How was the New Testament Canon Determined?

A. Why were any books added to the Old Testament Canon?

1. The Open-ended Nature of the Old Testament

2. The Establishment of the New Covenant

3. Jesus's Promises to the Disciples
B. Why these particular 27 books?

1. They were widely accepted by the Church as uniquely true and inspired.

2. They were linked to an Apostle.

3. They did not contradict previous Scripture.

C. What about those writings that were left out?

1. The Apostolic Fathers

2. The New Testament Apocrypha

3. The Gnostic Writings

D. What if we found new writings?

More theologically decisive...is the Christian conviction that Jesus was God's final and decisive word for humanity, for our sinful plight, and for the salvation that we, therefore, found ourselves in need of.
II. Is the Text of the New Testament Reliable?

A. The Number of Manuscripts (i.e copies)

B. The Nature of the Discrepancies

C. Some Longer Disputable Passages
   1. The Ending of the Lord's Prayer (Mat 6:13)
   2. The Ending of Mark (Mark 16:9-20)
   3. The Woman Caught in Adultery (John 7:53-8:11)

D. The Verse and Chapter Markers

"It is important to stress that no Christian doctrine depends only on some disputed text...and, therefore, even if we do not have the original documents...we have copies that have been preserved with remarkable care in which we can place our trust."
III. The Four Gospels

A. The Similarities and Differences among the Gospels

1. "Harmonies" of the Gospels

2. The "Synoptic" Gospels

3. The Uniqueness of John.

B. Other Early Sources of Information about the Life of Christ

1. What other sources do we have?

2. What can we learn about Jesus from these sources?

3. What should we conclude from this information?

"Certainly no one in the earliest centuries of Christian history, inside or outside of the movement, suspected that one day it would grow to be the religion that claimed more followers than any other religion in the world."
C. Methods for Explaining the Differences among the Gospels

1. The Traditional Approach

2. Source Criticism
   Definition: determining the source(s) from which the biblical authors drew their material.

3. Form Criticism
   Definition: determining the original (oral) form in which the biblical material was passed on from one generation to the next.

4. Redaction Criticism
   Definition: analyzing the editorial process that produced the final version of the biblical texts.

5. Socio-historical Criticism
   Definition: analyzing the social-historical context in which the New Testament books were written.
D. Explaining the Uniqueness of the Gospel of John

1. The Traditional Explanation: Familiarity with the Synoptics

2. The Modern Explanation: Unfamiliarity with the Synoptics

3. A Hybrid Approach: Familiarity with the Stories

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Why do you think the early church believed it was important to establish which books of the Bible were "canonical"? Does it change how you view the New Testament to know that these books were intentionally and thoughtfully selected as being uniquely authoritative and inspired?

2. Does it bother you to realize that there are differences and discrepancies among the various copies of the New Testament? How might our confidence in the sovereignty of God and the continual work of the Holy Spirit help us deal with our concerns in this area? How could you encourage someone who was struggling with whether these discrepancies meant they could no longer trust the Bible?

3. In what ways are the four Gospel accounts similar? In what ways are they different? Why are these differences important? Why might these differences also cause problems?

4. What do you think of the various ways that people have come up with to explain the differences among the Gospels? How might each of these help us understand how the Gospels were written? Pause for a moment and put yourself in the place of the biblical authors as they sorted various sources (source criticism) and oral traditions (form criticism), editing them together (redaction criticism) to present an account of Jesus's life that would be meaningful in their cultural context (socio-historical criticism). How can this help you appreciate these authors and what they accomplished? How was the Holy Spirit involved in all of this? Why is that important?
I. Introduction

A. Definition

B. The Content of the Gospels

C. The Gospels as Ancient Biographies

II. The Gospel of Mark

A. The Background of Mark
   1. Author
   2. Date
   3. Purpose

"Mark is concerned to emphasize aspects of Jesus's life and ministry that can bring encouragement and comfort to Christians who are suffering."
B. The Major Themes of Mark

1. Jesus as "Son of God" (Mark 15:39)

2. Jesus as "Christ" (Mark 8:27-30)

3. Jesus as "Suffering Servant" (Isa 53; Mark 10:45)

4. The Disciples' Inability to Understand (Mark 8:31-33)

C. Applying the Gospel of Mark

1. It helps us understand the fundamental themes and events of Jesus Christ's life.

2. It encourages Christians in the midst of adversity.

III. The Gospel of Matthew

A. The Background Of Matthew

1. Author

2. Date

3. Purpose
B. The Major Themes of Matthew

1. Jesus as "Teacher"
   a. The Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7)
   b. The Commissioning of the Twelve (Matt 10)
   c. The Parables (Matt 13)
   d. The Teaching on Humility and Forgiveness (Matt 18:1-6; 15-35)
   e. The "Woes" and the Second Coming (Matt 24-25)

2. Jesus as "Son of David" (Matt. 9:27; 15:22; 21:9, 15)

3. The Progression of the Gospel Offer (Matt. 28:16-19)

C. Applying the Gospel of Matthew

1. It is most helpful for those with a Scriptural background.

2. It stimulates the mission of the Church.

3. It provides material for ethical reflection.
IV. The Gospel of Luke

A. The Background of Luke

1. Author

2. Date

3. Purpose

B. The Major Themes of Luke

1. The Humanity of Jesus (Luke 4:31-41; 5:12-26)

2. Jesus as "Teacher" (Luke 15-16)


5. The Importance of Stewardship (Luke 16:10; 19:19-26)

"Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us...that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught." Luke 1:1, 4
V. The Gospel of John

A. The Background of John

1. Author

2. Date

3. Purpose

B. The Major Themes of John

1. Jesus as "Son of God" and "Christ" (John 20:31)

2. The Importance of Evangelism (John 3:16-21)

3. Jesus as "Word of God" (John 1:1)

4. Jesus as "Lamb of God" (John 1:29, 36)

5. Jesus as "God Incarnate" (John 10)
6. The "I am" Sayings (John 6:48; 8:12, 58; 10:9, 11; 11:25; 14:6; 15:1)

7. The Presence of Eternal Life (John 3:16; 6:35-71)

8. The Miracles as Key Signs Pointing to Jesus's Identity (John 9:1-41)

   a. The Unity between the Father and the Son
   b. The Unity between the Son and His Followers

10. The Eternal Security of the Believer (John 6:39)

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Read Isaiah 53, Mark 8:31 and Mark 9:12. How do these passages help you understand who Jesus was and what he did? How could you use these passages to encourage someone who was enduring persecution or suffering?

2. One of the key themes for the Gospel of Matthew is that Jesus is a teacher. Spend some time looking through the Sermon on the Mount to see what kinds of things Jesus taught about (Matt 5-7). Pick one part of the Sermon and spend some time reflecting on what it would have been like to hear Jesus preach these words to his disciples. What would it be like to hear him preaching these words to your church today? How should you live in light of these words?

3. Read Luke 2:52. What does this verse tell us about the humanity of Christ? Why is the humanity of Christ such an important issue for Luke? Why is it important that we understand the humanity of Christ today? Read Hebrews 2:17-18. How can Christ's humanity be a source of encouragement for us?

4. Read John 1:1-18. What does it mean to say that the 'Word' became 'flesh'? What can you do this week to reflect more deeply on what an amazing truth this is? What can you do this week to help someone else understand and appreciate this truth?
I. An Overview of Jesus's Life

A. Jesus's Birth (4-6 BC)

B. Jesus's Adult Ministry (AD 27-30)
   1. The Passover Narratives in John
   2. Jesus's Three-Year Ministry
      a. The Phase of Obscurity
      b. The Phase of Popularity
      c. The Phase of Rejection

II. The Birth of Jesus

A. The Birth of Jesus in Matthew and Luke
   1. The fulfillment of OT prophecy
   2. The Virgin Birth
   3. Jesus's Infancy
   4. Jesus's Childhood
III. The Phase of Obscurity

A. The Beginning of Jesus's Public Ministry

1. The Starting Point in Mark & John

2. John the Baptist

B. Jesus's Baptism

1. Baptism in Judaism

2. The Reasons for Jesus's Baptism

C. Jesus's Temptation

1. Common to all 3 Synoptics

2. The Three Temptations
   a. Turn Stones to Bread
   b. Rule All Kingdoms
   c. Jump from the Temple

"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." Hebrews 4:15
3. The Significance of the Temptation
   a. These temptations are common to all people (1 John 2:16)
   b. Jesus is just like us, yet without sin (Heb 2:17-18)
   c. Jesus can sympathize with our weaknesses (Heb 4:14-16)
   d. We can resist temptation as well (1 Cor 10:13)

D. Events Unique to the Gospel of John

1. The Four Main Episodes
   a. Turning Water into Wine (John 2:1-13)
   b. Clearing the Temple (the first time) (2:13-22)
   c. Jesus and Nicodemus (John 3:1-21)
   d. Jesus and the Samaritan Woman (John 4:1-45)

2. A New and More Universal Salvation
IV. The Phase of Popularity

A. Introduction

B. Jesus Announces the Kingdom & Calls for Repentance (Mark 1:14-15)

1. The Kingdom as the Heart of God's Ministry

2. The Nature of the Kingdom

3. The Nature of Repentance

C. Jesus Calls the Disciples

D. Jesus's Healing Ministry

1. Miracles and Mythology

2. Miracles as Testimonies of the Kingdom
E. The 'Conflict' Stories

1. The Healing of the Paralytic (Mark 2:1-12)

2. The Calling of Sinners (Mark 2:13-17)

3. The Sabbath Laws (Mark 3:1-6)

4. The True Family (Mark 3:31-35)

F. Jesus's Public Ministry Challenged

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Why do you think it is important for believers to reflect on Jesus's birth and childhood? Why is the Virgin Birth important? Do you think that understanding Jesus's birth and childhood has any significance for life and ministry today? Why or why not?

2. Read Hebrews 4:14-16. According to this passage, why can we draw near to God's throne with confidence? What difference might this make in our prayer and worship lives? How can this help us appreciate the importance of Jesus's life on earth?

3. According to Jesus's message, what lies at the heart of God's ministry? How might this affect the way that we understand the Gospel? How can we make this a more prominent part of our own lives and ministries?

4. What can we learn from the controversies and challenges that surrounded Jesus's public ministry? How can this become a source of motivation and encouragement to us in difficult times?
I. The End of the Phase of Popularity

A. The Parables

1. The Purpose of the Parables (Luke 8:9-15)

2. The Nature of the Parables

3. The Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32)


B. The Nature Miracles

1. Resurrection from the Dead (Mark 9:30-32)

2. Walking on Water (Mark 6:45)

3. Calming the Storm (Mark 4:35)
C. Jesus's Teaching on Kingdom Ethics (Mark 7:1-8:26)

D. Jesus Confessed as Messiah (Mark 8:27-9:1)

E. Additional Material in Matthew
   1. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
   2. The Sermon on Mission (Matthew 10)
   3. The Sermon on the Parables (Matthew 13)
   4. The Sermon on Humility (Matthew 18:1-6)
   5. The Sermon on Last Things (Matthew 24-25)
E. Additional Material in Luke

F. Additional Material in John

1. Jesus Healing on the Sabbath (John 5)

2. The Feeding of the 5,000 (John 6)

3. Jerusalem Ministry (John 7-9)

4. Jesus as the Good Shepherd (John 10)

II. The Phase of Rejection

A. The Key Turning Point – Raising Lazarus (John 11)

B. A Changing Message (Mark 10)
B. Passion Week


2. Clearing the Temple (Matt. 21:12-17; Mark 11:15-19; Luke 19:45-48)

3. Cursing the Fig Tree (Matt. 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14)


   a. The Bread and the Wine
   b. Anticipating the Coming Banquet
c. Jesus's Teaching


FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Read Luke 15:11-32. What does this parable reveal about the nature of God's love and grace? In what ways are you like the younger son? In what ways are you like the older son? What can you do this week to reflect God's love and grace in your home and/or workplace?

2. Read Mark 4:35-41. What does this story reveal about Jesus? What does it say about the disciples? Are there areas in your life where you are fearful and need to learn to trust Jesus more? What can you do this week to remind yourself that Jesus is Lord over that issue as well?

3. This study emphasized the 'urgency' of the disciples' mission (cf. Matt 10). How urgent is this mission today? How urgent is the mission in your own life? In your church?

4. Read John 17:11. Why do you think Jesus emphasized Christian unity so much in his prayer? How do you think this relates to the existence of so many Christian denominations? Can you think of any ways in which your church could work toward greater unity and cooperation with other churches?
I. The Passion of Christ

A. The Trial of Jesus

1. Jesus before the High Priest (Matt. 26:57-68; Mk. 14:53-65; Lk. 22:54-65; Jn. 18:24)

2. Jesus as the Messiah (Matt. 27:11; Mk. 14:61-64, Lk. 22:67-71; Jn. 18:33-38)


4. The Charge against Jesus (Matt. 27:1; Mk. 15:1; Lk. 22:66-71)

5. Jesus before Pilate and Herod Antipas (Matt. 27:2, 11-14; Mk. 15:1-5; Lk. 23:1-12; Jn. 18:28-38)

B. The Crucifixion

1. The Nature of Crucifixion (Matt. 27:27-50; Mk. 15:16-37; Lk. 23:26-46; Jn. 19:16-27)

2. The Death of Jesus (Matt. 27:51-56; Mk. 15:38-41; Lk. 23:45-49; Jn. 19:28-30)

“But may it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.” Galatians 6:14
3. The Seven Last Sayings of Jesus on the Cross

   a. “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” (Lk. 23:34)

   b. “Truly I say to you, today, you will surely be with me in paradise.” (Lk. 23:43)


   d. “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matt. 27:46; Mk. 15:34)

   e. “I thirst.” (Jn. 19:28)

   f. “It is finished.” (Jn. 19:30)

   g. “Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit.” (Lk. 23:46)

C. The Resurrection

   1. The Significance of the Resurrection

   2. Alternative Explanations of the Resurrection

      a. The Swoon Theory

      b. The Stolen Body Theory

      c. The Wrong Tomb Theory

      d. The Hallucination Theory

      e. The Late Legend Theory
3. The Resurrection Accepted
   a. The Women as Eyewitnesses
   b. Sunday Worship
   c. Jesus Worshipped
   d. The Solidarity of Early Christianity
   e. Paul's Testimony (1 Cor. 15)

II. An Introduction to Acts

A. Background to the Book of Acts
   1. The Author of Acts
   2. Date: AD 62
   3. The Audience of Acts

“This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of lawless men. God raised him up, loosing the pangs of death, because it was not possible for him to be held by it.”

Acts 2:23-24
4. The Purpose of Acts
   a. To Show the Progress of the Gospel (1:8)
   b. To Show the Shift from Jerusalem to Rome (8:26-40)
   c. To Show the Shift from Jewish to Gentile (10:1-43)
   d. To Show the Ministry of the Early Church
   e. To Show the Ministry of Peter & Paul
   f. To Defend Christianity from Criticism

B. Possible Outlines of Acts
   1. Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the End of the World
   2. "The Word of God grew and spread…"

C. An Outline of Acts
      a. Date: AD 30-32
      b. Jesus's Appearance and Ascension
      c. The Day of Pentecost
      d. Civil Disobedience
c. Caring for the Poor

f. Annanias and Sapphira

g. The First Deacons


a. Date: AD 33-47

b. The Stoning of Stephen

c. Philip’s Ministry in Samaria

d. The Main Theme: The Word of God Spreading to the Unlikely

e. The Work of the Spirit Debated

f. The Conversion of Saul

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FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Look at "The Seven Last Sayings of Jesus on the Cross." Pick one and spend a little time reflecting on it. What does it tell you about Jesus's experience on the cross? How can this saying help you appreciate what Jesus did?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-19. According to Paul, why is it so important that we believe in the resurrection? How often do you reflect on the importance of the resurrection? What can you do this week to remind yourself of how important it is that Jesus was raised from the dead?

3. Read Acts 2:38. What is the "gift of the Holy Spirit"? Why do you think that it is important for Christians to understand that they have received the gift of the Holy Spirit? How does it help you to understand that you too have received the gift of the Holy Spirit?

4. Look over the various purposes of the Book of Acts. Which of these do you need to understand better? What can you do this week to develop a deeper understanding of this theme?
I. The Book of Acts (part II)

A. Acts 9:32-12:24

1. Peter's Vision

2. Cornelius' Conversion

3. The Gospel Moving Out

B. Acts 12:25-13:1

1. The Focus Shifts to Paul

2. The Pattern of Paul's Ministry

C. Paul's Missionary Journeys

1. The First Missionary Journey (13:4-14:28)
   a. Date: AD 47-49
   b. The Ministry in Cyprus
   c. The Journey to Pisidia
   d. Other Journeys
2. The Jerusalem Council (15:1-35)
   a. The Reasons for the Council
   b. The Theological Conclusion: Salvation through Faith Alone
   c. The Practical Conclusion: Some Restrictions for the Purpose of Unity

3. The Second Missionary Journey (15:36-18:22)
   a. Revisiting Earlier Churches
   b. Lydia and the First Converts
   c. Paul's Arrest in Philippi
   d. Paul's Mars Hill Speech in Athens
   e. The City of Corinth
   f. The Return to Antioch
   a. Paul's Ministry in Ephesus
   b. The Riot in Ephesus
   c. The Offering for Jerusalem

5. The Trials of Paul in Jerusalem and Caesarea (21:17-26:32)
   a. Paul's Arrest in Jerusalem
   b. Paul Imprisoned
   c. The Attempt on Paul's Life and His rescue
   d. Paul's Appeal to Rome

   a. God's Promise
   b. The Island of Malta
   c. Paul's Arrival in Rome

“God’s sovereign plans and responsible human actions are never pitted against one another in scripture, but work hand in hand.”
D. Four Key Theological Emphases

1. God oversees the progress of the Church.

2. The message of Christianity centers on the resurrection of Jesus.

3. The offer of salvation is for all people.

4. The Church will flourish despite opposition.

E. Two Key Applications

1. Understanding the Nature of Salvation
   a. Through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ
   b. Outwardly symbolized by baptism
   c. Inwardly ratified by the Holy Spirit

2. Looking for Lessons for the Church Today
   a. Find the constant in the patterns.
   b. Recognize that methods are variable.

“Do not call anything impure that God has made clean.”
Acts 10:15
II. Galatians

A. The Background of Galatians

1. Recipients: Psidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe

2. Date: AD 49
   a. Between the 1st missionary journey and the Jerusalem Council
   b. Before the declaration on unclean foods

3. Paul’s use of the word “bewitched” (3:1)

B. Keys to Understanding Galatians

1. Understanding the Law

2. Debating with the Judaizers

C. Outlining Galatians

1. Paul Defends His Authority (1:1-2:14)
   a. His Calling from God
   b. His Mission Affirmed
   c. His Rebuff of Peter
2. Paul Defends Justification by Faith Alone (2:15-4:31)
   a. Abraham Justified by Faith
   
b. The Nature of the Law
   
c. Salvation for both Jew and Gentile

   a. Freedom from the Law, not from morality
   
b. Faith expressed through love
   
c. A life directed by the Spirit
   
d. The new life not produced by Law
   
e. The Gospel as a fulfillment of the Law
D. The Theology of Galatians

III. First Thessalonians

A. The Background of First Thessalonians

B. An Outline of First Thessalonians

1. Greeting and Exhortation (1:1-3:13)
   a. Praise to God
   b. The Thessalonians as an Example to the Churches
   c. The Gospel as God's Divine Word
   d. An Encouragement to Continued Growth

“Galatians is the charter of Christian liberty—a foundational document defining how Christians become free. Free from the sin that enslaves them. Free from the penalty of that sin, and thus free to establish a relationship with God through the work of Christ on the cross, empowered by the Holy Spirit who comes to dwell in believers, and produces the good works that do not save, but demonstrate the presence of salvation in an individual.”
2. A Call to Godly Living (4:1-5:28)

   a. Living a Holy Life in Light of Christ’s Return

   b. The Rapture

      i. Definition of "rapture"

      ii. The Relationship between the Rapture and the Return

      iii. The Rapture as a Welcoming Party

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. What was the significance of Peter’s rooftop vision in Acts 10? Why do you think it was so difficult for Peter to accept the gospel being given to the Gentiles? What groups of people or persons would you have difficulty sharing the gospel with? Spend some time this week in prayer for those people.

2. On all three of Paul’s missionary journeys he experienced persecution. How did Paul respond in the face of this persecution? In what ways are you persecuted for the gospel? How do you respond?

3. From the book of Galatians, what passages would you use to defend the truth that salvation is by grace through faith alone, and not by works of the law? Why would these verses be a source of comfort to the believer? How could someone use these verses to condone sin?

4. In light of the second coming of Jesus, how should this motivate a believer to live? How much time do you spend thinking about and praying for the return of Christ? What about your life would look different if you knew the Lord was returning tomorrow?
I. Second Thessalonians

A. Debated Theme: The Day of the Lord (2:1-2)

1. The Fear of Missing the Day of the Lord

2. The Problem of Laziness

B. Signs that the Day of the Lord Approaches

1. The Man of Lawlessness (2:3-4)
   a. The Antichrist of Revelation
   b. A Powerful Anti-Religious Figure
   c. Desecrating the Temple of God
   d. Masquerading as a Christian

2. The Restrainer (2:6-8)
   a. A Strong World Leader?
   b. The Spirit of Christ?
   c. The Church?
   d. The Hand of God?
C. Key Theological Themes in First and Second Thessalonians

1. The return of Christ is certain despite apparent delays.

2. We do not need to fear that we have missed the Day of the Lord.

D. Key Applications from First and Second Thessalonians

1. All believers must stay alert for the end.

2. Do not presume that there is still a lot of time before the end.

3. Do not presume that the coming end means you do not need to plan for the future.

4. Do not misjudge the direction of human history.

5. We can be confident that God's causes and people will triumph.

II. First Corinthians

A. Historical Background of First Corinthians

1. The Reason for Writing the Letter
   a. The Corinthian church was young and in need of instruction.
   b. There were divisions in the church. (1:10)
   c. The Corinthians had asked some questions. (7:1)
   d. Paul needed to correct misunderstandings from a previous letter. (5:9)

“For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”
1 Corinthians 1:18
2. Date: AD 54-55

3. Location: Ephesus

B. An Outline of First Corinthians

1. Greeting and Exhortation (1:1-9)

2. Divisions in the Church (1:10-4:21)
   a. Why were there divisions in the church?
      i. Competing Philosophies
      ii. Spiritual Pride
      iii. Class Differences
      iv. Celebrity Worship
   b. How does Paul respond?
      i. Focus on the Cross (1:18-2:5)
      ii. True Wisdom (2:6-2:16)
      iii. God as the Source of Growth (3:1-23)
      iv. Servant Leadership (4:1-21)

“A Christian church that is divided is a contradiction.”
John MacArthur
2. Three Topics of Concern (5:1-6:20)
   a. Incest
   
   b. Lawsuits among Believers
   
   c. Sexual Immorality

3. Responding to the Principle of Celibacy (7:1-40)
   a. Celibacy not an Absolute for Christian Life
   
   b. Celibacy as a Norm Outside of Marriage
   
   c. Celibacy Qualified for Different Groups
   
   d. The Issue of Divorce

4. Food Sacrificed to Idols (8:1-10:33)
   a. Morally Neutral Areas
   
   b. Three Basic Principles
      i. Do not cause a weaker brother or sister to stumble.
      
      ii. Do not eat food that is part of idol worship.
      
      iii. Ensure that morally neutral practices lead others to Christ.
5. Head Coverings (11:1-16)

6. The Lord's Supper (11:17-34)

7. Spiritual Gifts (12:1-14:28)
   b. The Primacy of Love (13:1-13)
      i. Prophecy and Tongues
      ii. The Appropriate Use of Gifts
      iii. Silence in the Service
      iv. Evaluating Prophecy
C. Key Theological Themes of First Corinthians

1. The Centrality of the Cross (2:2)

2. The Significance of the Resurrection (15:1-58)

3. Love and Unity as the Ground of Christian Behavior (13:1-13)

4. The Mark of Christian Community: Service Not Competition (3:1-23)

“For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’ ‘O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’”

1 Corinthians 15:53-55
D. Key Applications from First Corinthians

1. The Balanced Christian Life

2. Principles for the Right Use of Certain Practices

3. The Importance of "Yes, But…" Logic

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Paul gives several reasons why the Corinthian church was divided. Do you see any of these in your church today? Of the ways in which Paul deals with divisions inside the church, which do you think is the most important? How would you deal with divisions in your church?

2. How should “stronger” members in the faith deal with “weaker” members in the faith concerning morally neutral practices? What are principles that Paul gives to help the church in this area? What are some examples of modern day activities that are not sin, but should possibly be restrained from if they would cause others to stumble?

3. Do all believers have at least one spiritual gift according to 1 Cor. 12:4-11? Why has God given spiritual gifts to believers? What are your spiritual gifts? If you don’t know, how would you find out what your gift is? Are you being a faithful steward of your spiritual gift, using it for its intended purposes?

4. Why is the resurrection so central to the Christian message? What arguments does Paul give in 1 Cor. 15?
I. Second Corinthians

A. Background to Second Corinthians

1. Mixed Reactions to the Previous Letter (2:1-4)

2. Different 'Tones' in Chapters 1-9 and 10-13

3. A Proposed Resolution
   a. Chapters 1-7: Positive Response to Understanding
   b. Chapters 8-9: Encouragement toward Needed Progress
   c. Chapters 10-13: Areas Still to Be Grasped

4. Evidence of Another Letter

5. Date: AD 56

B. Problems in Outlining

1. The Hardest Letter of Paul to Outline

2. The Possibility of Different Letters

3. The Possibility of Jewish Thinking

4. The Possibility of Symmetry and Parallelism
C. Key Theological Themes in Second Corinthians

1. The Role of Suffering in the Christian Life (1:3-11)

2. Being Ambassadors of Reconciliation (5:11-21)

3. Not Being Unequally Yoked (6:14-7:1)


5. Paul's Authority (11:21-33)

6. Dealing with a "Thorn in the Flesh" (12:1-10)

D. Key Applications from Second Corinthians

1. Suffering need not lead us to despair.

2. God uses suffering and will sustain us in the midst of suffering.

3. Suffering should be expected as the norm for the believer.
II. Romans

A. Background to Romans

1. Author: Paul

2. Recipients: Christians in Rome

3. Purpose
   a. Clarify the Gospel
   b. Prepare for a Visit to Spain

B. An Outline of Romans


2. God's Wrath against Ungodliness (1:18-3:20)
   a. Against the Gentile (1:18-32)
   b. Against the Jew (2:17-3:8)
   c. The Sinfulness of All Humanity (3:9-3:20)

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek." Romans 1:16
3. The Results of Justification (5:1-21)
   a. Peace with God

   b. Reconciliation with God

   a. Sanctification: to become progressively more righteous.

   b. The Public Initiation of Sanctification: Baptism

   c. The Process of Sanctification: Lifelong Struggle with Sin

   d. The Promise of Sanctification: No Condemnation

4. The Role of Israel in God's Plan of Salvation (9:1-11:36)
   a. The Question: Why so many Gentiles and so few Jews?

   b. Paul's Answer:

   “But how are they to call on him whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written: ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news.’” Romans 10:14-15
5. The Ethics of Christian Living (12:1-15:33)
   
a. The Renewal of Body and Mind
   
b. Exercising Christian Gifts in Love
   
c. Tolerating Others in Love

D. Key Applications from Romans

   1. All humans are sinners and separated from God.
   
   2. The process of reconciliation involves justification, sanctification, and glorification.

III. The Prison Epistles

A. The Background of the Prison Epistles

   1. The Books: Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon
   
   2. The Author:

      a. Accepted Pauline Authorship: Philippians and Philemon

      b. Debated Pauline Authorship: Ephesians and Colossians
3. Recipients

a. Philemon was written to Onesimus.

b. Colossians was written to the church in Colossae.

c. Ephesians was probably a circular letter written to the churches near Ephesus.

d. Philippians was written to the church in Philippi.

4. Date: AD 60-61

B. Exegetical Highlights in the Prison Epistles

1. Exegetical Highlights in Philemon

a. Onesimus, a runaway slave, is sent back to Philemon. (10-12)

b. Paul asks Philemon to receive him as a brother in Christ. (17)

2. Exegetical Highlights in Colossians

a. The Deity of Christ (1:15-20)

b. The Colossian Heresy

c. The Importance of Godly Behavior (3:1-17)

d. The Household Code (3:18-4:1)
3. Exegetical Highlights in Ephesians

a. Predestination and Election (1:3-14)

b. Salvation by Grace, Not Works (2:1-10)

c. The Mystery of Unity in Christ (2:11-22)

d. Spiritual Gifts and the Unity of the Church (4:1-16)

e. Right Relationships for Authority (5:22-6:9)

f. Serving one Another (5:22-6:9)

g. Spiritual Warfare (6:10-20)

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. Will believers suffer in this life? What are reasons given for why God allows suffering in 1 Cor. 1:3-4, 9, 11? Did God answer Paul's prayer in 1 Cor. 12:7-10 to remove his suffering? Why not? How do these verse help us deal with a health/wealth/prosperity gospel that says believers should never suffer? How can these verses help us when we suffer?

2. What does Romans 1:16-17 reveal about the power of the gospel? According to Paul who stands condemned before God? Why do you think God chose faith in Christ, instead of good works, as the criterion for salvation? What is sanctification and how does it work in the life of a believer?

3. What three specific relationships are mentioned by Paul in Ephesians 5:22-6:9? What are some implications for husbands and wives? What are some implications for parents and children? What are some implications for employer/employee relationships?
I. The Prison Epistles (part 2)

A. Exegetical Highlights from Philippians

1. A Personal Letter (1:3-11)

2. Christ's Example of Humility (2:1-11)

3. The Impossibility of Denying the Lordship of Christ (2:10)

4. A Brief Biography of Paul (1:12-28)

5. God's Sovereignty and Man's Responsibility (2:12-13)

6. Promises about Prayer & the Peace of God (4:4-7)

8. The Strengthening Grace of God (4:13)

B. Key Theological Themes from the Prison Epistles

1. Key Theological Themes from Philemon
   a. Christian freedom means equality before God (16)
   b. Love for other Believers (5)
2. Key Theological Themes from Colossians
   a. Christ is preeminent over all. (1:15-20)

   b. Christ’s work on the cross is complete. (1:21-23)

   c. We must understand who Christ is. (2:6-15)

3. Key Theological Themes from Ephesians
   a. Christ’s work on the cross informs our understanding of the church. (2:1-22)

   b. We have spiritual responsibilities to live out godly lives. (4:17-32)

   c. We must recognize that all Christian life is spiritual warfare. (6:10-20)

4. Key Theological Themes from Philippians
   a. We should rejoice in all circumstances. (4:4)

   b. Christian leadership must be appropriately exercised. (1:15-18)
III. The Pastoral Epistles

A. The Background to the Pastoral Epistles

1. The Books: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus

2. The Author: Paul

3. Date: AD 62-68

4. Recipients: Timothy and Titus

B. Exegetical Highlights from the Pastoral Epistles

1. Criteria for Church Leaders
   a. Elder, Overseer, and Pastor (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-16)

   b. "the husband of one wife" (3:2)

   c. Deacon vs. Elder
      i. The Teaching Role of Elders

      ii. Women and Leadership Roles
C. Key Theological Themes in the Pastoral Epistles

1. The Importance of Sound Doctrine (1 Tim. 6:3-10; 2 Tim. 2:15-19; Tit. 2:1-15)

2. The Importance of a Well Organized Church (1 Tim. 5:1-25)

D. Key Applications from the Pastoral Epistles

1. We need to have a biblical understanding of how churches should run and function.

2. We should follow biblical patterns for leadership regardless of our respective traditions.

IV. Hebrews

A. The Background to Hebrews

1. Author: Unknown
   a. Possibly Paul, Silas, Barnabas, Luke, or Apollos
   b. Certainly someone associated with an apostle

2. Recipients: Unknown
   a. Possibly written from Rome to Jerusalem
   b. Possibly written to the church in Rome
B. An Outline of Hebrews

1. The Supremacy of Christ (1:1-14)
   a. Over angels (2:5-18)
   b. Over Moses (3:1-6)
   c. Over Old Priesthood (4:14-7:28)
   d. Over the Old Covenant (8:1-13)
   e. Over the Old Testament Heroes (11:1-12:3)

   a. A Calvinist Interpretation
   b. An Arminian Interpretation


4. The Supremacy of the New Covenant (8:1-13)

5. The Nature of Faith (10:19-12:3)

Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. Hebrews 11:1
C. Key Theological Themes in Hebrews

1. Christ alone is sufficient for salvation. (1:1-4)

2. Do not fall away. (5:11-6:12)

D. Key Applications from Hebrews

1. Salvation is found only in Christ.

2. Salvation is demonstrated by a changed life that perseveres to the end.

3. We should not presume ours or another's spiritual state.

V. James

A. The Background of James

1. Author: James, the half-brother of Jesus

2. Recipients: Jewish Christians in the Diaspora

3. Date: AD 40

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. Hebrews 11:1
B. The Three Key Topics of James

1. Trials and Temptations
   a. Internal vs. External Temptations (1:2-18)
   b. The Purpose of Trials (1:3-4)
   c. The Seductive Power of Sin (1:13-15)

2. Wisdom and Speech
   a. Right Godly Behavior and the Use of the Tongue (1:19-27)
   b. The Gift of Wisdom (1:5-8; 3:13-18)
   c. Being Good Stewards of our Speech (3:1-12)
   d. The High Standard for Teachers

3. The Right Use of Riches
   a. God's Special Favor for the Poor (2:1-13)
   b. Caring for the Poor, But Not Discriminating against the Rich (5:1-6)
C. A Subordinate Topic in James: Faith vs. Works

1. Justification by Faith Alone in Paul (Gal. 2:15-16)

2. Faith and Works in James (2:14-26)

3. Different Definitions of Faith
   a. James: Faith as mere intellectual assent. (James 2:19)
   b. Paul: Faith as full-orbed trust in Jesus. (Eph 2:10; Gal 5:6)

4. Different Views of Works
   b. Paul: Works done to attain salvation.

5. Different Problems Being Addressed
   b. Paul: Christian faith and Jewish works.

What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him?

James 2:14
D. Key Applications from James

1. Those who claim to be believers should have a changed lifestyle.

2. The changed lives of Christians should be especially evident in the areas of speech and money.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. How are God’s sovereignty and your responsibility spoken of in Philippians 2:12-13? What does Paul mean when he says to work out your salvation with “fear” and “trembling?” What two things does Paul say God is doing in you?

2. What are the criteria for an elder and a deacon in 1 Tim. 3:1-13 and Titus 1:5-16? Why is it important for a leader to meet these criteria? What does your church think about whether both men and women can fill these roles? Why does your church think that is the best way of understanding these criteria?

3. How would you identify a false teacher of the gospel? What are some marks of false teaching given by Paul in 1 Timothy 1:2-11, 6:3-10, 2 Timothy 4:1-5, and Titus 1:10-16?

4. How is the supremacy of Jesus spoken of in the book of Hebrews? What was the role of the High Priest in the Old Testament? What is the significance of Jesus functioning as our High Priest today? Take some time this week to meditate on Hebrews 2:17-18 and 4:14-16.

5. What is the role of works in James 2:14-26? How would you respond to someone who claimed that there is a contradiction between James and Paul in regards to the role of works in salvation? If good works are a fruit of salvation, what is the warning that James is giving? What response should this prompt from us?
I. First Peter

A. The Background of 1 Peter

1. Author: Peter
2. Recipients: Christians in the Diaspora
3. Date: Early 60s

B. Outline of 1 Peter

1. The True Identity of Christians (1:1-2)

2. An Eternal Perspective on Suffering (1:3-12)

3. Rallying around One Another (1:13-2:10)


5. The "Spirits in Prison" (3:18-4:6)

6. Baptism as the Outward Sign of an Inward Commitment (3:21)

7. Victory in Suffering (4:12-19)

8. Servant Leadership (5:1-11)
C. Key Theological Themes from 1 Peter

1. Christians are called to endure persecution patiently.

2. As God’s people, a believer’s life is to be marked by increased holiness.

D. Key Applications from 1 Peter

1. Prayer may be more effective than rebellion in overcoming problems.

2. We must participate in change.

II. Second Peter and Jude

A. The Background of 2 Peter and Jude

1. Authors:
   a. 2 Peter: Peter
   b. Jude: Jude, the half-brother of Jesus

2. Recipients: Unknown

3. Dates
   a. 2 Peter: early 60s
   b. Jude: some time before 2 Peter

“As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct.”  1 Peter 1:15-15
B. The Key Themes of 2 Peter and Jude

1. To Conserve Christian Teaching in the Midst of Heresy
   a. The Inspiration of Scripture (2 Peter 1:20-21)
   b. The Immorality of the False Teachers (2 Peter 2:1-22; Jude 3-16)
   c. The Denial of Christ's Return (2 Peter 3:1-13)

2. Holding Fast to the Central Truths of the Faith (2 Peter 1:3-15)

3. Explaining Suffering in the World (Jude 17-23)

III. The Letters of John

A. The Background of 1, 2, and 3 John

1. Author: John, the Apostle

2. Recipients
   a. 1 John: Christians around Ephesus
   b. 2 John: A House Church
   c. 3 John: An Unknown Christian Named Gaius

3. Date: Late 80s or early 90s
4. Purpose
   a. To Combat Gnostic Tendencies
   b. To Combat Docetic Tendencies
   c. To Balance Jesus's Humanity and Deity

B. Three Key Themes in the Letters of John
   1. Believing in the Incarnation (1 Jn. 2 Jn. 7-11)
   2. Obeying Christ's Commandments (1 Jn. 2:1-6; 5:18)
   3. Loving One Another (1 Jn. 2:7-14; 4:7-21; 2 Jn. 4-6)

IV. Revelation

A. The Background of Revelation
   1. Author: John, the Apostle
   2. Recipients: Seven Churches in Asia Minor
   3. Date: AD 90s
   4. Genre: Apocalyptic and Prophecy
B. Interpretive Grids for Revelation

1. Various Views on the Millennium

2. One Perspective on the Issue

C. An Outline of Revelation

1. Opening (1:1-20)

2. Letters to the Churches (2:1-3:22)

3. A Heavenly Scene of Praise (4:1-5:14)

   a. The Seven Seals
   b. The Seven Trumpets
   c. The Seven Bowls

   a. Christ will End Opposition
   b. Thousand Year Reign
   c. Release of Satan
   d. Final Judgment
   e. New Heaven and New Earth
D. Key Theological Themes of Revelation

1. God's people will have to endure suffering. (2:8-11)

2. God's people will be protected from his wrath. (7:1-17)

3. God always seeks to bring people to repentance. (9:20-21)

4. The End Times will be marked by worldwide spread of the Gospel and increasing evil.

5. Christ will return and put an end to all opposition. (19:1-21)

6. Hell is a reality outside the new heaven and the new earth. (20:11-15)

7. Jesus wins! (21-22)

E. Key Applications from Revelation

1. Search your soul and ask if you are one of Jesus's people. Have you trusted him as Lord and Savior?

2. Hell is a conscious reality that people who reject Christ are destined for.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

1. What role should the believer play in society according to 1 Peter 2:11-3:7? Why do you think that living a godly life in the public arena was so important to Peter? Have you given anyone a reason to doubt Christ by how you have lived your life in public or at home? What example did Christ leave for us to follow?

2. Read 1 John 3:16-18. How are we to love others? What are some tangible ways you might love someone this week?

3. Of the seven churches mentioned in Revelation 2-3, which one might most accurately describe your church? Why?