

New Testament Survey

The Gospels

Matthew

The Gospel of Matthew is ascribed to Matthew the publican, tax collector, and disciple. It is the most complete account of Jesus' teachings and was written to convince the writer's Jewish audience that Jesus was the Messiah descended from David, the One promised by the Old Testament Prophets.

Mark

The Gospel of Mark - the shortest and to be written. John Mark, a companion of Peter and also of Paul and Barnabas in their missionary endeavors. The preaching of Peter may well have been the source of most of Mark's material. Mark accounts for the ministry of Jesus from His Baptism to His Ascension. His Gospel is theological: to present Jesus as the Christ, the mighty worker. Hence, Mark makes fewer references to the Parables and discourses, but records each of Jesus' "mighty works" as evidence of His divine power. Mark contains 20 specific miracles and alludes to others. Mark wrote his Gospel in Rome for the gentiles.

Luke

Luke, the "beloved physician" (Col. 4:14) who accompanied Paul on his missionary travels, was the author of the third Gospel. Luke wrote to present Jesus as the Universal Savior, the compassionate healer and teacher. His careful historical approach is revealed in the preface, which states that the author has traced "all things from the very first". Unlike Mark, this author includes an account of the Virgin Birth, and unlike Matthew he extensively describes the Perea Ministry (Chapters 9-18).

John (Non-Synoptic)

The Gospel of John was written by John the beloved disciple. It endeavors to explain the mystery of the Person of Christ by the use of the term "logos" (word) and was written to confirm Christians in the belief that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God and God the Son. Its purpose is evangelical and is so stated in 20:31. John not only records events as do the other Gospels but also uniquely interprets the events by giving them spiritual meaning. The author makes significant use of such words as light, water, life, love, and bread.

History

Acts

Addressed to a certain Theophilus, the Book of Acts records the early history of the Apostolic Church. Beginning with the Ascension of Jesus to heaven, it traces the growth of Christianity in Palestine and its spread to Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and eventually to Rome. The leading figure in the first chapters is Peter, who delivered the stirring sermon on the day of

Pentecost (2). The greater part of the book, however, is devoted to the experiences of Paul and his companions during their missionary endeavors. The Book of Acts provides a useful background for study of the Pauline Epistles. The introduction (1:1) attests to a Lukan authorship.

Epistles

Pauline Epistles

Romans

This letter, the first in canonical order, but not the first of Paul's Epistles, is the longest and the most influential of all of the Apostle's writings. Writing to Christians at Rome whom he hoped soon to visit, Paul presents to them his mature convictions concerning the Christian faith: the universality of sin; the impotence of the law as a means of salvation; the nature of God's saving act in Christ, and its appropriation by faith alone.

First Corinthians

This letter discusses doctrinal and ethical problems in the Corinthian church, and presents a picture of the life of a particular local congregation in New Testament times. Writing from Ephesus, Paul addresses the Corinthian church concerning the significance of the new life in Christ, which should be demonstrated in the fellowship within the Church. He advises them regarding spiritual gifts (12), Christian love (13), and the meaning of the Resurrection (15).

Second Corinthians

Often called "the hard letter", this is an intensely personal letter. It recounts the difficulties and hardships Paul has endured in the service of Christ (10-13). The Apostle regards the Corinthians as his children in Christ. Paul asserts and defends his Apostleship.

Galatians

Paul's letter addressed to the churches in Galatia is the great letter on Christian freedom; in it Paul attacks the Christians who wished to exalt the law. Galatians' emphasis is similar to the theme of Paul's letter to the Romans. The doctrinal section, as is typical of the Pauline format, is followed by an intensely practical section in Chapters five and six.

Ephesians

The Ephesian letter is one of Paul's four "Imprisonment Letters" - Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon being the others. Although addressed to the church in Ephesus, this letter is generally believed to have been a circular discussing the believers' exalted position through Christ, the Church as the body of Christ, her relationship to God, and practical implications of the Gospel.

Philippians

In this letter, which is a message of joy, Paul expresses his gratitude for the Philippians' love and material assistance. The Epistle is uniquely significant because of its presentation of the humility of Jesus. Its practicality is also observed in Paul's advice to Euodia and Syntyche.

Colossians

The Colossian letter is well known for its doctrine as well as for its brevity. In the letter, Paul insists upon the Lordship of Christ. Colossians is very pointed in its attack on Gnosticism vs. the Supremacy of Christ.

First & Second Thessalonians

Probably the earliest writing of the Apostle Paul soon after the founding of the Thessalonian church, and give Paul's answer, to some basic problems disturbing the Christians of Thessalonica. The major contributions are eschatological, investigating especially the events preceding and accompanying the return of Christ.

First & Second Timothy

Along with the letter to Titus, these writings are defined as "pastoral epistles", which approach the material from the perspective of the minister, not of the Church. The letters to Timothy discuss such matters as the duties and qualifications of church officers, the inspirations of Scripture, the treatment of widows, and the expectation of a future reward.

Titus

This is a personal letter written by the Apostle Paul to a young minister on Crete. Like the Timothy correspondence, the letter to Titus is practical and discusses the everyday problems confronted by a young minister.

Philemon

This shortest of all Paul's letters was addressed to Philemon (although two other persons are included in the salutation). Paul entreats Philemon, the master of Onesimus, a runaway slave, to receive him back as a brother in Christ (16, 17). This very personal letter reveals not only the concern of the Apostle for a converted slave but also a practical demonstration of brotherhood in Christ.

Hebrews

Unknown Author - The Epistle portrays Jesus, who performed the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world, as the great High Priest of the line of Melchizedek (Gen. 14). This Epistle shows Christ being the superior fulfillment of all of the ceremonies of the Old Testament.

General Epistles

James

The writer of this Epistle is usually identified with James who was the leader of the church in Jerusalem. The letter is addressed to the "the twelve tribes which

are scattered abroad". It is not a treatise on Christian theology but rather a practical letter dealing with Christian ethics. James insists that works, not words, are the mark of a disciple.

First Peter

Written by the Apostle Peter, this letter reflects a time of suffering and trial. No doubt the widespread persecution of the Christians by the Roman authorities was the occasion of the "fiery trial" (4:12). The writer admonishes his readers to a life of purity, of godly living, and exhorts them to steadfastness and faithfulness.

Second Peter

This letter was a "reminder" to the readers of the truth of the Gospel, which they had received as against the attacks of false teachers who would pervert it. The author urges his hearers to remain steadfast even amidst persecution and reminds them that the Lord will keep His promises. He speaks of the "day of the Lord" (parousia) and of the necessity of keeping themselves "without spot and blameless" (3:14)

The Epistles of John

3 Johannine Epistles - I, II and III John. John, the author of the Fourth Gospel, addresses the first one to an unidentified group. I John 5:13 indicates that the author writes in order that this group might know the certainty of eternal life. II John is addressed to an elect lady, either a church or perhaps a woman. III John is to Gaius who is commended for his hospitality.

Jude

The author of this short letter warns his readers against the dangers of apostasy, and points to the faithlessness of the Israelites as a reminder of God's judgment. Surrounded as his readers were by moral corruption and apostatizing influences, the author urges them to "contend for the faith" (3), and in a closing benediction he commends them to the One "who is able to keep you from falling" (24).

Prophetical Book

Revelation

This last book of the Bible identifies itself as "the revelation of Jesus Christ", and its author is designated "his servant John" who was exiled to the Greek island of Patmos because of his faith. John the author of the Fourth Gospel. Addressed to seven historical churches in Asia Minor, the Book of Revelation was written to warn against spiritual indifference and to elicit courage under persecution. Because of the extensive use of symbolism and picturesque imagery, its interpretation has posed many problems for the student of the Bible. The ultimate victory of Christ is the dominant theme of this book.