



NEW TESTAMENT

Book By Book

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400 SILENT YEARS

MATTHEW: Jesus the King

MARK: Jesus the Servant

LUKE: Jesus the Son of Man

JOHN: Jesus the Son of God

MT., MK., LK., JN. : Compared
and Contrasted

ACTS: Early Church

ROMANS: Salvation

I CORINTHIANS: Worldly
Wisdom

II CORINTHIANS: A Godly
Ministry

GALATIANS: Christian Liberty

EPHESIANS: In Christ

PHILIPPIANS: Joy

COLOSSIANS: Christ is
Supreme

I THESSALONIANS: Jesus is
Coming Again

II THESSALONIANS: Jesus is
Coming Soon

I TIMOTHY: Church Order

II TIMOTHY: Faithful Service

TITUS: Daily Walk

PHILEMON: Christian Courtesy

HEBREWS: Christ is Superior

JAMES: True Faith

I PETER: Suffering

II PETER: Keep the Faith

I JOHN: Fellowship

II JOHN: Walk in Truth

III JOHN: Hospitality

JUDE: Apostasy

REVELATION: Prophecy

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400 SILENT YEARS

Alfred Hitchcock (1899-1980), the movie director, told a parable in Guideposts (1959) about the unknown. There once was a king who was granted two wishes. His first was to see the future. But when he saw all

that lay ahead -- the beauty and the pain -- he immediately asked for his second wish; that the future be hidden. "I thank Heaven," the master of suspense proclaimed, "that tomorrow does not belong to any man. It belongs to God."

HISTORY = HIS STORY In fact, ALL history belongs to God: past, present and future. Every single event is under His control, even to a bird coming to land on the ground (Matthew 10:29). The rising and falling of the most powerful nations of the world are also under God's control (Daniel 2:32-47; Acts 4:25). This is very comforting in a world that seems out of control.

One of the best examples of this is the coming of Jesus to earth. God says that this was in the very time He chose: *Gal 4:4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law.* God didn't sit around waiting for the right time, He actively controlled history so that all the conditions necessary were present when He came to earth. Just what made this particular time so special?

There were three main groups of people God used to prepare the world for Jesus' first coming. These affected all areas of life at that time. Everything was perfectly prepared in the area of politics (Rome), philosophy (Greece) and the people (Israel).

GREECE (PHILOSOPHY) Greece took over control of Palestine from Persia in 334 BC when Alexander was conquering the whole area. When he died in 323 the Ptolemies ruled there until the Seleucids took over in 219 BC. During this time the area was totally saturated with Greek culture, thought and philosophy (a kind of humanism not much different from New Age thought today). Many Jews bought into this, lead by a group of very liberal-thinking Jews called the Sadducees. God used this Greek thought to prepare people for the coming Messiah and the spread of the early church because Greek thought was looking for answers but, despite all the attempts to find them, didn't really produce anything to fill people's hearts. There were Epicureans, Stoics, Academics, Orphism, Pythagoreans, Cynics, Skeptics and many more. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle were influencing the people. God was just an intellectual abstraction. There were no strong gods or goddesses demanding the loyalty and attention of the common people. Questions were asked but not answered.

Of great impact on the world, and the Bible, was the spread of Greek as the universal language. Now people could speak to each other in a common language -- very essential to the quick spread of the early church. Not only was Greek a universal language, but it was a very



**ALEXANDER
THE GREAT**

precise language. It was just what was needed to convey all the theological nuances and flavors of the New Testament. God obviously prepared Greek for His Word.

ISRAEL (PEOPLE) While the Greeks greatly influenced the land of Palestine, they never conquered the hearts of the people. Antiochus Epiphanes desecrated the temple in the most awful ways and killed any Jews who practiced their religion in any way. Even quoting a Bible verse was punishable by death. The Maccabean revolt, led by the Hasmonean family, won back Jewish independence and culminated with the rededication of the temple on December 25, 164 BC. Unfortunately the Hasmonean rulership soon became almost as oppressive as the Seleucids had been before them. A movement of conservative Jews who wanted to have the nation turn back to God and His Word arose. Called the Pharisees, they led the people in civil war which just made everything worse. This so weakened the nation that the Romans, having defeated the Greeks, were easily able to annex Palestine in 63 BC.

During all this, though, Jews were moving into virtually every nation of the world. This dispersion was very foundational to the spread of the early church. The Jews brought their message of one God revealed in the Bible Who wanted His people to live a holy life to every nation, setting the groundwork for the spread of the early church. Their synagogues became perfect places to first preach the Good News of Jesus the Messiah. The church became patterned after the synagogue.

Also during this time period the Septuagint (LXX) was translated. For the first time the Jews, and also anyone who could read Greek, could read the Bible for themselves. This opened the way for the spread of the Gospel, too. God was working to bring all this about.

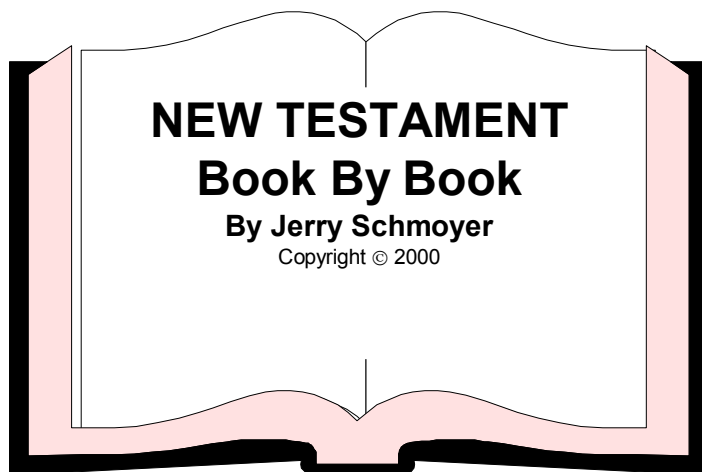
ROME (POLITICS) While the Greeks influenced the minds of men, Rome controlled their bodies. Rome's take-over of that whole part of the world also was important in setting the groundwork for what was to come. For the first time there was world peace, and it lasted for several hundred years. That meant it was safe to travel anywhere. Rome built marvelous roads



for travel. Travel by ship was safe, too. Pirates and robbers were kept under control. Because of peace as well as advances in technology, it was no longer for everyone to spend the vast majority of their time growing their own food. Many people moved into cities and pursued other crafts. This made it possible for Paul and the other early missionaries to go into the cities where people were already gathered and preach. This was MUCH more efficient than going from farm to farm!

Then, too, Rome allowed religious freedom. They did not dictate who or what was to be worshipped. People could decide for themselves. The old gods and idols their ancestors worshipped no longer held much interest and often didn't apply to their new lives in the cities. City life brought its share of new problems, too. Sin was rampant. Alcoholism, immorality, homosexuality, prostitution, crime, murder, extortion and political corruption were rampant. Something was needed to give meaning, peace and satisfaction in life. The stage was set for the message of Jesus

Gal 4:4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law. God IS in control of history, of ALL history. He has everything set up just the way He wanted it to be for Jesus' first coming. He's doing the same right now, getting ready for Jesus' return. It's His world. He is sovereign Lord over all that happens. Praise His name!



MATTHEW: JESUS the KING

TITLE: Named after the author
AUTHOR: Matthew, tax collector, disciple
DATE of WRITING: About 60 AD
PLACE of WRITING: Antioch of Syria
TIME COVERED: Life of Jesus
RECIPIENTS: Jews everywhere

KEY VERSE: *A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham: 1:1*

KEY WORD: "Fulfill" (17 times); "kingdom of heaven" (32 times)

PURPOSE: Connect the Old and New Testaments

THEME: Jesus is the King of Israel, the promised Jewish Messiah.

Suppose you had 10 pennies in your hand shook them up, then opened your hand. What are the chances that they would all be heads? How many tries do you think it would take? On an average it would take you a little over a thousand tries! Now think of these coins as prophecies of Jesus. Pennies only have two sides – a 50-50 chance. Prophecies have many more ways of not being fulfilled than fulfilled. What if the very first time all 10 came up heads! Suppose you did it again and they were all heads, and again and again – 30 times in all and every time every penny was heads. You would think something special was going on, wouldn't you? That's just how it is with prophecies of the Messiah. He fulfilled every one of the over 300 prophecies about the Messiah. This is tremendous proof that Jesus is the Messiah.

MATTHEW WROTE TO SHOW JESUS FULFILLED PROPHECY to show that Jesus was the Messiah. "That it might be fulfilled" occurs about 20 times in his gospel. Matthew was the best-educated of all the Jews and an excellent writer. He wrote to fellow Jews, who knew the Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah, to show that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies. He includes 50 direct quotes from the Old Testament and 75 allusions to the Old Testament – double what any other Gospel has.

In Malachi the Messiah is anticipated. The Old Testament closes looking for Him. *"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."* (Malachi 4:5) In Matthew we see the Messiah has arrived, fulfilling these prophecies.

MESSIAH The term 'Messiah' is a Hebrew word that means 'Anointed One.' The word 'Christ' is the Greek equivalent of it. Prophets, priests and kings were all anointed. The Messiah was all in one. In Matthew, and to the Jews as a whole, the main emphasis was on Messiah as King. That's what Matthew shows his readers – Jesus is the promised Messiah-King.

I. THE KING IS REVEALED (1:1 - 9:30) The first question a Jew would ask of someone claiming to be the Messiah would be, "Are you a direct descendant of David?" Here is where Matthew starts. He gives Jesus legal status through His earthly father Joseph (1:1-7). One problem arises, and that is that there is a curse on all the physical descendants of Jehoiachin, so how could a king come from that line? The solution is that Jesus wasn't a physical descendent of his but a legal one only. Matthew explains how this could be by explaining about the virgin birth (1:18 - 2:23). About a dozen times Matthew quotes the Old Testament to show how each step fulfilled a prophecy about the Messiah.

He then tells how ambassadors came to crown the king (3:1-17), and how He proved His sinlessness when Satan tempted Him (4:1-11). The King then sets forth His moral laws for His kingdom (5:1 - 7:25). Thus Matthew shows Jesus is the Messiah by His birth and by what He said. Next He will show His qualifications by what He did.

Miracle after miracle is listed, showing Jesus' words (8:1 - 9:30). He is not only man (genealogy and birth), He is also God (miracles)

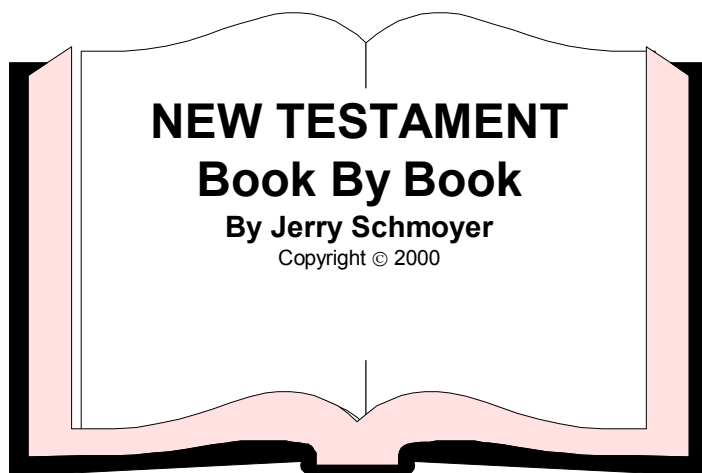
II. THE KING IS RESISTED (10:1 - 16:12) While some accepted the message of the King, many rejected it (10:1 - 12:50). Jesus' parables of the coming Kingdom show the pattern of rejection before eventual acceptance (13:1-52). Meanwhile, the Messiah was rejected by Herod, His own family, and the religious rulers (13:53-16:12).

III. THE KING IS REJECTED (19:13 - 27:66) Because the masses rejected Him, Jesus turned his ministry to training those who believed, preparing them for when He would be gone (16:13 - 20:28). He taught them about His coming rejection and death and what would happen after.

On 'Palm Sunday' Jesus clearly showed the whole nation, by actions and words, that He was the Messiah King (21:1-11). Some accepted, but most rejected. He went on to cleanse His throne room, the temple (21:12-22) and defend His kingship against those who rejected Him (21:23 - 23:39). In the Olivet Discourse (24:1 - 25:46) Jesus foretold when His kingdom would come. In the meantime, the King was turned down and crucified (26:1 - 27:66).

IV. THE KING IS RAISED (27:66 - 28:20) The power of the King over death and sin is seen in His resurrection from the dead.

Thus Matthew shows Jesus as the Messiah King, even though the religious rulers and the nation as a whole rejected Him. What about you – is He your King?



MARK: JESUS the SERVANT

TITLE: Named after the author
AUTHOR: Mark, young friend of Paul
DATE of WRITING: About 50 AD
PLACE of WRITING: Rome
TIME COVERED: Ministry of Jesus
RECIPIENTS: Gentiles

KEY VERSE: *For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.* (Mark 10:45)

KEY WORD: "Straightway" (40 times in KJV; "right away" "at once" in NIV); "Multitude" (17 x)

PURPOSE: Short account of Peter's preaching (gospel tract) to distribute

THEME: Show Christ as the perfect and absolutely faithful servant

In many churches today someone who is a 'deacon' is looked up to as being in a position many aspire to for they are often seen as occupying a level a little above others. In the New Testament, though, a 'deacon' was one who waited on tables – a servant/slave. Church leaders are to be servants of others, following the example of Jesus, the ultimate Servant. *"I did not come to be served, but to serve"* (Mark 10:45).

MARK WROTE TO SHOW JESUS WAS A SERVANT Mark, in his short gospel, paints a picture of Jesus the servant/slave. While Matthew wrote to Jews to show Jesus as the Messiah/King, Mark wrote to Gentiles to show Jesus as a servant. Mark wasn't with Jesus, although it seems the Last Supper was held in the upper room in his house. Mark wrote down what Peter taught and preached, so really the Gospel of Mark is Peter's words.

"Straightway" and "immediately" are used over 40 times in Mark. The focus is on Jesus' actions and miracles. There aren't many quotes of his teaching or recounting of parables. After all, a servant is known by his actions, not how good a servant he claims to be!

A servant is someone who will deliberately, voluntarily, sacrificially and joyfully give up their own goals in order to help someone else meet their goals. Mark shows Jesus doing just this. In life He served God by obeying Him in all He wanted, and in death He served Him by giving up His own life to redeem us.

I. SEPARATION OF THE SERVANT (1:1-13) Mark starts with John the Baptizer (1:1-8). There is no mention of Jesus' birth, parents, etc. After all, the background of a slave isn't important. Also, Mark's Gentile readers weren't as interested in that sort of thing as Matthew's Jewish readers. Jesus' baptism shows Jesus committing Himself to serve God (1:9-11) and His resisting Satan's temptations (1:12-13) show Him as being 100% obedient to His own Master only. When John was arrested the focus of attention switched to Jesus.

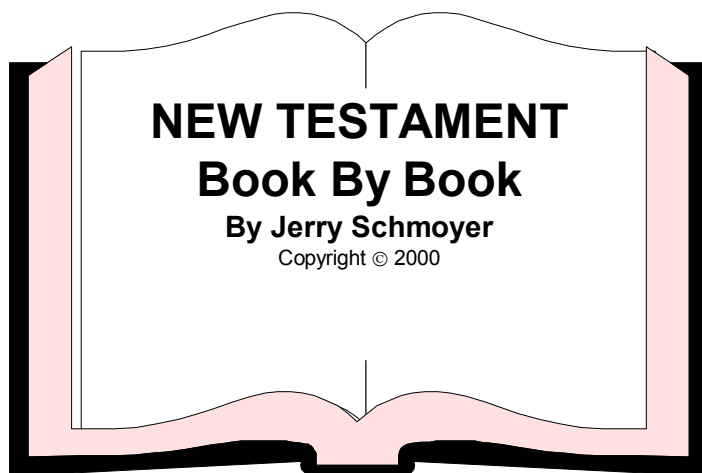
II. SERVICE OF THE SERVANT (1:14 - 10:52) Usually a servant/slave doesn't have servants/slaves, but Jesus did (1:14-20). He called disciples to follow Him to become servants like Him. Mark then lists a series of miracles to show that, while being a servant, Jesus was also God and could therefore call servants (1:21 - 3:12). The majority rejected this, but some believed. Those that did were with Him 24 hours a day, 7 days a week to learn how to be servants from Him (3:13-35). Jesus taught them using stories (parables), showing them the importance of serving God (4:1-34).

Next Mark shows how this Servant was sovereign over nature, demons, sickness, death, rejection and physical ailments (4:35-9:1). There are a few words of His quoted at this point, His teachings about His glory, death, hell, divorce, children and eternal life (9:2 - 10:52).

III. SACRIFICE OF THE SERVANT (11:1 - 15:47) The true test of a servant is His submission. Jesus doesn't ask His followers to do anything He wasn't willing to do – and He did the worst of all. After showing Himself to be King (11:1-11) and being rejected, He went on to teach His followers how to live like a servant after He was gone (11:12 - 13:37). A few did recognize Who He really was, and commit themselves to a lifetime of service to Him (14:1-9). However one of His closest followers betrayed Him for 30 pieces of silver – the price of a slave (14:10-11). Still, Jesus was submissive to His Master's will. He instituted the Last Supper, showing that it was His free will choice to go through with the crucifixion (14:2-52). He also submitted to His arrest and unfair trials, which culminated in His crucifixion (14:53 - 15:47).

IV. SOVEREIGNTY OF THE SERVANT (16:1-20) That seemed to be the end of the suffering Servant – but it wasn't so! The suffering was done, but not His service. He came back to life (16:1-8). Mark has very little to say about the resurrection and time after, just enough to let his readers know that it happened. He is no longer a servant, His followers are to now take over His servant chores on earth.

Do you see Jesus as a servant? Do you see Him as YOUR servant, Who died for you? Since He did that for us, He has the right to ask us to lay down OUR lives for Him, to die for Him by living for Him each moment of each day. He continues to serve us by interceding for us, helping and protecting us, providing for our needs and keeping us safe from Satan's destruction. He needs us to serve Him by serving each other in this life. Since He is no longer here to do it, He wants it done through us. Remember, everyone serves someone. If it isn't God, it is self, sin or Satan. Honestly, which do YOU serve? Which do your actions say you serve? How good a servant are you? What can you do to improve your service now?



LUKE:

JESUS the MAN

TITLE: Named after the author
AUTHOR: Luke, a Gentile doctor
DATE of WRITING: About 60 AD
PLACE of WRITING: Rome
TIME COVERED: Life of Christ
RECIPIENTS: Theophilus, then everyone

KEY VERSE: *For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.* (Luke 19:10)

KEY WORD: "Son of Man" (26 times)

PURPOSE: To confirm Theophilus' faith by basing it on historical facts about Jesus (1:3-4).

Then to present Jesus as the Son of Man (humanity of Jesus is emphasized) Whom Israel rejected (which opened the door for Gentiles to enter).

THEME: Give an accurate record of Jesus as the perfect God-man.

Hundreds of names are used for Jesus in the Bible, but the one He chose for Himself was "Son of Man." It's used 27 times in Luke. If Jesus would have called Himself "Messiah" then people would have thought He was claiming to be a military leader who had come to lead a revolt against Rome, for that is what the people thought the Messiah would do.

LUKE WROTE TO SHOW ON JESUS THE MAN The title "Son of Man" comes from Daniel's vision of God the Son coming to reveal future events to him (Daniel 7:13; 8:17). Using it is an obvious claim to deity, but also a term of identification with man. "Son of," in Jewish idiom, doesn't mean inferior or lesser. Rather it means 'related to, part of, extension of.' Thus when Jesus used this, and Luke focused his gospel around it, the focus was not on the connection with God in Daniel but with Jesus' identification with man: "Son of Man." The Messiah was to be God and man. While John focuses on Jesus as God, Luke focuses on Him as a man.

Luke was certainly the person to write about the human side of Jesus. As a doctor he was very attuned to the physical aspect of people. As a scientist, Luke approaches his subject in a very scholarly, objective way. The miracles he includes are those of healing, and he is quite specific in his descriptions.

The fullest account of Jesus' birth, childhood and home life is in Luke's gospel. He shows Jesus' human side and feelings. Social contacts and human relationships are emphasized. His prayer life is emphasized. His interest in downtrodden and needy individuals is clearly shown as well. This is the longest book in the New Testament.

I. COMING OF THE SON OF MAN (1:1-4:13) Luke gives the most complete and detailed account of Jesus' human beginnings: birth and childhood (1:1 - 2:59). By being baptized He was identifying with humanity, calling man to repent from sin (3:1-22). While Matthew includes Jesus' royal/kingly genealogy, Luke records His human descent through Mary, all the way from Adam (3:23-38). His temptation by Satan showed He was subject to temptation as a man: hunger, pain, loneliness, pride, etc. He withstood the temptations as a man (4:1-13).

II. CAREER OF THE SON OF MAN (4:14 - 9:50) Jesus' first claims to being the Messiah were made in Nazareth, but the people there, who watched Him grow up, could only see Him as a man, not as God and man (4:14-30). To prove He was no ordinary man Jesus performed miracles to show His authority. He had power over demons, disease, disciples, defilement and deformity (4:31 - 6:11).

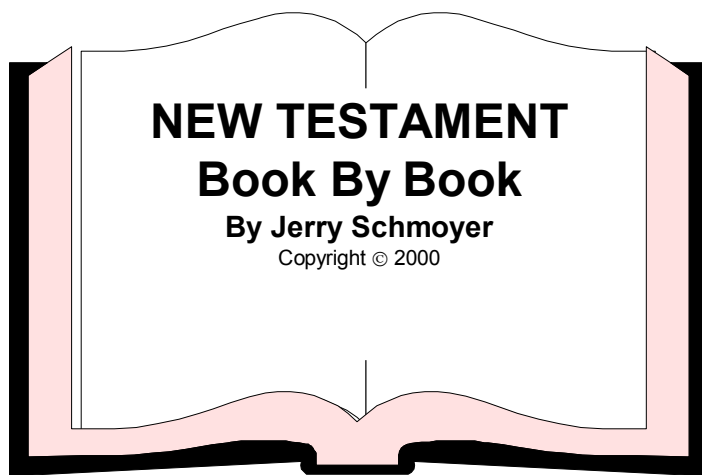
Jesus, by living His message, was attracting a strong group of followers, men and women who wanted to live their lives like Him. This is one reason He became a man: to show us how to live life on earth (6:12-49). As a man He cared about other people and showed His compassion by healing and feeding them (7:1 - 9:50). Then He was Transfigured to show He was more than a mere man.

III. CONFLICT OF THE SON OF MAN (9:51 - 19:27) While people were quick to take the healing and free food Jesus provided, they didn't want to follow His life style (9:51 - 11:54). To the ones who did, He taught them how to live as God wanted them to (12:1 - 19:27). He warned against hypocrisy, taught about love and salvation, even warned about His coming death.

IV. CRUCIFIXION OF THE SON OF MAN (19:28 - 23:56) His death is just what happened next. When He presented Himself as the God-man Messiah most rejected. Weeping loudly because His heart was breaking over what rejection would mean to Jerusalem, He showed He knows what we feel and go through (19:28-44). He showed other emotions, too – like anger when He cleaned out the temple (19:45-48). He showed need of human companionship when lonely at the Lord's Supper (22:7-38). In Gethsemane He emotional pain (22:39-46), as He did when mocked during His unfair trials (22:47-53). Peter's denial hurt, too (22:54-62). He experienced extreme physical pain when they beat and crucified Him (22:63 - 23:49). He died as a man and was buried (23:50-56).

V. CLIMAX OF THE SON OF MAN (24:1-53) But that wasn't the end of it. He came alive physically again, showing that will happen to all who follow Him (24:1-49). It was a new, resurrection body He had that replaced His earthly, human body.

How does it make you feel to think about Jesus as a man: humbling Himself to be one of us because He loved us, setting an example for us to follow, showing us God's perfect standard for us to follow, and paying for our sins on the cross? He knows what we go through when we are tempted, lonely, angry, in pain or stressed out. He understands. He's been there. God to Him and He'll understand.



JOHN:

JESUS the SON of GOD

TITLE: Named after the author

AUTHOR: John, beloved disciple of Jesus

DATE of WRITING: About 80 - 90 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Ephesus

TIME COVERED: Life of Jesus

RECIPIENTS: Believers

KEY VERSE: *"For God so loved the world*

that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life". (John 3:16)

KEY WORD: "Father" (121); "World" (78); "Believe" (98), "Love" (57); "Life" (52); "Son" (42)

PURPOSE: Add a written account of Jesus' life including information Matthew, Mark and Luke didn't include.

THEME: To show Jesus is God, Savior of the world.

Years after Matthew wrote to Jews to show Jesus as the Messiah, Mark to Gentiles to show Jesus as man and Luke wrote to show Jesus as a man, John wrote and added information that wasn't covered by the others. If he hadn't done this our knowledge about Jesus' earthly life would be much weaker, both in quantity and quality.

JOHN WROTE TO SHOW JESUS AS GOD John was the perfect one to write a Gospel, for he was one of the inner three, and perhaps the closest on to Jesus on earth, for he was called "the disciple whom Jesus loved." Knowing everyone would recognize John in that description means they must have been VERY close. Thus John could provide a unique perspective on Jesus' life. Matthew, Mark and Luke are called synoptic gospels because they contain roughly the same material. John, however, contains 92% new material. John's focus is on showing that Jesus is God. Six times He is called the "Son of Man."

I. DEITY OF THE SON OF GOD (1:1-18) John starts with the divine genealogy of Jesus, showing He was always God and was with God before the world was created. In fact, John says He created the world, then became man to reach us with God's message and die for our sin. Luke shows Jesus' humanity ("Son of Man") and John shows His deity ("Son of God"). These opening verses give a summary of the whole book. He then expands and fills in details showing that Jesus was indeed God.

II. DEBATE WITH THE SON OF GOD (1:19 - 12:50) Jesus was shown to be God by John the Baptizer (1:19-51) and His own miracles, such as turning water to wine (2:1-11) and cleansing the temple (2:12-25). He revealed Himself to Nicodemus (3:1-21), a Samaritan Woman (4:1-42), and a Nobleman in Capernaum (4:43-45).

Not everyone believed His claims to deity, though. Despite miracles the religious rulers disbelieved (5:1-47). When the masses found He wasn't there to wait on their needs they, too, turned (6:1-71). John then shows a series of debates between Jesus and the religious rulers

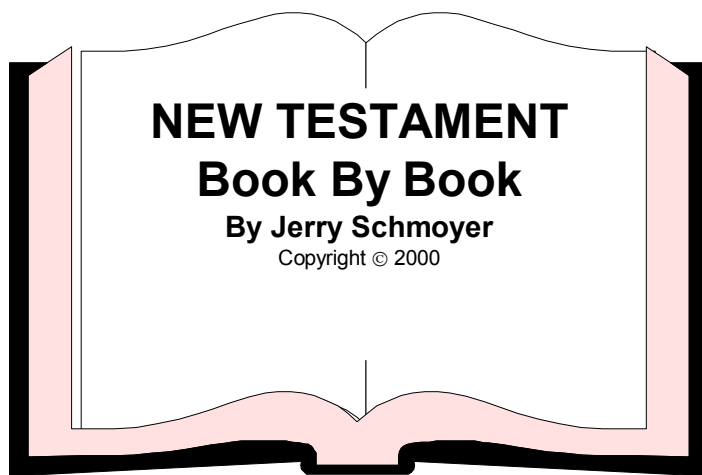
(7:1 - 12:11), all showing in various ways that Jesus was God. This section culminates in Jesus' triumphal entry (12:12-50) with His claim to be the God-man Messiah.

III. DECREES OF THE SON OF GOD (13:1 - 17:26) John uses about half of his gospel to detail information about Jesus' death and resurrection. He starts with a detailed account of Jesus' teachings during His final meal on earth (13:1 - 16:33). He foretold the future and just what would happen, then He prayed for His followers (17:1-20) as He still prays for us.

IV. DENIAL OF THE SON OF GOD (18:1 - 19:42) Although He had power to resist, Jesus allowed the authorities to arrest Him (18:1-11) and put Him through a series of degrading trials (18:12 - 19:16), culminating with His death on the cross (19:17-42). Even that showed His deity in that He paid for our sins and conquered sin and death.

V. DESTINY OF THE SON OF GOD (20:1 - 21:25) The ultimate proof that Jesus is God, of course, is His resurrection (20:1 - 21:25). That shows completely and finally who He is.

It's been said that Jesus is either Lord, Lunatic or Liar. Having claimed so often to be God there is no way He could be just a good teacher and fine example. If someone over and over claims to be God, always have existed and be able to forgive sin, He is either crazy (lunatic), lying (liar) or Who He claims to be (Lord). What is your choice?



MT, MK, LK, JN: Compared & Contrasted

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. Their names are very familiar to us. They fit together in our minds, in that precise order. We are so familiar with them that we take them for granted. But why wasn't it Philip, Peter and Paul? Or just Andrew? Why four

gospels? Why these four? Why a New Testament at all? It's important to know the answer to these questions to be able to correctly interpret the Gospels. The answers are quite interesting.

WHY A NEW TESTAMENT? From God's viewpoint the New Testament was to complete the incomplete revelation of the Old (Heb 1:1-2; Jer 31:31-34; Mal 3:1), to show the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies (Lk 4:21; Jn 13:18; 17:12; Acts 1:16), to fully present the way of salvation (Jn 20:31) and to give all needed information for God's people to live for Him (Jn 4:25; 17:8; 16:12-13; Mt 16:18; Eph 5:23-32). From man's viewpoint it was written to have a clear and accurate record of Jesus' life on earth. The eye-witnesses were dying off and heresies were growing and spreading false teachings. Plus, Christianity was spreading and expanding, and the best way to carry the truth to faraway places was in written form.



WHY THE GOSPELS FIRST? The Old Testament shows the promises and prophecies of a coming Redeemer and why He is needed. The Gospels show that Jesus fulfilled those prophecies and met man's need. Acts shows the results of the Messiah's coming. The Epistles add further teaching about the Messiah's work and its results as well as how that applies to our daily lives.

The book of Revelation shows the final culmination of all things, when all prophecies are totally and completely fulfilled with God Himself on David's throne.

WHY MORE THAN ONE GOSPEL? Various men viewed Jesus from different perspectives. They wrote to vastly differing audiences. Several writers help to confirm what the others say, and shed light on each other's accounts.

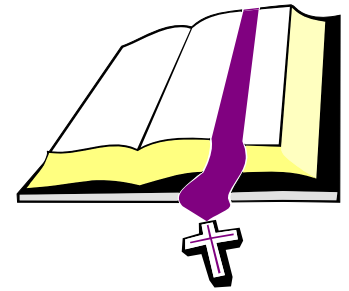
WHY FOUR GOSPELS? The Law required the testimony of 2 witnesses (Dt 19:15; Mt 18:16). For something this important twice the number of witnesses is given. Also, the number four in the Bible and to the Jews stands for earthly completeness: four season's directions on a compass, walls in a building, phases of the moon, etc. Together Matthew, Mark, Luke and John show the completeness of Jesus' life on earth.

WHY THESE FOUR GOSPELS? Actually several other gospels were written to help spread the message of Jesus, but aren't included in the New Testament. The four that are included were the ones God Himself chose. He inspired them and kept them perfect for us.

WHICH GOSPEL WAS WRITTEN FIRST? Most scholars agree that Mark wrote first, recording Peter's message in tract form. About 10 years later, in the 60's, Matthew and Luke wrote. They had Mark's gospel and elaborated on much of what he wrote. Then, 20 years later, John supplemented what they wrote by adding much new material focusing on the deity of Jesus.

WHO DO MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE AND JOHN COMPARE? Matthew, Mark and Luke are called 'synoptic' gospels because so much in them is 'synonymous' (similar) material. They all cover virtually the same events. John, however, includes almost all (92%) new material which they didn't cover. The synoptic focus on Jesus' outer life, giving facts about Him as a person. John goes deeper inside and focuses on showing Jesus as God. Matthew's focus in Jesus as the prophesied, mighty King. Mark shows Him as the obedient, lowly Servant. Luke pictures Him as the perfect, ideal Man. Matthew wrote to convince the Jews that Jesus is the Messiah (1:1; 23:37-39), Mark to spread the gospel among Gentiles (10:45), Luke to give an accurate history of His earthly life (10:10) and John to help believers to grow by trusting in Jesus' power as God (3:16).

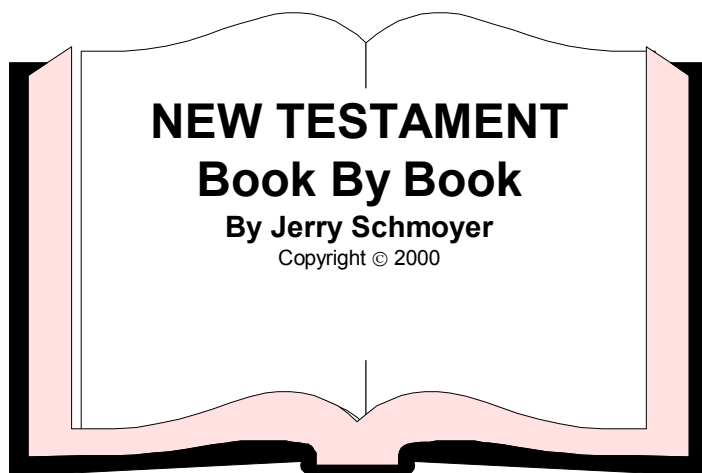
WHY DOES MATTHEW COME FIRST? Since Mark was written first, why is Matthew put first? Thematically Matthew links the Old Testament with the New Testament by showing that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled the prophecies and is, indeed, the promised Messiah. Mark moves away from Judaism, but not completely. Luke presents Christ as the Savior of the Gentiles. John then concludes with a strong, clear declaration that Jesus is in essence God, the Savior of all mankind.



SPECIFICALLY HOW DOES THIS APPLY? The Triumphal Entry is one of the very few events in the life of Jesus that is included in all four Gospels. It was so important and so pivotal that each had to include it. We can use it as an example of their various perspectives and purposes. This shows why understanding the differences in the gospels is so important.

Matthew gives it 15 verses (21:1-11, 14-17), Mark 11 verses (11:1-11), Luke 16 verses (19:29-44) and John 8 verses (12:12-19). Mark wrote first, a short account showing Jesus as a humble servant who makes Himself available but doesn't shove Himself on Israel. Matthew, who adds more details to Mark's story, structures his account around three prophecies which Christ then fulfilled (Zech 9:9; Ps 118:26; 8:2), quoting them and showing his Jewish readers how this further proves Jesus is the Messiah. Luke also builds on Mark's account. Doctor Luke focuses on Jesus as a man, a human being like us, but a man who was also God. He records that Jesus wept (41) as a man but also prophesied the future (43) as God. Only Luke records the religious rulers challenging Jesus the man to stop His disciples (39) as well as Jesus' response that if they are silent the stones will cry out (40) because they are proclaiming Him Messiah - God and man in one. John, writing last, doesn't repeat the details that the others have already recorded but, in accordance with his theme, shows Jesus is God. He refers to His resurrection (16) and miraculous signs He had been doing (18).

Thus it is important to understand the history of the writing of the four gospels to accurately interpret them. It is true that ALL Scripture is inspired and important for us (II Tim 3:16). God's Word is so special, so important, so precise, so wonderful and so life-giving that we must immerse ourselves in it all we can. Spend some time in the Bible today.



ACTS: EARLY CHURCH

TITLE: After the ACTions of the Holy Spirit

AUTHOR: Luke

DATE of WRITING: About 63 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Various places

TIME COVERED: AD 30 - 60

RECIPIENTS: Theophilus, then everyone

KEY VERSE: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."* (Acts 1:8)

KEY WORD: "Holy Spirit" (54 times); "name" (33 times), "witness" (12 times)

PURPOSE: The Gospels contain the facts of Jesus' earthly life. Acts continues the story about the start of the early church and sets the background for understanding the epistles.

THEME: To continue the record of the works ('acts') of the risen Lord.

The Old Testament shows our need of a Redeemer and God's promise to send One. The Gospels show how that was fulfilled in Jesus. The book of Acts picks up the story after Jesus' ascension back to heaven (1:1-26). It shows how a handful of believers, filled with the Holy Spirit, started the church and spread God's message to the world. The epistles are letters written to churches and individuals during the time of Acts. Revelation shows the final fulfillment of all the ages.

LUKE THE WRITER Luke wrote both Luke and Acts. While Paul wrote the most books in the New Testament, 13, and John was next with 5, Luke wrote the most pages. His book called Acts was a follow-up to his Gospel of Luke. It is a historical book, a transitional book. It is not a theology for us to apply in every detail, but it is an accurate historical record of the transition from Law to Grace, from Israel to Church, from Jew and Gentile to Bride of Christ. Any transition takes time and goes through various stages. This was true of the early church, too.

chapter	1-7	8-12	13-28						
area	JERUSALEM	JUDEA - SAMARIA	ENDS OF THE EARTH						
people	JEWS	SAMARITANS	GENTILES						
men	PETER	PHILIP (Peter/Paul)	PAUL						
church	ESTABLISHMENT	EXTENSION	EXPANSION						
time	2 YRS (33-35)	13 YRS (35-48)	14 YRS (48-62)						
		Missionary Jour Chapters Years	1MJ	2MJ	3MJ	Rome1	Trip	Rome	...
			13-14	16-18	19-20	21-28			
			1 1½	2 ½	4	5	5	1	...
Books		James	Mark Gal.	IThes IIThes	I Cor II Cor Rom	Eph Col Phile Phili Acts	ITim Titu Mt Lk I Pt II Pt	II Tim Heb Jud	Jn I Jn II Jn III Jn Rev

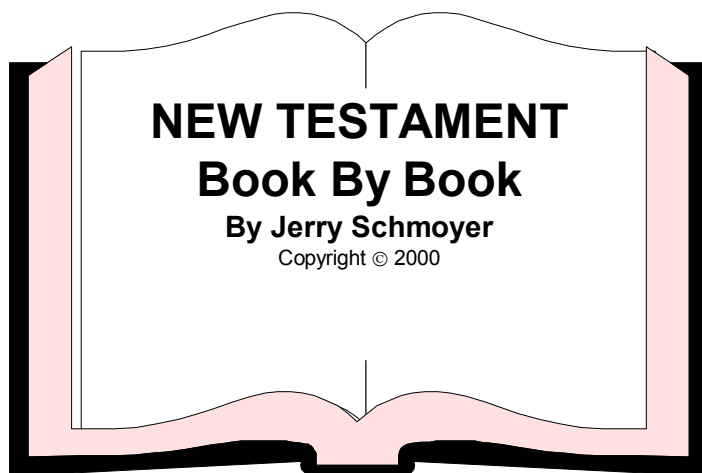
The book follows the outline laid down in 1:8: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

I. "JERUSALEM" (1-7) In the first section of Acts the focus is on Jerusalem. Peter leads the early church. The account is picked up with the ascension of Jesus to heaven (1). The start of the early church in Jerusalem is recorded – Pentecost (2). Events of the young church are then listed: a cripple cured (3), Peter and John arrested and released (4), Ananias and Saphira killed for deception (5), 7 deacons chosen to help with the work load (6) and the death of Stephen (7).

II. "JUDEA & SAMARIA" (8-12) God used this first wave of persecution against the Christians in Jerusalem to cause them to scatter with the gospel. They should have done this before but didn't, now they must. Philip's preaching in Samaria and to the Ethiopian eunuch, (8), Paul's conversion (9), and Peter's evangelism of the Gentile Cornelius and his household (10-11) comprise the historical elements. The church has gone from Jews in Jerusalem to Jews and Gentiles throughout Palestine.

III. "ENDS OF THE EARTH" (13-28) In this third section the focus shifts to Paul and his missionary journeys - 3 of them (13 - 20). Paul was the one to take the gospel to Gentiles and start churches in Asia Minor and even into Europe itself. The book ends with Paul's arrest and trip to Rome for trial (21-28). After his release he continued to travel, then was martyred in Rome.

Now it's our turn to take the gospel and spread it. Like in a relay race, each one has his turn to do his part. Now is your turn as part of this generation. Don't drop the baton!



ROMANS: SALVATION

TITLE: Named for the recipients

AUTHOR: Paul

DATE of WRITING: 56 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Corinth

RECIPIENTS: Church at Rome

KEY VERSE:: *I am not ashamed of*

the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith." 1:16-17

KEY WORDS: "Christ" (39 times), "faith" (37 times), "justify" 17 times

PURPOSE: To teach the basic truths of the Christian faith to a place he has long wanted to visit but hasn't been able to visit.

THEME: All about salvation and living the Christian life.

Every preacher's dream is to have one time in his life when he can say whatever he wants with no time limit and no interruptions. Perhaps that's why so many of us dream of writing a book. Most of us will have to wait until heaven, though, for the chance to preach and teach without a time limit. Few of us get that chance on earth. Paul is one of the fortunate ones. He was known to preach all night long, but he still had time constraints. He started in Athens giving his total overall teaching of salvation and the Christian life, but he didn't get to finish. Finally in writing to the Romans he was able to say it all!

THE GREATNESS OF ROMANS Romans is perhaps the finest book in the New Testament. Many would say that if they had to pick just one book of the Bible to keep and use it would be the book of Romans. It has led to more great revivals than any other book and, because of its breadth and scope, stands head and shoulders above other books. Paul's other writings were to address specific problems or doctrinal issues. In Romans he is free to choose his topic, and he chose salvation and its results in our life. There is no greater topic to be had.

LIVING BY FAITH Paul starts off stating his theme in 1:16-17: "The righteous shall live by faith." This is actually quoted from Habakkuk and led to Martin Luther's conversion and the Reformation. It is actually a play on words in the Aramaic by Paul. First he says that those who become justified shall have eternal life by faith, accepting God's free gift of salvation. That is expanded in Romans 1-4. Then he also says that those who have become justified by faith shall live their daily lives by that same faith. This is expanded in Romans 5-15. This not only summarizes the book but our own lives.

I. SIN – guilt of all (1:18 – 3:20) Before showing the solution, Paul shows the problem – sin. Those without God's revelation (Gentiles) are guilty of sin. Those with God's revelation (Jews) are also guilty of sin. In fact, ALL are guilty and condemned.

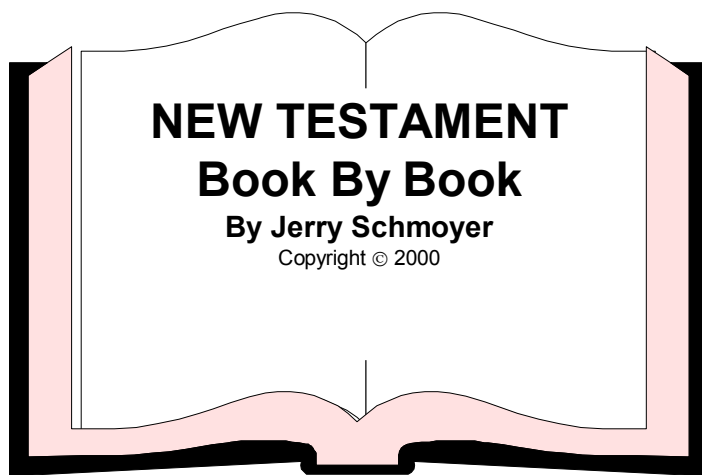
II. SALVATION – provision for all (3:21 – 5:21) God provided for our sins in the person of Jesus Christ (3:21-31). It is up to us to freely accept this gift of salvation by faith (4:1-25). When we do we have all the blessings and benefits of salvation (5:1-11). This is all freely given in Jesus (5:12-21). However the book doesn't end here. Salvation is just the start, then comes the command to live for Jesus.

III. SANCTIFICATION – provision for all believers (6:1 – 8:39) After salvation we must live a holy life unto God. Our sin has been paid for and removed, so in actual practice we are to not live in sin (6:1-23). We are freed from the power of sin to control us. Grace is not an excuse to sin. We'll never have victory over sin by trying to keep the law, for that isn't its purpose (7:1-25). We have freedom only in Jesus (8:1-39). If Romans is the crown jewel of the Bible, then Romans 8 is the focal point of most beauty in this whole jewel. It is certainly a chapter well worth memorizing. It shows the victory we have in Jesus.

IV. SOVEREIGNTY – provision for Jews & Gentiles (9:1 – 11:36) With Gentiles now accepted by faith, what about Jews? God sovereignly chose them through Abraham. Even though they disobeyed and failed Him, He won't reject them. He may temporarily set them aside so Gentiles can come to salvation, but they will one day turn to Jesus for salvation and be restored as God's chosen people.

V. SERVICE – provision for daily life (12:1 – 15:13) Paul concludes, as he always does, by applying the doctrine he has just taught to daily life. He changes from teacher to preacher. He talks about our daily life (12:1-21), daily conduct (13:1-14), and daily relationships (14:1 – 15:13).

Spend time in this most special book. It's a treasure mine of special promises and blessings.



I CORINTHIANS: WORLDLY WISDOM

TITLE: Named for recipients

AUTHOR: Paul

DATE of WRITING: 55 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Ephesus

RECIPIENTS: Church at Corinth

KEY VERSE:: *For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. ... But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. ... But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. 14:33; 14:40; 15:57*

KEY WORDS: "Wisdom, love, resurrection, cross, Spirit, body, gifts, corruption"

PURPOSE: Address certain situations of worldliness that were defeating the Corinthian church.

THEME: To correct errors in Christian conduct by going by God's wisdom instead of man's worldly wisdom.

We generally think that the greatest danger to the church today comes from without: persecution, oppression, etc. The real danger, however, comes not from without but from within. We are often our own greatest enemy! That is especially true of the church in Corinth. They were believers, but they lived like unbelievers. The church wasn't influencing society. Society was influencing the church.

CORINTH The city of Corinth was in present-day Greece. It was Greek, but very 'Roman' since it was the capital of the whole area. It was large (1/4 million people) and full of pride and pleasure. It had a reputation for being very immoral. To call someone a 'Corinthian' was a great insult. Paul was there on his Second Missionary Journey, 50-52 AD. When he was kicked out of the synagogue he started a church and stayed 1 ½ years. He actually wrote 4 letters to the church there. We have the second (called I Corinthians) and fourth (called II Corinthians) in our Bible. Paul then visited them again for 3 months. It was a very worldly, carnal church. The people were believers, but their world view, their motives, their priorities and their thought processes were the same as they were before salvation. They were living by the world's ways and wisdom, not God's. That is why Paul writes to them.

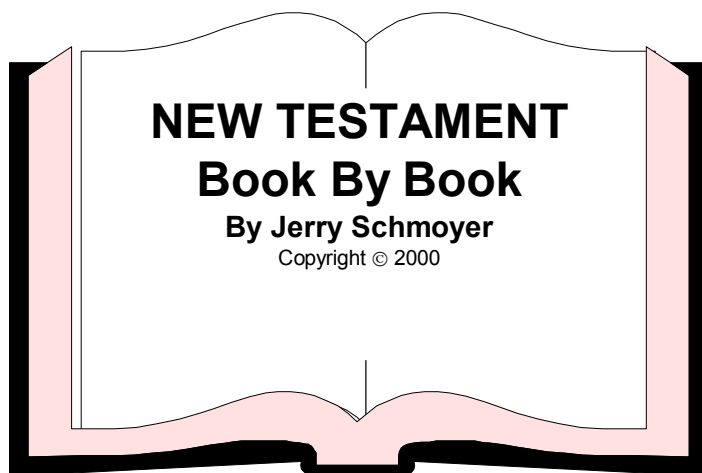
I. DIVISIONS (1 – 4) Because of their ungodly viewpoints and values, they were having the same problems after salvation that they had before. They were comparing themselves with each other and putting down those who were different. They had groups based on who they followed: Paul, Apollos, Peter or Christ (the 'super-spiritual' ones claimed this). They also divided over social status and material means. They even made some spiritual gifts superior to others and had divisions over that. This undermined their unity and brought other problems.

II. DISORDERS (5 – 6) In taking the world's outlook on things they opened themselves to sins. Incest, lawsuits against fellow believers, and immorality in general were tolerated and accepted. Paul has to warn them and show them how they are wrong in these things.

III. DIFFICULTIES (7 – 14) While only some were involved in the immorality and lawsuits, it seems everyone was affected in other ways. By still following their beliefs and views from before salvation, they were experiencing troubles in other areas. What about marrying someone who wasn't a believer? If one became a Christian and their mate didn't, could they leave that mate? Why not divorce when things got tough like the rest of the culture? What was wrong with sex before marriage or sex outside marriage? Was it OK to eat cheaper meat which had been offered to idols? Why should a woman have to submit to her husband? Why did a man have to take the lead in his family? What was wrong with observing the pagan love feasts and adding the Lord's Supper to them? Why wasn't one who had an impressive spiritual gift like tongues superior spiritually to one who didn't have that gift? What was wrong with showing off one's gift during the church service? On and on the list went.

IV. DISBELIEF (15) The culmination of these worldly thoughts and attitudes was that the resurrection was questioned. It didn't make sense to think of one coming back from death. But without the resurrection, what was left of their faith? If Jesus never raised from the dead there is no power, no hope, no forgiveness – nothing but another belief system which is no better nor any worse than the others. That's where their thinking was going, and that's why Paul was so concerted to writ to them as quickly and directly as possible.

What about you? What about your world view, your value and belief system? Does it line up more with the world or the Bible? I don't mean just what you profess to believe, I mean what you practice in daily life. How different are you from the unbelievers around you in values and goals, in priorities and motives? There are many modern Corinthian believers today – make sure you aren't one of them!



II CORINTHIANS: A GODLY MINISTRY

TITLE: Named for recipients

AUTHOR: Paul

DATE of WRITING: Late 55 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Ephesus

RECIPIENTS: Church at Corinth

KEY VERSE: *For we do not preach*

ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. ... We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 4:5; 5:20-21

KEY WORDS: "Ministry" (18 times), "glory, boast" (20 times)

PURPOSE:

I CORINTHIANS	II CORINTHIANS
Objective & Practical	Subjective & Personal
Insight into the character of an early church	Insight into the character of Paul
Deliberate Instruction	Impassioned Testimony
Warning against pagan influences	Warning against Judaistic influences

THEME: Paul defends himself as a true minister of the Gospel and reestablishes a good relationship with the Corinthians.

BACKGROUND Paul spent 1 ½ years at Corinth on his Second Missionary Journey. He left for Ephesus and Apollos stayed at Corinth awhile. Then Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians condemning immorality and asking them to start a collection for the poor. We don't have a copy of this letter. As reports came to Paul in Ephesus about the problems arising in Corinth, he wrote to them the letter we call I Corinthians. Timothy went to Corinth to help get things settled, but more difficulties arose. To counter Paul's recent letter, his apostolic authority was being questioned. Timothy personally went to Paul with this matter and Paul stopped by Corinth for a short visit during which he was grossly insulted by someone in the church. After he left Paul sent a letter about the money they were collecting for Jerusalem, a letter we don't have. Titus delivered this letter and then was to bring a report back to Paul. Paul was so anxious to find out the news that he started out to meet Titus. They ran into each other half way, and Paul rejoiced in Titus' good report of their godly response to Paul's words. This made Paul so glad he immediately wrote another letter to them, which we call II Corinthians. Later Paul went there and stayed for 3 months, during which time he wrote the letter to the Romans.

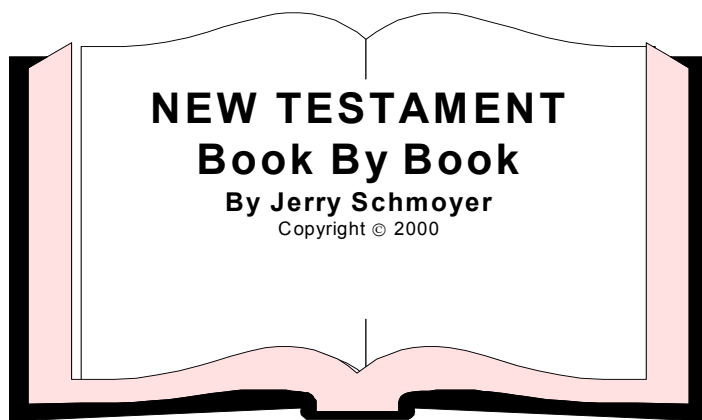
II Corinthians is the most autobiographical of Paul's Epistles. It provides insight into his personal life and ministry not seen elsewhere. Because of the false charges against him, Paul reveals things about himself and his ministry he would never have written down. If it sounds like bragging, it's really just self defense. Paul knows they won't believe God's truth unless they see him as God's true messenger. Thus we get rare insight into the warm, human side of Paul. This letter comes from his heart, unlike Romans which comes from his head.

I. COMMISSION OF PAUL (1:12 – 7:16) False teachers caused Paul a lot of trouble. They often carried fake letters of commendation so they could minister in churches and be paid by those churches. While doing so they viciously criticized Paul's appearance and poor speaking ability. They said he didn't have apostolic authority since he wasn't one of Jesus' 12 disciples. Paul answers their charges and talks about what he had been doing and why. He shows that his words are from God, and that therefore they are correct in believing and accepting them. He shares from his heart about what he has been through and why.

II. CONTRIBUTION FOR THE SAINTS (8:1 – 9:15) Wherever he went Paul encouraged the Gentile churches to collect money to send to Jerusalem to help their poor brothers there. The gospel came through the Jews to the Gentiles, and now they can help them back. Jews in Jerusalem who became believers lost their families, jobs, everything. Paul talked to the Corinthians about this, too, showing it is all of our responsibility to help believers in need.

III. CREDENTIALS OF PAUL (10:1 – 13:10) Paul answered charges about his being too easy on some in the church. He refers to Jesus' example of forgiveness and mercy. He is accused of not accepting support for his ministry, and he explains why he chose to not exercise that right. He even told them of a time he died and went to heaven before coming back to life. What a wonderful experience that was!

In conclusion Paul tells them to repent and turn 100% from false teachings and teachers to God so things would be fine when Paul got there. He said he wanted to come in love and joy, not with scoldings or disciplining. He promised he would come soon and prove beyond doubt that God supported him and his teachings.



GALATIANS: CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

TITLE: Named for the recipients
AUTHOR: Paul
DATE of WRITING: 49 AD
PLACE of WRITING: Antioch
RECIPIENTS: Churches in Galatia (Asia Minor)

KEY VERSE: *"It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery."* 5:1

KEY WORDS: "Christ" (43 times); "law" (32); "Flesh" (18); "Faith" (22); "spirit" (15)

PURPOSE: To show the readers that the purpose of the law is to lead us to Christ (3:24) and the purpose of Christ is to free us (5:1), bring Christian liberty.

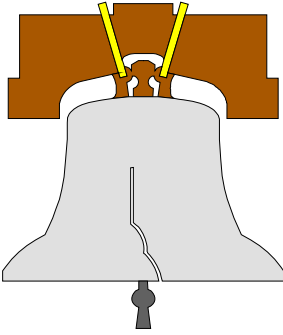
THEME: To show that the believer is free from the law and legalism.

When I was a new Christian I was invited to join the Mormon church as well as Herbert W. Armstrong's Radio Church of God. As I checked into these groups I found they each had at their core a set of practices that one must adhere to. The big things, even the little things in life, were regulated and specific responses were set for most any event. That didn't seem too unusual, though, because the Baptist church I was a member of was pretty much the same way. New members took their cue from the older ones about how to dress, act, talk and think in most any situation. If one didn't know they had only to ask and the answer was given. Everything was black and white. At first that nice because I didn't have to make decisions on my own. They were all made. As a new Christian I could act and look just like those who had been Christians their whole lives. Instant spirituality was available to any who would just follow the 'rules.' However before long I realized that my Christian life was being lived by and for other Christians, not Christ. Fear of what others would think motivated all I did. It was empty. Oh, it appealed to my pride, but where was the 'personal relationship' I so longed for?

Then in Bible College the first book of the Bible I studied in depth was the book of Galatians – just what I needed! Paul was writing to people who were facing the same dilemma I was. He had just completed his First Missionary Journey, going through Asia Minor into the area of Galatia in the middle of it. Several churches were started there, but after Paul left Jewish Christians who said one had to keep all the Jewish law in order to have salvation came in and misled the people. So when Paul got back to Antioch he wrote them to straighten them, and me, out about the relationship of law and grace. What he did was give three proofs why we are free from any form of law. These are as follows:

I. BIOGRAPHICAL PROOF (1:10-2:21) - An Independent Revelation First Paul talks in detail about himself, something he does in no other book. However in no other book is he writing to people who distrust him and his motives. He must prove that God is speaking through him or no one will listen to anything he has to say. Thus he gives his credentials first.

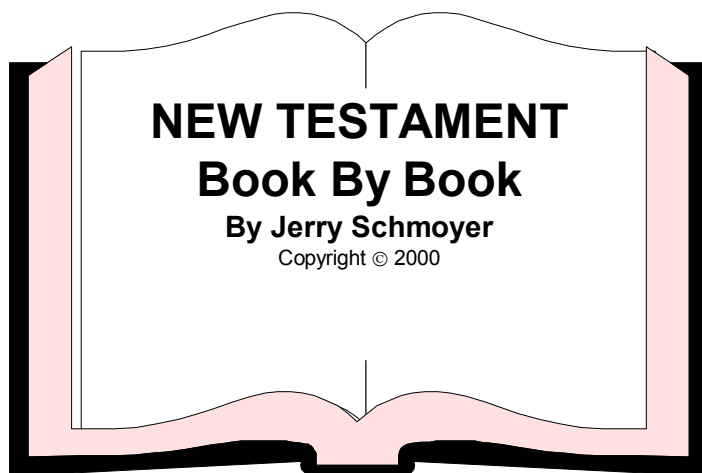
Paul points out that he got his message directly from Jesus, not Jewish rabbis, for they were opposed to him (1:10-14), nor from the apostles for they kept away from him (1:15-17). Neither did he get his message from the churches in Judea for he didn't learn from them (1:18-24) nor from anyone else (2:1-18). He himself had kept the law better than any of them ever could, yet he knew from experience that that was empty (2:19-21).



II. THEOLOGICAL PROOF (3:1 - 4:31) - Failure of Legalism Having shown that his readers could trust the source of the message (Paul) he now focuses on the message itself. He reminds them that if grace is how they were saved, that should be how they live the Christian life (3:1-5). Any system that focus on impressing or pleasing man or God fails because the focus is on outer actions, not inner attitude. Paul even uses Abraham as an example of salvation and Christian living by faith, before God gave him any laws (3:6-22). Actually the law makes us slaves, not free (4:8-31).

III. PRACTICAL PROOF (5:1 - 6:10) - THE Effect of Liberty After showing that trying to keep the law is an inferior way to live, Paul shows the superior way of following Jesus. Legalism is under God's judgment for it seeks to add to the finished work of Jesus. It elevates our work of the flesh and feeds our pride. God wants us to obey and serve Him out of love. When we obey and serve out of love the results will be evident in our lives: the fruit of the Holy Spirit, humility and meekness, faithfulness, perseverance, to name a few (5:25-6:10).

A woman worked for a man whose wife had died. Every day he gave her a list of chores and jobs to do and she did them because he paid her at the end of the week. Eventually they got to love each other and married. She found she was doing the very things he had paid her to do and more, but there was no list and no pay. She now did them out of love. Her motive had changed. What is your motive in serving God? If it isn't love, it isn't right/



EPHESIANS: “IN CHRIST”

TITLE: Named for recipients

AUTHOR: Paul

DATE of WRITING: 60 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Rome (prison)

RECIPIENTS: Church at Ephesus

KEY VERSE: *Praise be to the God*

and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ... As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 1:3; 4:1

KEY WORDS: “In” (93 times); “grace” (12 times); “walk” (8 times); “body” (8 times)

PURPOSE: “In Christ” key phrase

Romans: We are justified “in Christ” (3:24)

I Corinthians: We are sanctified “in Christ” (1:2)

II Corinthians: We are vindicated “in Christ” (11:19)

Galatians: We are liberated “in Christ” (2:4)

Ephesians: We are exalted “in Christ” (1:3)

Philippians: We are exultant “in Christ” (1:26)

Colossians: We are complete “in Christ” (2:9)

Philemon: We are graced out “in Christ” (15)

I Thessalonians: We are hopeful “in Christ” (1:3)

II Thessalonians: We are glorified “in Christ” (1:12)

I Timothy: We are faithful “in Christ” (1:18)

II Timothy: We are triumphant “in Christ” (14:6)

Titus: We are made examples “in Christ” (2:7)

THEME: The heavenly position of the believer and the daily life which corresponds to this position.

Suppose you had a long lost relative who died leaving their whole estate to only you. The lawyers had tracked you down and re at this moment trying to contact you to tell you all these riches are now yours. It’s already yours, you just don’t realize it yet! It might seem impossible, but this is true. God is trying to contact you. Ephesians is the letter He is sending about all your inherited riches and blessings. Its not about material possessions with will decay and be left behind, its about something yours eternally.

EPHESUS The city of Ephesus was one of the top 3 cities of its day, similar to New York City. Paul spent 3 years there. It was a very strategic location for a church.

US IN CHRIST (1 – 3) Paul starts talking about salvation, how God the Father planned it (election past, present & future – 1:4-6) He was the Architect who drew the blueprint. Then Paul writes about God the Son who provided it (redemption past, present and future – 1:7-12). He is the builder Who followed God’s blueprint. Finally he writes of God the Holy Spirit Who

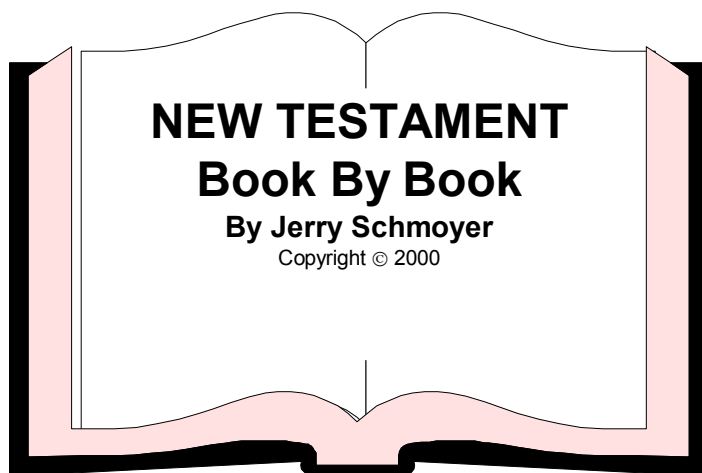
vapplied it regeneration past, present and future – 1:13-14). He is the One Who delivers the title deed to that which Jesus built according to God's blueprint.

Of course, this is all by grace (2:8-9). God loves us. He knows everything about us and loves us anyway. There is nothing we have done or can do to earn His love. It is given freely and unconditionally. This is grace. There is nothing we can do to earn His love or lose His love. If we wish, we may reject His love, or even reject God Himself. But He will never stop loving us. When we decide to recognize and accept His love, we will feel a joy like we've never known before.

CHRIST IN US (4 – 6)

(1-3) LIVE what	you ARE (4-6)
POSITION of the believer	PRACTICE of the believer
Heavenly Standing	Earthly State
Our heritage in Christ	Our life in Christ
DOCTRINE	PRACTICE

As is his pattern, Paul applies in the second half of his writings what he teaches in the first half. Because of our position in Christ we should live like Him. We must live a holy life. WWJD. He applies this specifically to husbands, wives, parents, children, slaves and masters. He concludes with a most important section on spiritual warfare and our armor. Those who seek to live like Jesus and for Jesus better be prepared to fight for their spiritual growth for the enemy will oppose any attempts to grow spiritually.



PHILIPPIANS: JOY

TITLE: Named for recipients

AUTHOR: Paul

DATE of WRITING: 60-61 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Rome (in prison)

RECIPIENTS: Church in Philippi

KEY VERSE: *Rejoice in the Lord*

always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 4:4

KEY WORD: "Joy (rejoice)" 18 times; "Mind/think" 10 times

PURPOSE:

	GALATIANS	EPHESIANS	PHILIPPIANS
Style	Logical Arguments	Teaching & Application	Inform & Console
Main subject	Salvation (free from law)	Christ (possessions of believer 'in Christ')	Life of joy
Purpose	Correct	Instruct	Inspire
Tone	Sharp Rebuke	Calm, Victorious	Tender, Joyful

THEME: Rejoice in the Lord!

The famous German philosopher Nietzsche once said about Christians: "I would believe in their salvation if they looked a little more like people who have been saved!" The early church made a profound impression on their world because of their joy. Paul wrote to one of his favorite churches, the church at Philippi, to encourage them in their joy. There is no problem to correct, just joy to share – and Paul wrote it from prison!

PHILIPPI The city of Philippi was a near Thessalonica. It was a Greek city which Paul had visited on his third missionary journey, about 6 or 7 years before writing to them. When the believers in Philippi heard that Paul was in prison they sent Epaphroditus to Rome to see how Paul was doing and to deliver a gift of money. He needed money to pay for his quarters and food, for he was in house arrest and had to provide for these things himself. Epaphroditus realized Paul was needier than they thought so he stayed and worked for money to give to Paul. During this time he got sick and almost died. When he recovered Paul sent him back to Philippi with this letter. He wanted his friends there to rejoice that Epaphroditus was OK and that Paul was OK, too. Our book of Philippians is the letter Paul sent with him.

I. JOY IN SUPPORT (1:3-11) Paul begins by thanking them for their concern and support for him. He prays for them. Then he gets right to the heart of something he wanted to say.

II. JOY IN SUFFERING (1:12-30) They felt that prison had ended Paul's ministry, but Paul says NO! He pointed out clearly that his afflictions actually promoted the gospel for he had more time to pray, could witness to the guards and Caesar's household (many of whom became believers), and had lots more time to pray. Plus his being in prison had stimulated believers and churches everywhere to take up his work as well as to pray for him. Also, he used this time to write an important part of our New Testament: Philippians, Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon. Truly "all things work together for the good of those who love the Lord" (Rom 8:28).

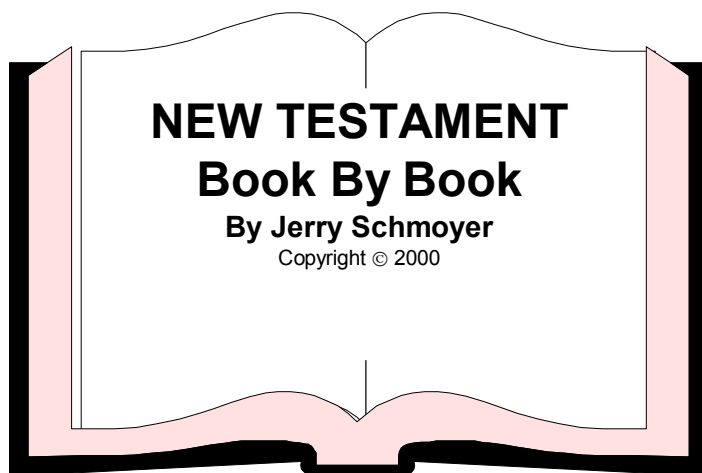
In addition, Paul saw his sufferings as making him more Christ-like. He exhorted them to remain steadfast and fearless when they, too, faced suffering.

III. JOY IN SUBMISSION (2:1-30) Paul then calls on them to make his joy complete by putting Jesus first in everything. He calls them to unity, humility and self-sacrifice. He uses Christ, Timothy, Epaphroditus and himself as examples. No matter what life brings them, they are to submit to it as God's will for them. This will bring them great joy and peace.

IV. JOY IN SALVATION (3:1 – 4:3) Paul warns them against the false teachers that are so prevalent everywhere. They aren't submitting to anyone and they don't have God's joy. Paul challenges them to follow his example, not the false teachers.

V. JOY IN SUFFICIENCY (4:4-19) Paul prays they will continue to have peace and joy in all they do. He rejoices at God's power to provide for him in prison and rejoices over their concern and sacrifice. He knows they can't afford to send him money but did. Their concern means more to him than the amount of money. He assures them that God will bless and reward them for their sacrificial giving and assures them he is well provided for.

Paul then concludes in typical letter-writing style for his day. He sends greetings and short messages to some of those in Philippi and passes on greetings to them from some of the men with him. His love for them is evident, as is their for him. Thus they rejoice in each other. What about you? Do others notice your joy and give Jesus the credit? Are you full of a joy that draws others to the Savior? If not, ask God for this fruit of His Spirit now!



COLOSSIANS: CHRIST IS SUPREME

TITLE: Named for the recipients

AUTHOR: Paul

DATE of WRITING: 60 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Rome (in prison)

RECIPIENTS: Church in Colossae

KEY VERSE: *and who also told us of your love in the Spirit. ... and you have been given fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority. 1:8; 2:10*

KEY WORD: "head" (3 times)

PURPOSE:

	TO GIVE TRUE TEACHING	TO CORRECT FALSE TEACHING
ABOUT SALVATION	Romans	Galatians
ABOUT CHRIST	Ephesians	Colossians

THEME: Show the preeminence of Christ – the head not only of the church but of the whole universe.

In my hometown is a gray concrete building just off the main street. It's not the largest, nor the smallest building in town. I first remember seeing it when a child and often went past it but never paid much attention to it. Oh, I'd been inside a time or two, but didn't have any special memory of it. Then one Sunday I went inside to worship with a church that met there and I found good fellowship, times of praise and worship, and a source of learning and growth. Now the building has an entirely different meaning to me when I pass it.

There's a book in the New Testament that is quite similar. It's not the biggest nor the smallest. We all know it's there and go by it often, even stopping in from time to time. However we often don't take the time to really to see what's inside. It's the book we call Colossians.

BACKGROUND Colossae was a small town near larger Laodicea. Although he was in the nearby region we have no record of Paul's ever having gone to Colossae. The church there was started by some of the nearby churches which Paul had started. Paul wrote this letter to them while in prison in Rome. Because it is so similar in content to the book of Ephesians, it is often ignored and Ephesians chosen to be studied.

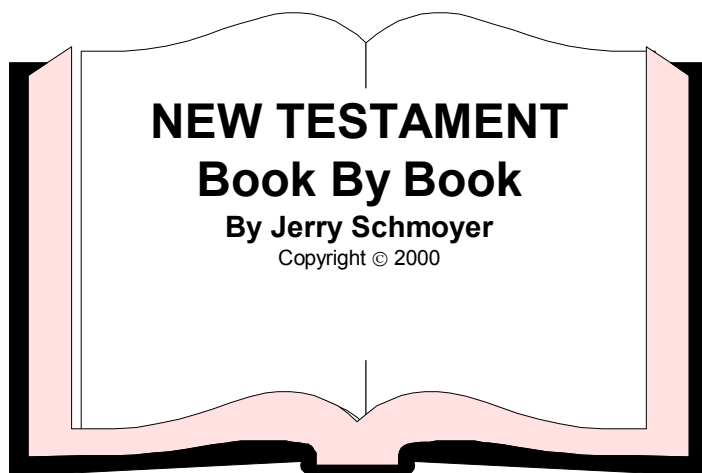
Paul wrote to encourage them to stay true to God and watch for the false teaching called "Gnosticism." Jude and I John also refute this heresy. Gnostics believed that an intellectually enlightened few were far above the masses of humanity. To them 'god' was an impersonal force and they rejected salvation for sin. Many of their lies Satan is recycling today under the label of 'New Age.' Paul refutes this heresy, not by showing its inconsistencies and inaccuracies but by showing the truth of Jesus. That's a good lesson for us, too. Instead of attacking another's false teaching, lift Jesus up as the Truth. Paul shows that Christ is Supreme over everyone and everything.

I. THE EXALTED CHRIST (1:15-29) Christ is exalted as the head of all creation and the church. He is also extolled as the reconciler of all things, the only One who reunites God and man. He points out that He did it by His work on the cross as our substitute. Paul says that true wisdom only comes by knowing Jesus, not through any counterfeit system which claims to have all the answers themselves.

II. THE EXALTED CHRISTIAN (2:1-23) Paul says that Christ is exalted over philosophy and appeals to them to totally turn from all false teachings and teachers. He points out that any system of legalism fails, that we are free from all that through Christ's death, burial and resurrection. Paul also shows Christ is greater than any mystical teaching or any system of asceticism.

III. THE EXALTED CALLING (3:1 – 4:6) Soon Jesus will return for us, so Paul says even now we are to be like Him for then we will be totally like Him. He then applies this to various areas of our lives: everyday life, family relationships, work responsibilities, and our own individual spiritual lives as well.

It's been said that if Christ is not Lord OF all, He's not Lord AT all. Make sure He is first in your life, the Supreme One who is exalted above all else. If He is not all in your life, He's not in His proper, deserving place!



I THESSALONIANS: JESUS IS COMING AGAIN

TITLE: Named for the recipients

AUTHOR: Paul

DATE of WRITING: 51 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Corinth

RECIPIENTS: Church at Thessalonica

KEY VERSE: *for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to*

serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son

from heaven, whom he raised from the dead-Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath. (1:9-10)

KEY WORDS: "comfort" (6 times); "coming (of the Lord)" (4)

PURPOSE: To commend the Thessalonian believers for their faith and to defend himself against criticism. He also instructs them in areas of difficulty: sexual purity, love & especially the Second Coming of Christ.

THEME: The Second Coming of Christ

When Gideon's 10,000 potential soldiers went to drink, only 300 of them were chosen. These were the ones who drank looking up. For us to defeat our enemies today we must be found 'looking up' as well. That's Paul's message to the Thessalonians.

Paul started a church in Thessalonica on his Second Missionary Journey. It was only the second church established on European soil. It had much opportunity but faced a lot of persecution. Paul wrote to them from Corinth to encourage them in their times of suffering.

LOOK AWAY FROM: Troubles (chapter 1) Paul starts off praying for them, encouraging them in faithfulness. He commends them for their fruit: receiving the gospel and passing it on. Their godly reputation had been spreading quickly. Paul wants them to look to God and what He has done for them, not to focus on their suffering and persecution.

LOOK AWAY FROM: Temporal (chapter 2) Then Paul defends himself against attacks and criticism some in Thessalonica have been spreading about him. He assures them that both his motives and methods were pure. His focus was on serving God, not on gaining money or a reputation for himself. He encouraged them, too, to not focus on this temporary world during the hard times they were facing.

LOOK AWAY FROM: Temptation (chapter 3) Paul tells them he sent Timothy to help them faithfully endure their trials, and Timothy's good report about them really encouraged Paul as well. He concludes this section praying that he will be able to visit them in person very soon. After telling them what to look away from, he then tells them what to look towards:

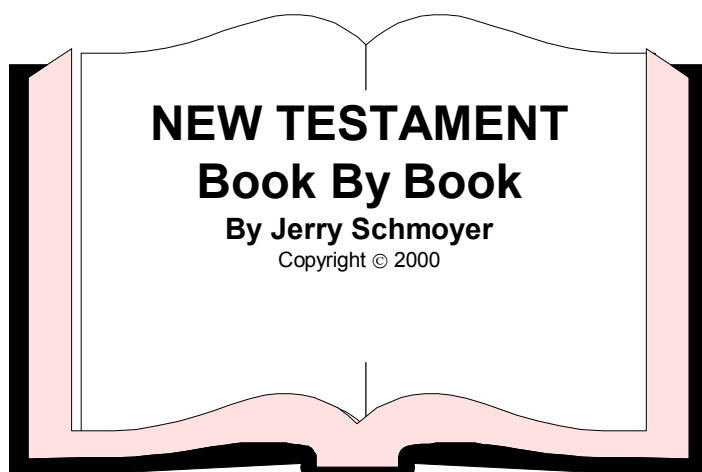
LOOK UP TO: Trumpet (chapter 4) Paul challenges them to be pure in their lives, for some of them continued in their old pagan immorality. He emphasized that they are to love each other. He corrected those who said they didn't have to work because Jesus was coming back soon. Then he gave the most complete description on the Rapture in the Bible (4:13-18). The trumpet will one day sound and those who have accepted Jesus as Savior will have their bodies

instantly changed and taken to heaven. Those who have already died have temporary bodies in heaven and their earthly bodies will be raised at that time and taken to heaven, too. Thus we don't have to fear death nor grieve the loss of believers who die before us. Those killed in persecution just get to heaven first! Jesus could return any day, ending their earthly suffering. Thus they are to live looking up, awaiting the trumpet.

LOOK UP TO: Triumph (chapter 5) Immediately following the rapture will be the Tribulation. The persecution they were enduring was not the Tribulation. Believers are not under God's judgment ('wrath' v. 9; cf Rom 8:1). Until this time they must live victorious Christian lives, growing and ministering to others.

Paul concluded by praying for their total being. He prayed they would live a holy Christian life until Jesus returned for them. By knowing and remembering that Jesus was coming back for them, they could keep the sufferings of this life in proper perspective. He assured them that God would preserve them. Then he ended with his typical request for prayer on his behalf, a greeting, a charge and a benediction.

One day a business came to a school and promised the children that one day he would return and bring a special present for all who had their desks clean when he arrived. A certain girl in the class room really wanted to receive this prize so she committed herself to clean her desk every Monday morning. Knowing that it wouldn't stay clean long, for the girl wasn't normally a very neat person, the teacher asked her what happened if the man came on Friday. She decided to clean her desk Monday and Friday. Then when asked about if he would come on Wednesday, she decided she needed to clean her desk every morning. But what if he came at the end of the day? Finally she realized that what she needed to do was keep her desk clean at ALL times. Paul wants us, like the Thessalonians, to always be aware of and ready for Jesus' soon return. Don't focus on your problems or difficulties, but on His return!



II THESSALONIANS: JESUS IS COMING SOON

TITLE: Named for the recipients

AUTHOR: Paul

DATE of WRITING: 51 AD, shortly after I Thessalonians

PLACE of WRITING: Corinth

RECIPIENTS: Church at Thessalonica

KEY VERSE: *This will happen when the*

Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you. (1:7b-10)

KEY WORDS: "Day of the Lord"

PURPOSE:

<u>I THESSALONIANS</u>	<u>II THESSALONIANS</u>
Teaches the WHAT of the Rapture	Teaches the WHEN of the Rapture
Teach something NEW - Rapture	correct WRONG - time of Rapture
Mainly about the church	Mainly about Satan, Antichrist, world

THEME: to tell the Thessalonian believers Christ would return BEFORE the Tribulation, and to explain to them how they were to live until Christ came.

The truth of the Rapture is one of the most glorious of all Christian doctrines. It is wonderfully encouraging and uplifting. Knowing Jesus will return soon to take those who believe in Him to heaven to be with Him forever is comforting and motivating. Yet, despite its simple truth, much confusion and misunderstanding has arisen around this simple doctrine. It's easy to understand that Satan would do what he can to confuse and cloud this beautiful truth. He did the same thing in Paul's day, too.

Not long after Paul wrote to the church at Thessalonica, telling them about Jesus' coming back for them, wrong ideas started to develop which took away from the comfort of this truth. For instance, some false teachers in Thessalonica said the persecution they were then facing was the Tribulation which had already started. Yet Paul said the Rapture came before the tribulation. What was true? Who was right?

I. THE ANXIETY ABOUT THE RETURN OF CHRIST (chapter 1) Again Paul starts with thanksgiving for their faithfulness in times of suffering. He assured them that God was not unfair in permitting them to experience the trials they were going through. He reminded them about what the future held if they didn't die before Christ returned. If they had accepted Jesus as Savior they would be taken to heaven immediately when Jesus returned. If they hadn't accepted Him they would live on into the Tribulation and find themselves under God's judgment.

Paul then prayed God would continue to work out His will in their submissive lives, and they would glorify Him. He assured them they were doing right and weren't under God's

judgment, for the Tribulation had not started yet. Then he goes on to prove that they couldn't already be in the Tribulation.

II. THE ANSWER ABOUT THE REVELATION OF ANTICHRIST (chapter 2) No, Paul says, you haven't missed the Rapture and entered into God's judgment. His proof is that the Antichrist has not yet been revealed and when the Tribulation really begins the Antichrist will be right there. In fact, he can't be revealed until after the Rapture, when the Church and the Holy

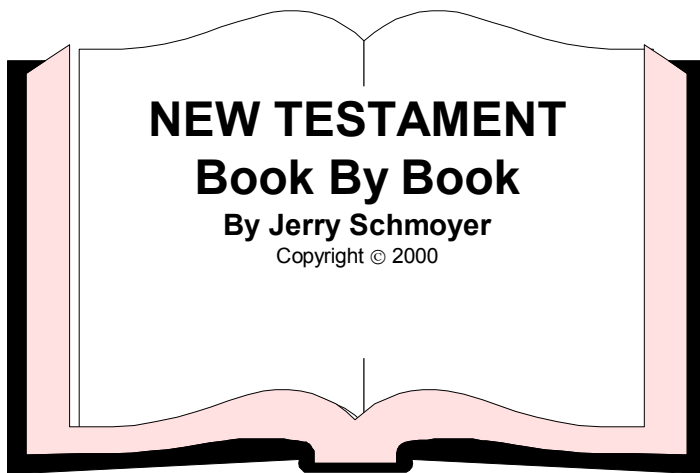
Spirit are gone. The Antichrist couldn't possibly be revealed yet, for the Rapture must come first. The fact that they were still here proved the Rapture hadn't come.

Paul then builds on the many details given by Daniel and Ezekiel about the Antichrist and his actions on earth. Paul then gives thanks for their spiritual standing as seen in contrast to the deceived world around them. He encouraged them to stand fast in what he had taught them while there and in his first letter.

III. THE APPLICATION ABOUT THEIR RETURN TO WORK (chapter 3) Paul then tackled the final problem that had arisen about the Rapture. Some refused to work because the Rapture could come at any time, so why bother? Paul got very strong with them, telling them that if someone wouldn't do his share to support himself, no one should do anything to help him! That's how important it is for God's people to live a holy Christian life.

We can't and won't know exactly when it is time for the Rapture, but we can tell when the season gets closer (Matthew 24:36-39). Contractions can be felt earlier, but labor doesn't begin until the pains ('signs') come close and hard.

Paul then closed with prayer. He asked that they would be conscious of God's presence, peace and grace. After a final benediction and greeting, the book closes.



I TIMOTHY: CHURCH ORDER

TITLE: Named for recipient

AUTHOR: Paul

DATE of WRITING: 62 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Macedonia

RECIPIENT: Timothy, a young pastor friend

KEY VERSE: *if I am delayed, you*

will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth. ... But godliness with contentment is great gain. ... But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. 12 Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ... Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, 3:15; 6:6, 11-13, 20

KEY WORDS: "Good" (22 times); "godliness" (8); "doctrine" (8); "teach/teacher" (7)

PURPOSE: Paul is providing guidance for his young trainee as a pastor. He warns him about false teachers and explains how he should operate a church.

THEME: Correct church order.

Before we even knew if our firstborn would be a boy or girl, God laid it on both of our hearts to name him 'Timothy' because he would be a young pastor. Timothy in the Bible is a fine example for anyone to follow. Born to a Greek father and Jewish mother, he was led to salvation in Jesus by Paul on his first missionary journey. Both his mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, had had a fine godly influence on him. Because of his spiritual gifts and rapid maturity, and also because he naturally got along very well with him, Paul asked Timothy to come with him and help on his second missionary journey. He helped Paul establish churches at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Corinth. Paul sent him anywhere and everywhere as his official 'trouble-shooter,' to straighten out tough situations in churches which Paul himself was unable to visit. His went on for years. Timothy and Paul were very close to the very end. He was probably with Paul in Rome the second time Paul was imprisoned there. This arrest ended in Paul's execution. Timothy himself died as a martyr, killed by the Roman government.

BACKGROUND I Timothy was written about 3 years before Paul died. Timothy had been sent to Ephesus to iron out problems there while Paul ministered elsewhere. Paul expected to join him in Ephesus but was delayed, so he wrote this letter to Timothy instructing him how to carry on until he got there. Thus we have Paul's insight into how a church should run. Not being able to get to Ephesus was frustrating to Paul and Timothy, but certainly to our benefit.

I. ORDINATION OF TIMOTHY (1:3-20) Evidently things weren't going smoothly for easy-going Timothy. False teachers, domineering women, and church conflicts had him asking Paul if he could please leave Ephesus. It was so bad it was causing him stomach problems! Paul told him in no uncertain terms to stay and face up to the opposition. While that would not have been hard for Paul, Timothy was obviously natured quite differently. Thus Paul encourages and supports Timothy in this difficult assignment.

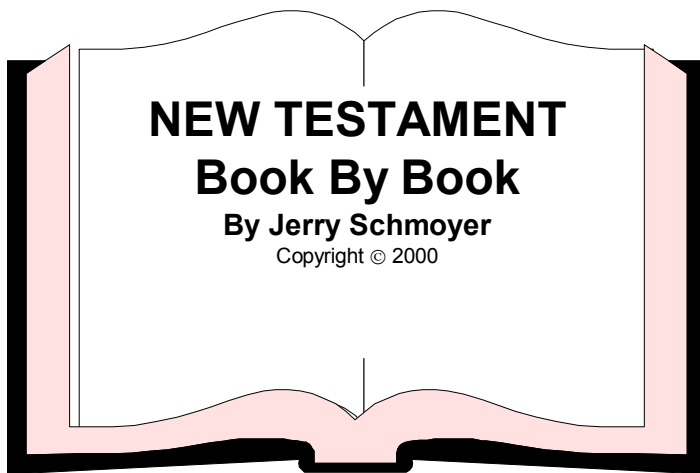
He gives him advice and guidance as well as reminding him of his obligation to stay and do the job. The church needed order and he was the one to bring it.

II. ORGANIZATION OF THE CHURCH (2:1 – 3:16) Paul then talks about the importance of prayer in the church and that it should be led by men. He exhorts that Christian women should be marked by the inner adornment of the soul, not by the outward dress of the body. Their lives should express modesty and good works. Men are to be the leaders, women the supporters. Evidently that wasn't happening in Ephesus.

Paul then told Timothy what the qualifications should be for elders and deacons. The male leadership needed straightening up there, too. Who to choose for church leadership is always a very important subject. Since Paul wasn't able to visit there as soon as he had hoped, he instructs Timothy about how to choose and use leaders.

III. OPERATION OF TIMOTHY (4:1 – 6:19) This last section of I Timothy relates to Timothy's own walk and work within the church. Paul warns him about false teachers and reminds him of his duty to be a godly teacher. Paul talks about the church as a family and encourages Timothy to treat the church people as he would treat family members: with respect and honor.

How does your church stack up against Paul's standards as listed in I Timothy? If it isn't meeting those principles something is wrong. If Paul were alive he'd come straighten things out. He isn't and he won't, but God is and He will. Be a Timothy and bring order to your church.



II TIMOTHY: FAITHFUL SERVICE

TITLE: Named for recipient

AUTHOR: Paul

DATE of WRITING: 64 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Rome (prison #2)

RECIPIENT: Timothy, a young pastor

KEY VERSE: *In the presence of God*

and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: 2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction. 3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. 4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. 5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry. 4:1-5

KEY WORD: "Good" (5 times)

PURPOSE: Paul is providing more guidance for the young man he is training in the pastorate.

He tells him how to live as a true servant in a time of apostasy. He also asks timothy to come to him quickly, as he was about to be executed.

THEME: Paul's final words are to faithfully serve God.

Paul has been serving God faithfully for over 30 years. It's been 20 years since his first missionary journey. He has suffered much, sacrificed much, and been near death often. His brilliant, gifted mind and strong personality has led the early church through its tough growing years when false teachers and jealous political leaders tried all they could to destroy it. Now he is in prison again. In the 5 years since his first imprisonment Paul has been able to travel to see churches he has started as well as go start new ones in places he had never been. Now the end is near and Paul knows it. God has raised up a new generation of local leaders to take over the guidance of the church. Paul is worn out physically. He writes one final letter, to the one person (other than faithful Luke who was with him to the end) he loves more than anyone, his son in the faith Timothy. II Timothy contains Paul's dying words, his final communication as he faces death. If a news reporter had interviewed Paul at this time they would have asked him if he had any doubts about how he spent his life. "Paul, was it worth it?" "Yes!" Paul would affirm, "and much more." "What final parting words do you have for your followers out there?" the reporter would ask. Paul answered "Be faithful." That, in effect, is the message of II Timothy. "Be faithful!"

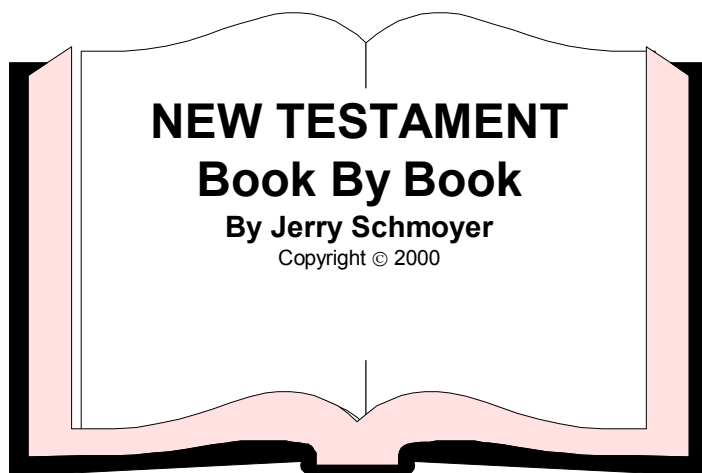
BACKGROUND Persecution is getting worse for believers. Thousands are being martyred. They are considered enemies of Rome with no rights to a fair trial. Then when Nero burned Rome and blamed it on the Christians things got worse. Everyone started blaming them for everything. Peter is also in prison, soon to be crucified upside down. Paul is public enemy number one. He was betrayed and deceived while in Ephesus, and thus he now finds himself in prison in Rome. He is not under house arrest but in a dungeon awaiting execution. This strips away all pretense and gets right to the heart and core of what is in a person. When one faces death all façade is stripped away. That's what makes II Timothy such a revealing letter.

I. FAITHFUL TO GOD (1:3-18) Paul begins by encouraging Timothy to stay faithful to God and use his spiritual gift of teaching for God's glory. With all the oppression going on, it seems Timothy was fighting depression and Paul does his best to encourage and motivate him to stay faithful to God and not be ashamed of the gospel. Paul doesn't want Timothy to feel badly because of his own sufferings. He says that it's a real privilege to suffer for the gospel. Many are defecting under pressure, but Paul tells Timothy to make sure he remains faithful to Jesus.

II. FAITHFUL TO SELF (2:1-26) Paul then uses seven illustrations of faithfulness as examples to Timothy: a teacher, soldier, athlete, farmer, workman, vessel and slave. Knowing that things will actually get much worse for Timothy, Paul wants to make sure he stays true.

III. FAITHFUL TO OTHERS (3:1 – 4:15) Despite how bad the circumstances are, Paul tells Timothy to stay faithful to God and his ministry. He assures him that he is in God's will and tells him to live no so he will be glad of it when he dies. Keep things in eternal perspective is Paul's message. Paul concludes with complements for those who have been faithful to him. He wants to see Timothy one more time before he dies if possible. We don't know if he got there in time or not. Some say he was arrested himself when he tried to see Paul. If so he was released and ministered in Ephesus for some time with John until being martyred for his faithfulness.

Paul would tell us the same thing today – be faithful. That was Jesus' request of His followers as well. What about you. Are you faithful? Are you passing the test? Make sure!



TITUS: DAILY WALK

TITLE: Named for recipient

AUTHOR: Paul

DATE of WRITING: 62 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Corinth

RECIPIENT: Titus, a young pastor Paul is training for ministry

KEY VERSE: *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men. 12 It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, 13 while we wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, 14 who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good. ... But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone. 2:11-14; 3:4-8*

KEY WORDS: "Good" (11 times); "good works" (6 times); "sound" (5 times)

PURPOSE:

I TIMOTHY	TITUS	II TIMOTHY
Mostly pastoral	Less pastoral	Mostly pastoral
Guard the gospel 6:20	Practice the gospel 3:8	Preach the gospel 4:2

THEME: How to live a godly life

After his third missionary journey Paul went to Jerusalem where he was falsely accused and arrested. For his safety he was taken to Caesarea where he spent 2 years in house arrest. Paul appealed to Caesar and was taken to Rome. On the way he was shipwrecked. Eventually he was released because the Jews couldn't prove any charges against him. Paul then went to Ephesus and left Timothy there to help churches in that whole area. Paul continued on to northern Greece and wrote back to Timothy, encouraging him in his work and explaining about church order and organization (I Timothy). Next Paul went to Crete and left Titus there to supervise those churches. Soon Paul left Crete and went to Corinth. From there he wrote back to Titus encouraging him. Eventually he ended up in Ephesus again where he was arrested for the second time and taken back to Rome for the crime of being a Christian. From prison there he wrote to Timothy again (II Timothy).

BACKGROUND Sandwiched between I and II Timothy is the book of Titus which is very similar to I Timothy. Titus was a Gentile whom Paul led to salvation. Paul took him to the Jerusalem council to show the leaders a Gentile could be saved without being circumcised. At the end of the third missionary journey Titus again is mentioned. Paul sent him to Corinth to deal with delicate problems there (much the same as Timothy was sent to Ephesus). Mainly, though, Titus worked with the churches on Crete, just as Timothy worked with the churches in Ephesus.

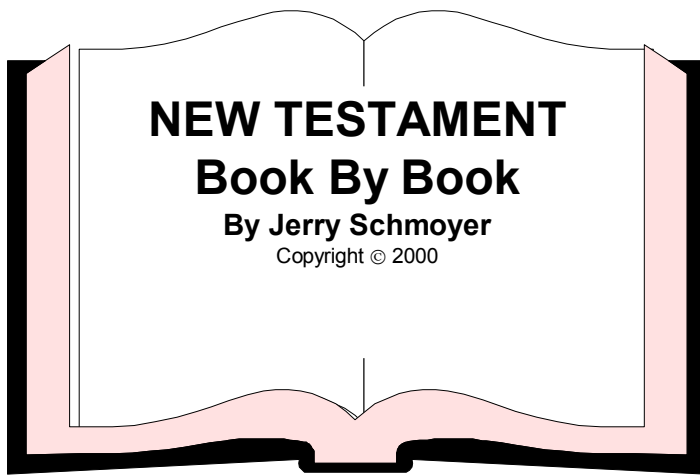
I. CONDUCT OF THE LEADERS (1:5-16) Paul begins by reminding Titus how the church leaders were to live and act. Qualifications and requirements were given for deacons and elders. Paul also warns them about false teachers and their danger. Titus couldn't be everywhere on the island of Crete so he needed dependable leaders to oversee the various house-churches there. This was the same set-up used in all the cities where there churches.

II. CONDUCT OF THE LAITY (2:1-10) Paul tells Titus how all believers are to live. Older men are to be self-controlled, women reverent and faithful, younger men are to be sensible. All are to set godly examples for others. Servants, too, are to live godly, submissive lives.

In all things they are to live by grace. They are to turn from ungodly lusts and desires. They are to live remembering that Jesus could come back for them at any time and they are to always be ready. Holiness must characterize God's people.

In relationship to the government they are to be good citizens. To all people they are to be ready to do what is good, honest in all they say and do, gracious and forgiving to all, and considerate and humble at all times. This will show others what a Christian really is. They are to avoid stiff and contentions among themselves.

Any who don't follow these principles are to be disciplined so they repent or are removed. This will show the seriousness of sin and keep the church pure. Living the Christian life is mandatory, not optional. It is a requirement, not suggestion. How are you doing?



PHILEMON: CHRISTIAN COURTESY

TITLE: Named for recipient

AUTHOR: Paul

DATE of WRITING: 60 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Rome (in prison)

RECIPIENT: Philemon, a rich and influential

believer in Colossae

KEY VERSE: *So if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. 18 If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. 19 I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand. I will pay it back-not to mention that you owe me your very self. 17-19*

KEY WORDS: “Love,” “beseech,” “profitable,” “servant”

PURPOSE: Paul intercedes with Philemon to be gracious to his slave Onesimus who ran away and is not returning to his service.

THEME: Christian courtesy and forgiveness

Several years Readers Digest printed the following. Talking with a friend recently, I remarked that status symbols are getting hard to come by. A great many people, if they want one badly enough, can have a new car, a fur coat, a Florida vacation, a boat, a cottage, a country-club membership, or even a college degree. “What’s left,” I asked, “to distinguish a man?” “Manners,” he replied, “just good manners.” The short letter of Philemon distinguishes Paul as a great man, a man of manners.

BACKGROUND Paul wrote to Philemon from prison just before his release. Onesimus, a slave of Philemon, ran away from Philemon after robbing him. He ended up in Rome meeting Paul, who led him to salvation. Onesimus stayed with Paul and helped him, becoming very useful to Paul while in house arrest. Philemon was a close friend of Paul. Paul had led him to salvation years before. He was one of the leaders in the church at Colossae. One of the house-churches that made up the church in Colossae met in his home. Now Paul is sending Onesimus back to his master with a letter asking for Philemon to forgive him. When the letter is closely studied one can see many ways in which Paul exercises Christian courtesy.

Paul begins by writing Philemon friend to friend. He doesn’t ‘pull rank’ and use his apostolic authority. Courtesy is made up of petty sacrifices, putting others first. It must come from the heart, an attitude of true love for others.

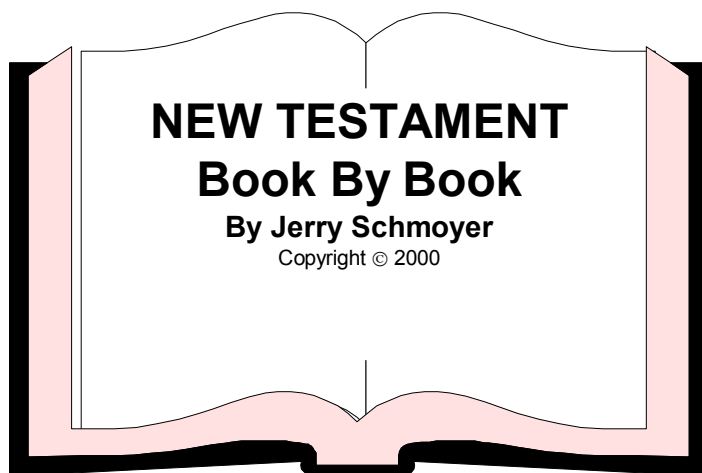
I. PRAISE OF PHILEMON (4-7) Paul begins by praying for Philemon, asking God to bless him. He then praises him for all the good he has done for Paul and the Gospel. Complementing people is very important and shows very good manners. Criticizing people is easy and does no one any good.

Remember that this letter was first read before the whole church. It wasn't delivered just to Philemon, but was for the whole church. Having Paul praise him was good for Philemon, setting the groundwork for the request that was coming.

II. PLEA FOR ONESIMUS (8-17) Paul wants Philemon to have the same gracious forsaking of rights for Onesimus that Paul has for Philemon. He wants him, too, to be polite and kind, based on love. Paul is showing Philemon love by sending Onesimus back to him and not using force to make Philemon forgive him. Paul wants Philemon to show love to him by forgiving Onesimus and accepting him back. Paul even points out that Onesimus has been very useful to him in prison, and that accepting him back without pressing charges would be like accepting Paul himself. He is using every argument he can to make sure Philemon comes to a godly, courteous decision in this matter. He isn't trying to force or manipulate him, or he wouldn't have sent Onesimus back. He sincerely wants to make it easier for Philemon to do the right thing. Paul is treating Philemon as he would want to be treated in similar circumstances – the Golden Rule in operation.

Paul says he is Philemon's friend, fellow-worker, brother and partner. To reject Onesimus would be to reject Paul and such a thing is unthinkable. Notice Paul never tries to sort out the reason Onesimus left. Whose fault was it? What went wrong? It's very hard to get to the bottom of things that way, often it just makes things worse. Christian courtesy means forgiving without having to prove guilt or innocence.

III. PROMISE OF PAUL (18-22) Paul says he will even pay Onesimus' debt so Philemon doesn't have to take the loss. Of course Philemon would never charge Paul for such a thing. Paul is very positive in what he expects of Philemon, saying he knows he will do the right thing. That is much more effective than being critical or condemning. Paul concludes by saying he will come for a visit when released from prison, and he probably soon did come. Thus we see valuable insights into Paul the man and his relationships with other believers. It's a fine example for us, too. Remember, you can't be too courteous!



HEBREWS: CHRIST IS SUPERIOR

TITLE: Recipients are Hebrew Christians

AUTHOR: Unknown (Paul, Barnabas, Timothy, Priscilla, etc.?)

DATE of WRITING: 65 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Unknown

RECIPIENTS: Jewish Believers

KEY VERSE: *For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." 4:4*

KEY WORDS: "Eternal" (13 times); "heavens" (13); "better" (12); "perfection" (11); "partakers" (7); "faith" (31)

PURPOSE: Encourage Jewish believers to stay faithful to Jesus and not give in to persecution and go back to Judaism for salvation.

THEME: Christ is superior to all things (including the Old Testament, Judaism, angels, etc.)

Becoming a 1st Century convert to Christianity could definitely be "hazardous to your health." There was rejection, persecution and even cruel death. It was especially hard if you were a Jewish believer because your family and friends would turn on you. Your whole support system would put tremendous pressure on you to revert back to Judaism. You would lose your job, your family, your savings, your inheritance and your hope through Judaism. Because of this extra pressure many Jewish believers who had put their faith in Jesus as the Messiah later recanted and went back to Judaism. This book was written to show them that Jesus is the ONLY way and that He is superior to everything in Judaism. It is essentially a commentary on Genesis through Deuteronomy showing how Jesus fulfill and supercedes all the laws and practices written therein. The Old Testament is but a shadow, Jesus is the real thing.

I. SUPERIORITY OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST (1:1 – 4:16) In a majestically constructed opening paragraph the author introduces his readers to the surpassing greatness of Jesus. Without a standard opening the author jumps right into his subject. Jesus is greater than the **Old Testament Prophets (1:1-4)** because He is the creator and sustainer of all things, the express image of God and the One seated beside the Father in heaven.

Next the writer shows that Jesus is greater than the **angels (1:5 – 2:18)** as well. He is superior because He is God and because He alone provided salvation. Jesus died for human sin as a man and thus defeated the most powerful angel, Lucifer. By becoming lower than the angels Christ lifted men up to a position spiritually superior to the angels.

Jesus is also superior to **Moses (3:1-6)**, the greatest Old Testament man to the Jews. Moses was a servant in God's house but Jesus was the builder of that house. In addition, Jesus is greater than **Joshua (3:7 – 4:16)**. Joshua may have led the Jews into the Promised Land, but even he didn't lead them into permanent victory or peace.

II. SUPERIORITY OF THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST (4:14 – 9:39) First the writer shows that Jesus is superior to **Aaron's priesthood (4:14 – 6:20)**. The Jewish high priest was in God's presence only one day a year, Jesus is continually there. He has unlimited access. He has no sin of his own to contend with as the Jewish priests did. They offered sacrifices for themselves and others, Jesus offered Himself as the sinless sacrifice for all and that ended the need for any sacrifices by any Jewish priests.

Jesus is even superior to **the priesthood of Melchizedek (7:1 – 8:13)**. He was a priest as well as a king, Jewish priests were never kings. Jewish priests were only priests from the age of 30 until their death, Melchizedek's priesthood was eternal, no beginning and no end.

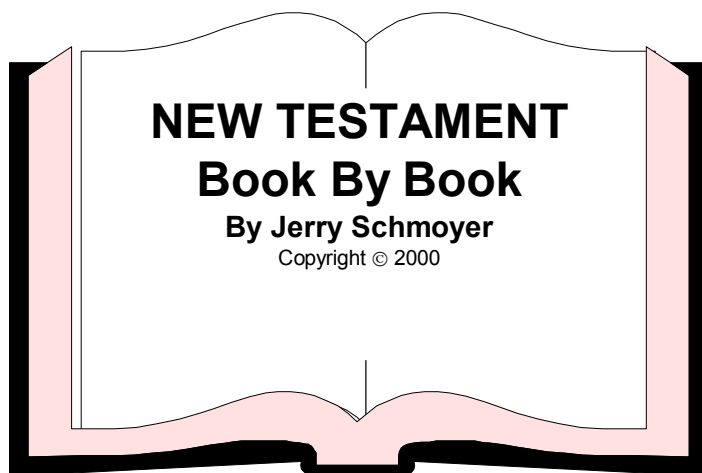
Thus Jesus is superior to **all priesthoods (9:1 – 10:39)**. His sacrifice is a one-time offering that totally removes all sin and guilt forever. His work is finished. He is seated in God's presence. Jewish priests can't compare to that at all.

III. SUPERIORITY OF THE POWER OF CHRIST (11:1 – 13:19) Jesus is greater than **faithlessness (11:1-40)**. Examples of those with faith are listed in chapter 11. It was their faith that brought God's approval, not their keeping of the Old Testament system. All were rewarded for their faith, and the writer wants his readers to be rewarded for theirs as well.

Following Jesus is greater than **hopelessness (12:1-29)**. Don't be like Esau he warns them, and sell their future spiritual blessing for a moment of physical relief from distress. When they see their error later it will be too late.

Finally he shows how Jesus is superior to **lovelessness (13:1-19)**. He says that Jesus motivates His followers to treat each other in love.

Interspersed throughout the book are 5 warnings to them to not go back. Some use these to show that salvation can be lost, but that's not the context they are written in. They are written to Jews who have realized that Jesus is the Messiah but, under pressure, have decided to go back to Judaism. Before they knew about Jesus, when they were in their ignorance, Judaism was all right and God didn't hold them accountable for what they didn't know. Now that they know, however, they are responsible to act on that and they can no longer go back to their ignorance. Jesus is superior. Is there anything in your life that you have above Him?



JAMES: TRUE FAITH

TITLE: Named for the author
AUTHOR: James, half brother of Jesus
DATE of WRITING: 45 AD (1st NT book)
PLACE of WRITING: Jerusalem
TIME COVERED: 45 AD
RECIPIENTS: Jewish Believers everywhere

KEY VERSE: *"You foolish man, do you want evidence that faith without deeds is useless?"* 2:20

KEY WORD: "faith" (16 times); :works: (15 times)

PURPOSE: For James to communicate with Jewish believers wherever they were. Since salvation wasn't by works, then what role did good works have in the Christian life?

THEME: True faith produces true works.

Suppose someone in your church fell over and didn't move. How would you know if they were dead? You'd check for signs of life: a pulse and breathing. When there is breathing there is physical life, when there is no breathing there is no life. James says the same thing is true spiritually. How is one to know if a body has spiritual life? If there are good works there is life, if there are no good works there is no spiritual life. It's that simple. "Faith without works is dead" is James' theme.

A Christian man worked each day transporting tourists across a lake. On occasion he would present the Gospel and its implications for life in a most unusual way. He had painted the word "Faith" on one of the oars of his rowboat and "Works" on the other. When they got quite far from shore, he would stop, then, beginning to row with only the one oar marked "faith," he would cause the boat to go in circles to the left. Reversing the process, he would pull on the other oar marked "works," and they would circle in the opposite direction. By this time the bewildered passengers were waiting for an explanation. This afforded him a wonderful opportunity to give them the truth concerning discipleship and the Christian life. He always concluded by saying, "You see, neither faith nor works can stand alone. They are twins that cannot be separated!" (James 2:20)

FAITH AND WORKS James is the first New Testament book written. Four hundred years of silence are broken. Nothing has been inspired since Malachi. Now God's Spirit again moves man to write. Their first problem is the relationship of grace and works. The second book written, Galatians, is about this same theme. Each seeks to avoid an extreme.

Now that Jews could become Christians without having to keep all the Jewish laws, what is the place of holy living? If it doesn't gain salvation, why live a godly life? If salvation is free, what does it matter how we live? Good works don't earn our salvation, but they do show that we already have salvation. They are a sign of faith. If faith is true, it will be manifest in how one lives. Salvation by faith will result in changed priorities, godly motives, humility, love, a desire to witness, and a life like Jesus.

JAMES THE MAN was the brother of Jesus. He became the leader of the early church in Jerusalem, along with John, when John's brother James was killed. This James grew up with Jesus but didn't believe until he saw His half brother after the resurrection.

I. TRUE FAITH AND TRIALS (1 - 2) James starts by talking about faith in times of trials and testing. It's one thing to say we believe in God and trust Him, it's another to show it when life is painful and unfair. It's interesting that James should start the New Testament by dealing with the problem of pain. The first book in the Old Test., Job, is about the same subject! True faith will triumph over obstacles.

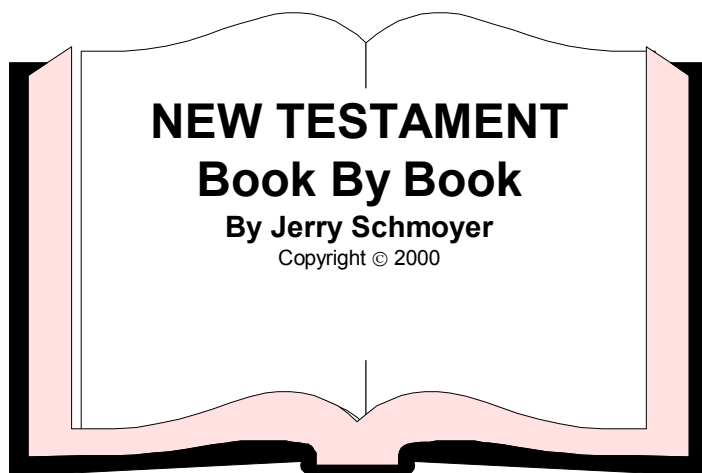
II. TRUE FAITH AND TALK (3) A second way true faith is shown is by our words. Since they show what is in our hearts, when our hearts change so will our talk. When we seek God's wisdom then we will become more like Jesus and our life will show it in all areas. In order for our life to show this, though, we must seek God's wisdom, not the world's wisdom. God's ways are different than man's ways. God's priorities and values differ from the world's.

III. TRUE FAITH AND TROUBLES (4) Another evidence of spiritual life is how one faces temptation. All will be tempted, and temptation is not sin, but continual progress over sin in life will be seen when one lives by faith. There doesn't have to be total victory immediately, but there must be progress in that direction. Faith results in one turning from worldliness.

IV. TRUE FAITH AND TRUST (5) Staying on the theme of materialism, true faith sees things as temporary and not the main thing in life. True faith will result in patience, godly speech and prayer.

Now, can you prove that YOU are alive? OK, physically you are breathing, so you have physical life. What about spiritually? Do you have spiritual life? Are there good works in your life, fruit of the Spirit, Christlikeness being reproduced in you? If not, what needs to happen in your life now to bring about the good works God requires?

Billy Graham had this to say about faith and works and their relationship to each other: "There really is no conflict between faith and works. In the Christian life they go together like inhaling and exhaling. Faith is taking the Gospel in; works is taking the Gospel out. Actually, what James is saying is: you can't have one without the other. The book of James balances off this matter of faith and works, and reminds us that the Christian must have both. True, we are not saved by works, but James reminds us also that we are not saved if good works do not follow. Some people argue this point so vehemently that it almost becomes like the old argument of which comes first, the chicken or the egg. The word "believe" comes from two words, "be" and "live". Faith helps us to "be," spiritually. But after we receive life, it is to find expression in Christian works and deeds. To show that there is no conflict in the Scriptures between the two, Paul, the advocate of faith speaks of "being rich in works," and James, the exponent of works, says, "rich in faith." Why be content with either when God has provided for, and says we must have both."



I PETER: SUFFERING

TITLE: Named for the author

AUTHOR: Peter

DATE of WRITING: 63 AD

PLACE of WRITING: 'Babylon' (Rome?)

RECIPIENTS: Jewish believers scattered everywhere

KEY VERSE: *Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. 13 But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. 4:12-14*

KEY WORDS: "Suffer" (16 times, implied 6 more); "glory" (16 times); "grace" (10 times)

PURPOSE: Peter wants to console persecuted Jewish believers who are scattered everywhere.

He also wants to prepare them for the trials that are still ahead. He does this by showing them the wonderful hope that lies ahead (1:13) and by Christ's example to us (2:21-23).

THEME: Encouragement to persecuted and suffering Christians

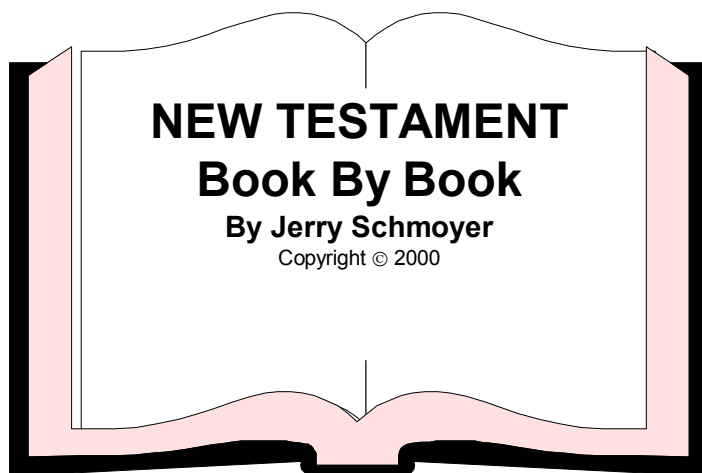
When you suffer for doing something wrong, like breaking the speeding limit and getting a ticket, it's relatively easy to bear the consequences for you know you are getting what you deserve. But when you suffer for doing something right, like getting fired from your job for telling the truth, that is much harder to bear. We have two options in how to respond: like the world (revenge, retaliation, bitterness) or like Jesus.

Many early Christians suffered unjust persecution for their beliefs. Jewish believers had it especially hard for they also were persecuted by Judaism and lost their family, friends and income. Peter writes to all, but especially to Jewish Christians, to help them stay faithful despite this persecution.

I. SALVATION (1:1 – 2:10) First Peter goes back and reminds them of their salvation and all they have in Christ. When you suffer always remember what you get FAR outweighs what you lose! See the copy of the letter on the other side for an outline of this section.

II. SUBMISSION (2:11 – 3:12) Throughout 2:11 – 3:12 two themes run side by side: submission and suffering. Peter encourages them to submit to their government, wives to husbands, other believers, church leaders and even to unbelievers to have a good testimony to them. Because we have salvation we are to submit no matter what happens.

III. SUFFERING (2:11 – 3:12) Suffering is a natural result of submitting instead of being hard and revengeful. We suffer even when we don't submit, but when we do we often suffer all the more. Jesus is our example. Peter says that suffering for Christ brings God glory and that we must trust in and depend on God to get us through it. Every Christian must come to grips with the Christian world view of suffering. It is to make us more like Jesus and to bring God glory as we trust Him through it. Is that true of you? It certainly should be!



II PETER: KEEP THE FAITH

TITLE: Named for the author

AUTHOR: Peter

DATE of WRITING: 64 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Unknown (Rome?)

RECIPIENTS: Jewish believers scattered everywhere

KEY VERSE: *But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them-bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2:1*

KEY WORDS: "Knowledge" (16 times); "judgment" (4 times)

PURPOSE:

I PETER	II PETER
Suffering from without (persecution)	Suffering from within (false teachers)
Consolation	Warning
Hope to face trials	Knowledge to face errors
"Christ" – title of redemption	"Lord" – title of dominion
Suffering of Christ	Glory to follow

THEME: To strengthen and confirm believers against attack by false teachers.

Peter was the first leader of the early church, Paul the second. The first half of the book of Acts is about Peter, the second about Paul. Sanguine Peter nursed the newborn church along so it could get established and start to grow. Choleric Paul whipped the adolescent church into shape and protected it against false teachers and those who would mislead it. Peter was with Jesus when He lived on earth, Paul was not. Peter was a common fisherman, Paul a well-trained upper class religious leader. Peter ministered mainly to Jews, Paul mainly to Gentiles. Yet despite these differences they served the same Lord at the same time. Both were martyred in Rome during the first great persecution. Peter was crucified upside down, Paul beheaded (an easier death because he was a Roman citizen). Each of them wrote their final book shortly before their deaths. Paul's was II Timothy, Peter's was II Peter. Both of them knew they would soon die when they wrote and gave encouragement to their followers to stay faithful no matter what happened. Both expressed deep faith and confidence in God. Both warned against apostasy in those 'last days.' The theme of II Timothy is 'Faithful Service.' The theme of II Peter is 'Keep the Faith.'

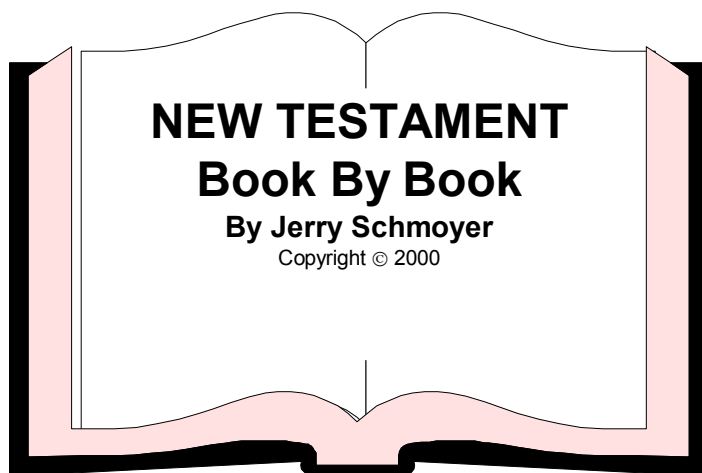
Peter wrote I & II Peter to the same audience – Jewish believers wherever they may be. In I Peter he talked about suffering from without the church: persecution, etc. In II Peter he talks about suffering from within the church: false teachers and apostates. This 'poison in the pew' is the worst kind. The only defense is to 'keep the faith.' Stay faithful to true Bible doctrine. The best defense is a strong offense. That's true against false teachers, too.

I. CONVICTIONS OF THE FAITH (1:3-21) Peter pleads with his readers to continue to walk with God no matter what. He says this is the only way to be for now, and it will bring rewards for all eternity. He uses his own testimony as well as the authority of Scripture to back this up.

When they are healthy and sound in their beliefs, false teachings won't be able to get a foothold among them.

II. CONTENTION FOR THE FAITH (2:1-22) Peter reminds them that there always have been and always will be false teachers. They counterfeit the truth, making what they teach seem like the truth. They secretly undermine the truth and subtly replace it with error, ever so slightly here and there until it finally takes hold. Peter says they will be judged and condemned, like the angels which fell with Lucifer, like the people in Noah's generation, like those in Sodom and Gomorrah. However in all these cases God spares the godly. He exposes their conduct, their claims and their converts.

III. CONSUMMATION OF THE EARTH (3:1-18) One of the major heresies of the false teachers was the denial of the second coming of Jesus. If Jesus doesn't return it means He lied, He isn't God, unbelievers won't be punished and believers won't be rewarded. Peter goes into detail telling what that Day of the Lord will be like. He reassures his readers that those who are believers will be spared but others will be judged. He tells them that the only reason it hasn't happened yet is God's mercy, waiting for more to repent. Peter concludes by using this as motivation to stay faithful. Be ready, he says – Jesus will return at any minute! Are you ready? Are you living in light of Jesus' soon return? What if He came today? Are you ready?



I JOHN: FELLOWSHIP

TITLE: Named for author

AUTHOR: John

DATE of WRITING: about 90 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Ephesus

RECIPIENTS: Believers everywhere

KEY VERSE: *He who has the Son has life;*

he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life.
5:12-13

KEY WORDS: "Love" (45 times); "know" (35); "world" (23); "life" (15); "light" (6)

PURPOSE:

GOSPEL	I JOHN
Written to arouse faith (20:31)	Written to establish certainty regarding that faith (5:13)
The Good News Historically	The Good News Experientially

THEME: How to have fellowship with God and others, and to know you have assurance of salvation.

Its 25 years since the persecution that killed Peter, Paul, Timothy and thousands of others. It's 90 AD. John is the only disciple not martyred. He still lives in Ephesus where he took care of Mary for so many years, as Jesus had asked him to do. He writes a letter to no one particular place, just to believers in general. He had something he wanted to say to everyone so he wrote a letter that would be copied and spread everywhere

The Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) have been written to keep the record for future generations, after the eyewitnesses have died. They were circulated so all would know the truth and not be misled by false teachers. John wrote his gospel 2 or more years after the others. He wrote to show his readers how to have eternal life in Christ (20:31). Now he is writing again to tell them how they can know they have eternal life and enjoy it now. He tells them this takes belief in Christ, obedience and love. False teachers attacked these 3 so John defends and explains them. The key, John says, is fellowship with God and then with man.

The false teachers were the Gnostics which Paul wrote against in Colossians. They made knowledge the greatest virtue, denied the Bible, said everything material is evil but we are spiritual, so our body can sin all we want and it won't affect our immaterial part which will be reincarnated one day anyway. Much of these false ideas have reemerged in 'New Age' belief.

I. CONDITIONS OF FELLOWSHIP (1:5 – 2:2) John starts by explaining the conditions of fellowship. We can't be close to God when we have sin in our lives (despite what the Gnostics say). Sin breaks relationships – man to man as well as man to God. The solution is not to be perfect and sinless, for that will never happen. The solution is to confess (admit, agree with God about the sin) the sin and accept His forgiveness.

II. CONDUCT IN FELLOWSHIP (2:3-27) John, the disciple of love whom Jesus loved so very much, said that they couldn't love God if they didn't love each other. If you truly love someone, you will love

their children as well. If you aren't kind to their children, you really don't love them. The same is true with God and His children. The love John is talking about is agape love – unconditional love, love in spite of. It's love that is the fruit of the Spirit, the love that comes only from God. It's not phileo love – conditional love, 'liking' someone because of what they do (or don't do).

John also tells them they can't love God and love the world, for they are diametrically opposed world views with no common ground. It's one or the other. If you love God you will go against the world system. If you love the world system you will go against God. If you say you love God but live by the world's values and priorities, you don't really love God. Loving God will show itself in how you live. We can't have fellowship with God and the world, it's one or the other.

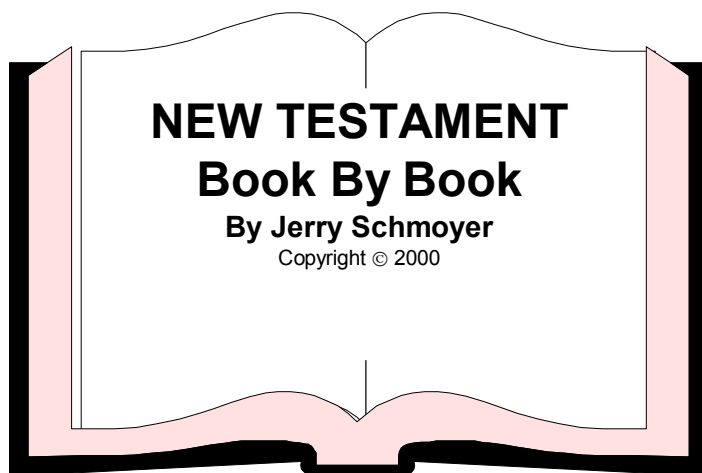
When John says we can't love the world, he is not talking about nature but about the Satan-inspired system of self-centered goals and motives, values and principles.

III. CHARACTERISTIC OF FELLOWSHIP (2:28 – 3:24) The condition for fellowship with God is no unconfessed sin in our life. The conduct of fellowship is to obey Him in love. The characteristic of that fellowship is living a holy, righteous life. That is what will happen when we obey Him in love. Our life will not be marked by continual habitual sin. We will reject the world's prideful, selfish, pleasure-first ways and the world will reject us. We will have a sincere love for God and fellow believers which will show itself in how we live and act.

IV. CAUTIONS OF FELLOWSHIP (4:1-21) John warns his readers to watch out for false, lying, deceiving teachers. These people they are to have no fellowship with.

V. CONSEQUENCES OF FELLOWSHIP (5:1-21) John concludes reminding them to have love for each other and trust Jesus to give them victory over the world. He reminds them that Jesus is God and man in one, something the false teachers strongly deny (as they do today, too). He also assures them of eternal life, that their salvation is secure and certain.

There are many practical truths in I John for us today. It is a book to read and apply. If you have accepted Jesus as your Savior, make sure there is no sin in your life. Make sure you obey Him in love, and show that love for God by loving your fellow believers.



II JOHN: GO IN TRUTH

TITLE: Named for author

AUTHOR: John

DATE of WRITING: about 90 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Ephesus

RECIPIENTS: Christian lady & her children

KEY VERSE: *Anyone who runs ahead and*

does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. 9-10

KEY WORDS: "Truth" (5 times); "walk" (3 times)

PURPOSE: 1. To give a Christian lady a good report about her children.

2. To warn and instruct her with regard to compromising with false teachers. She is told how to avoid being deceived (v. 9) and how to treat deceivers (v. 10-11).

THEME: Warning against receiving deceivers and false teachers.

II John is similar to I John, only shorter. It was written just after I John. John addresses it to a Christian lady, probably a church. In those days of persecution he was protecting them from danger. Immediately he gets to the point: stay faithful to God and avoid false teachings and teachers.

I. GO (4-6) He tells them to go and grow in truth. Their testimony of obedience to God has spread to John and he is encouraged by it. John also commends them for their love, which is their motive in obedience. If we love God we will obey Him. Love alone is weak and undisciplined. Obedience alone is cold and mechanical. Together there is a real balance of beauty. Do you have love and obedience? Which are you strongest in?

II. CAUTION (7-11) John warns them to avoid anyone who isn't obeying God in love. He specifically warns against anyone who does not see Christ as 100% God and 100% man in One. He is the God-man Who came to die for our sins and rise again.

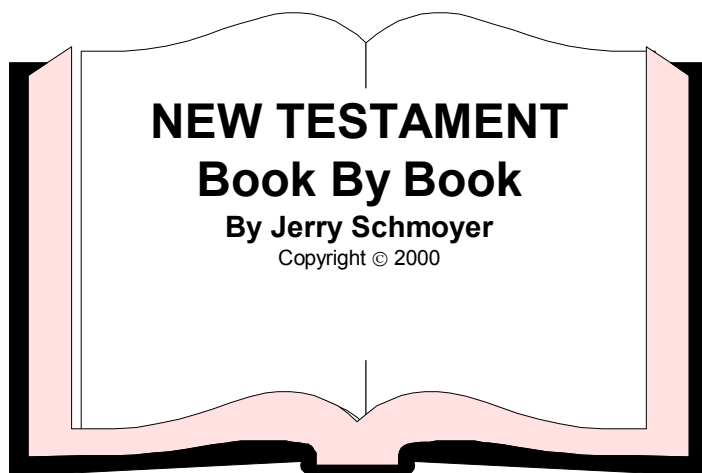
Notice how virtually off of the later New Testament books warn against false teachings? Why does God allow so many false teachers and teachings – then and now? For one thing, that motivated the disciples to write down the truth to keep it true and clear (so we have the New Testament). Another reason is to weed out the professors from the true possessors. It gave people a choice, and those who didn't want to accept Jesus as the God-man and live for Him had plenty of alternatives to turn to. God always gives man a free will choice. He never forces anyone. Another reason is that God allows the false teachers time to discover the error of their beliefs and repent. He doesn't force their free will, either, but does give them time to turn to Him for mercy and forgiveness.

John warns his readers that if they turn from the truth in Jesus to false teachings they won't lose their salvation but will lose reward. They can't lose the rewards they already have laid ahead, but can fail to earn any more and thus not get their full potential of reward.

III. STOP (9-11) John in effect says the same thing here that he said years before in John 15 – abide/remain in Christ. The message has not changed. Abiding and obeying are inseparable. Abiding in Christ calls for a firm response against those who don't abide. If someone doesn't have that John says we aren't to do anything to in any way encourage them, including letting them into our home (9-11).

In those days teachers and preachers traveled by foot and relied on local people for lodging and hospitality. There were no hotels or inns to stay in. It was the duty of believers to provide hospitality to these people (III John is about this very thing). However if someone isn't totally committed in belief and actions to Jesus as God and man in One, the only way of salvation, John says to have NOTHING to do with them. Don't even invite them in to debate them. Why? That is enough to encourage them in their wrong ways. Others will see you invite them in and could take it for acceptance. It is bad stewardship of ones own time. Also, the chances of them planting seeds of doubt in you are much greater than the chances of you straightening them out. It's often our pride that says we are too strong to be swayed and we are smart enough to show them their wrongs. Today we are too tolerant of religious differences. As long as someone appears 'sincere' we back off. "Who are we to 'judge' someone else?" we think. Paul, Peter, John and Jesus Himself would be very stern with us. They'd call it compromise and sin!

Always find out clearly where someone stands on the deity of Jesus and salvation by the shed blood of Jesus only. If they dance around it or are vague, watch out! Also have them define their terms. Roman Catholics and Mormons alike talk about 'salvation through faith by grace' but define their terms differently than we do. Watch out!!!



III JOHN: HOSPITALITY

TITLE: Named for author

AUTHOR: John

DATE of WRITING: about 90 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Ephesus

RECIPIENTS: Gaius, a faithful convert of John's

KEY VERSE: *We ought therefore to show hospitality to such men so that we may work together for the truth. 8*

KEY WORD: "Truth: (7 times)

PURPOSE: John had sent some faithful servants of God to minister to his church. Diotrephes, a leader, refused to be hospitable to them and he threatened to cast out of the church anyone who showed them hospitality. John warns against this and says he will come straighten it out. In the meantime, Gaius is to show hospitality to Demetrius, a visiting minister.

THEME: The importance of showing hospitality to true believers.

I JOHN	II JOHN	III JOHN
FELLOWSHIP	WALK IN TRUTH	HOSPITALITY
Jesus The LIFE	Jesus The TRUTH	Jesus The WAY
Fellowship with God (is crucial)	Fellowship with enemies (is forbidden)	Fellowship with Believers (is important)
FAITH	HERESY	HOSPITALITY
These "went out" (2:19)	These want to get in (10)	These want to cast out those who should be in (10)

Do you have a guest room in your house? If you do, then you have turned your home into a 'hospital'. 'Hospital' in Latin means 'guest room'. Every time you extend hospitality to someone, technically that person has been 'hospitalized.' Now the word is used of medical centers, but really it should be something all of us do. Often it is a lost art today. We send people to hotels or motels and we take them to restaurants instead.

To the Jews it was considered a sacred duty to receive, feed, lodge and protect any traveler who might stop at your door. Strangers were treated as honored guests. Men who thus ate together were bond to each other by the strongest ties of friendship, which descended to their heirs. Hospitality was a religious duty, even commanded by the law of Moses (Lev. 19:33-34). No one was to consider their house as theirs alone. It was always to be open to whoever may need a place to stay and they passed by.

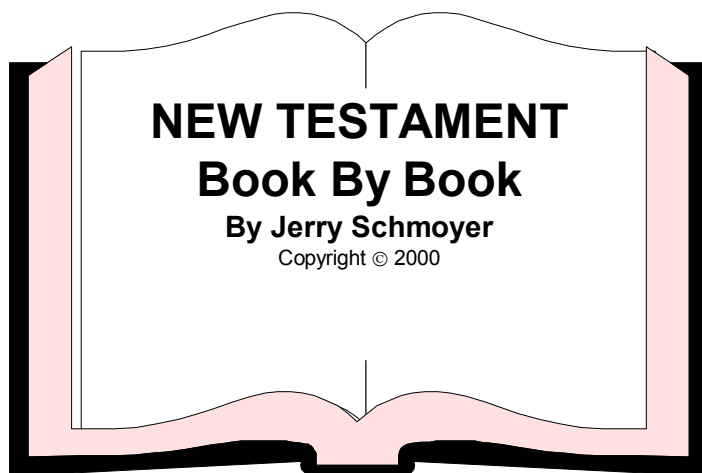
THE CAST **Diotrephes** dominated the church but wasn't hospitable. He was a jealous, controlling person who threatened to excommunicate any in his church who were hospitable to traveling preachers or teachers. **Demetrius** carried this letter of III John. He was a traveling preacher in need of a place to stay. **Gaius** was a believer in Asia Minor and was urged to show hospitality to Demetrius no matter what Diotrephes said or did. Thus III John is the only New Testament book that was private and personal. It was a letter addressed from John to Gaius, never intended for anyone else to read, much less be part of the Bible. The themes of love and truth again dominate, as they did in John's other letters, I and II John. III John is very short, more like a post card than a letter!

I. PROSPERITY SHOULDERS HOSPITALITY (GAIUS) 2-8 John, who probably enjoyed Gaius' hospitality himself, encouraged him to show the same consideration to Demetrius. He complements and encourages him in his spiritual growth. He says that all this love shown in hospitality brings honor and glory to God. Also, the one helping someone else do God's work shares in the reward that one gets. This is true if we give of our time, talents or treasure to help someone in God's work. It includes missionaries and pastors, but also anyone we help.

II. PRIDE SHOWS HOSPITALITY (DIOTREPHE) 9-10 It seems John had already contacted Diotrephes about his control and self-centeredness, but there was no change. Pride and control can be a temptation for anyone in leadership. John says he will come and deal with the problem of Diotrephes personally when he can, but that now he wants to make sure Gaius is cared for.

III. PRAISE SHOWS HOSPITALITY (DEMETRIUS) 11-12 One's conduct clearly reflects one's relationship with God. Demetrius is a godly man that John can highly recommend. He assures him that Gaius isn't a false teacher – probably that is the excuse Diotrephes used in denying traveling pastors hospitality. John says that isn't so.

So why is this short private letter in the Bible with books like Romans and Revelation? Because God wants us to know that showing hospitality is still very important. Do you do it?



JUDE: APOSTASY

TITLE: Named for author

AUTHOR: Jude, half-brother of Jesus

DATE of WRITING: 70 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Unknown

RECIPIENTS: All believers everywhere

KEY VERSE: *Dear friends, although I was*

very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints. 3

KEY WORD: “Ungodly” (6 times)

PURPOSE: Jude wanted to write about their “common salvation” but the Holy Spirit led him to write about the false teachers who were creeping in. They are clearly described, and so is their doom. Jude comforts and encourages the true believers

THEME: All about apostates and apostasy.

II PETER	JUDE
Warning against false teachings & teachers	Warning against false teachings & teachers
False teachers WILL come	False teachers HAVE come
Dark picture painted of false teachers	Darker picture painted of false teachers

Attacks from without are obvious, clearly seen attempts to defeat us and turn us from faithfulness to Jesus. Attacks from within are not as black and white. They are more subtle and deceptive. Guess which are most effective? Guess which Satan uses more? Persecution makes the church stronger and it grows in quality and quantity. False teaching within weakens it bit by bit, until it is diluted and ineffective.

We are not immune from this effective tactic of Satan’s today. Some forms include adding works of any kind to salvation. It can be legalism or anything based on fear. The other extreme is the teaching that God is love so everyone will go to heaven, no one will be condemned. Then there are those who say you can lose your salvation unless you do certain things, or that Satan has no influence on us today, or that man doesn’t sin after salvation. Other false teachings make certain spiritual gifts more ‘spiritual’ than others or base healing and prosperity on our having enough ‘faith’ to ‘claim’ it. The list goes on and on.

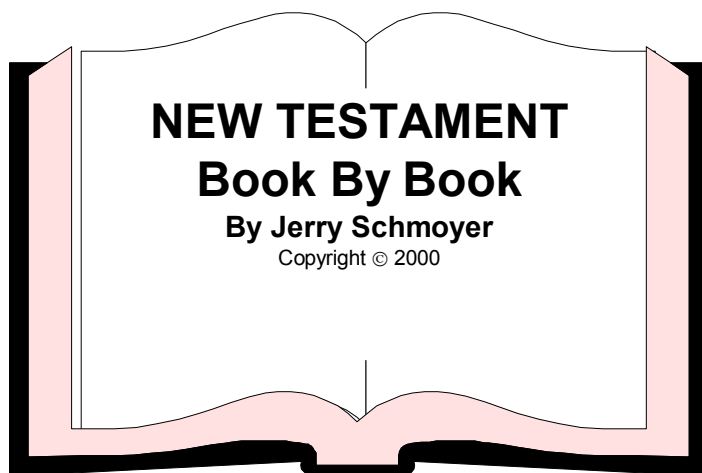
In the opening to his short book (v. 1-2), Jude assured the readers that their spiritual position was eternally secure and that God’s abundant provision for daily living was available to them. Then he talks about apostasy (turning from the faith).

I. ANALYSIS OF APOSTASY (3-4) Jude encourages his readers to contend (literally “agonize”) for the true faith and avoid any and all counterfeits. He says they sneak in the back door, they don’t parade in with the label of false teachings on them. They sneak in, like a little arsenic in food or a little spark in a gas tank.

II. ANATOMY OF APOSTASY (5-16) Jude refers to many Old Testament events. He talks about the Israelites (v. 5 – Numbers 13-14); fallen angels (v. 6 – II Peter 2:4); Sodom and Gomorrah (v. 7 – Genesis 18-19); Cain (v. 11 – Genesis 4); Balaam (v. 11 – Numbers 22-24); Korah (v. 11 – Numbers 16); Enoch (v. 14 – Genesis 5:18-24). He uses many of these as examples of past apostates whom God did judge. Let this be a warning! Jude says they are spiritually blind but speak about spiritual things as if they have the only and final answer to everything.

Jude also uses illustrations from nature to picture apostasy. He says it is like hidden reefs under the water's surface which a ship doesn't see but which sinks it. He says it is like clouds who look promising but don't hold any water. Also it is like autumn trees that have leaves but no fruit. He equates them to wild waves of the sea which make lost of motion but don't accomplish anything. Finally he says they are like wandering stars: brief, aimless and then darkness. Contrast this with Jesus who is the Rock of our Salvation instead of hidden rocks which shipwreck our faith. Jesus comes with clouds to refresh forever, He is the Tree of Life producing eternal fruit, He leads beside still waters, not wild seas. He is the Bright and Morning Star heralding the day.

III. ANTIDOTE FOR APOSTASY (17-23) Jude wants them to remember the warnings about apostasy being a sign of the last days and to watch out for it. He encourages them to keep their eyes on the truth and keep growing spiritually. That is the best antidote to false teaching. He says that they are to try to rescue those who fall into false teaching, but in such a way that they are very careful they don't get hurt. It's like treating a hamburger patty that falls into the coals. You rescue it quickly, gently and carefully so you don't get burnt.



REVELATION: PROPHECY

TITLE: Start of book, "revelation of Jesus Christ"

AUTHOR: John

DATE of WRITING: 96 AD

PLACE of WRITING: Isle of Patmos

RECIPIENTS: 7 churches in Asia Minor and all believers

KEY VERSE: *Write, therefore, what you have seen, what is now and what will take place later.*
1:19

KEY WORDS: "I saw" (49 times); "angel" (70); "seven" (59); "lamb" (29)

PURPOSE:

GOSPELS	ACTS & EPISTLES	REVELATION
PAST	PRESENT	FUTURE
Christ as PROPHET	Christ as PRIEST	Christ as KING
Setting: ISRAEL	Setting: CHURCH	Setting: UNIVERSE
Founder of Christianity	Fundamentals of Christianity	Fulfillment of Christianity
Introduction	Application	Realization

THEME: Reveal the future tribulation and related events to mankind.

GENESIS	REVELATION
Creation of heaven and earth	New heavens and earth
Paradise Lost	Paradise of God regained
Sorrow, pain enter	Sorrow, pain gone forever
First Adam and his wife	Last Adam and His Bride (church)

I. PERSON OF CHRIST (PAST) 1:3-20 John is imprisoned on Patmos. He is old, for it's 60+ years since the crucifixion. An angel comes to reveal these things to him.

II. POSSESSION OF CHRIST (PRESENT) 2 – 3 God first reveals messages for seven churches in Asia Minor that John was familiar with. They are listed in the order they would receive the letter as it traveled the circular mail route in Asia Minor. The carrier would read the letter in one city then move on to the next. The cities were Ephesus (John's home town), Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea. Only Smyrna and Philadelphia didn't receive any condemnation. All received some commendation from the Lord except Laodicea.

III. PROGRAM OF CHRIST (FUTURE) 4 – 22 The majority of the book of Revelation is about the coming 7-year tribulation. First the tribulation is seen from the view of heaven (judgment), chapters 4-11. Then it is gone through from beginning to end again from the earth's perspective (warfare), chapters 12-19.

First, 7 seal judgments are unleashed on the earth. These start with the Antichrist bringing peace, but soon turn to war, family, death to ¼ of the world population, and tremendous changes to nature. Many believers are martyred during this time. God sets aside 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes (144,000) as special witnesses and evangelists. They come to salvation at the start of the tribulation (for all true believers are raptured before the tribulation).

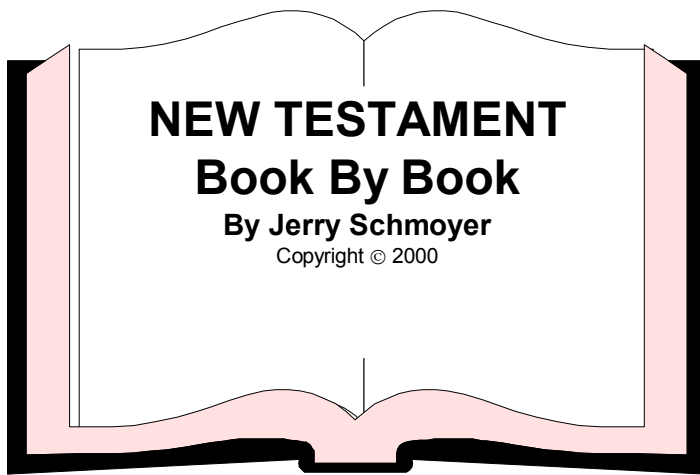
Following this are 7 trumpet judgments which affect the earth's vegetation, the sea and fresh water and the sun, moon and stars. Locust-like demons torture all who haven't turned to God for salvation. In the middle of this tribulation God raises up 2 special witnesses who will even do miracles and who cannot be killed. God always has His witness for man.

Satan will have his counterfeit trinity to oppose God and rule the world, as he has always wanted to do. Satan counterfeits God, the power behind it all. The Antichrist will counterfeit Christ. He'll bring peace and set himself up to be worshipped, then by Satan's power counterfeit his own death and resurrection and kill all the believers he possibly can. The False Prophet, Antichrist's assistant, while head up the apostate church until it is destroyed. He will kill any who do not wear the 666 in recognition of the Antichrist as God.

Seven bowl judgments complete God's judgment on man for rejecting Jesus. This culminates with the battle of Armageddon, when Jesus returns with the armies of heaven (us) and totally and instantly destroys all of feeble man's resistance to His authority.

Following this tribulation comes a thousand year period called the Millennium (Rev. 20). Jesus will rule on earth on David's throne as prophesied and all will return to Garden of Eden conditions.

Following a final revolt by Satan, who is consigned to hell forever along with his demons and those who haven't accepted God's free gift of salvation, God will create a new heavens and new earth (Rev 21-22). There we will dwell with Him for all eternity. Are you ready? I hope so!

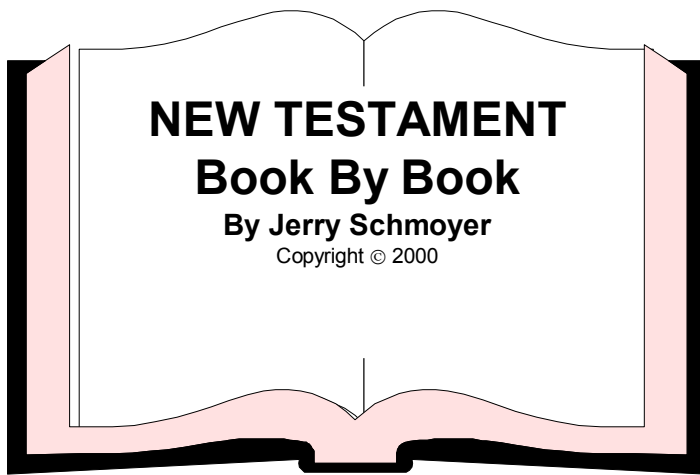


GENESIS: BEGINNINGS

TITLE:
AUTHOR:
DATE of WRITING:
PLACE of WRITING:
TIME COVERED:
RECIPIENTS:

KEY VERSE:
KEY WORD:
PURPOSE:
THEME:.

Several years ago a man named Alex Haley wrote a book called “Roots” which captured the attention of the entire nation. It was about his search for his background, where he came

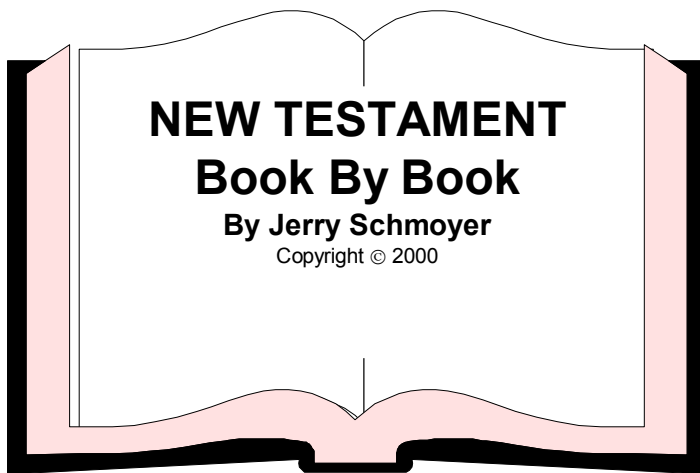


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