

New Testament Survey

Introduction:

The message of the New Testament is essentially one. It centers about the Person of Christ and the work of the cross. Christ appears *historically* in the Gospels, *mediately* in the Acts, *doctrinally* in the Epistles and *prophetically* in the Revelation. Redemption is *enacted* in the Gospels, *proclaimed* in the Acts, *interpreted* in the Epistles and *consummated* in the Revelation. This evangel is not a new one. “To him bear all the prophets witness, that through his name everyone that believeth on him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43, A.S.V.).

This course is intended for students at the beginning of their Bible college study of the New Testament. For this reason that which follows attempts to give an overview of the entire collection of twenty-seven books. The brief treatment of background and the integration of the various segments of the New Testament should aid in attaining this aim.

The Background of the New Testament:

The stream of history in the pre-Christian era flow three main currents. One was primarily *religious* in nature, the Hebrew; another was chiefly *cultural*, the Greek; the third was predominantly *political* and *social*, the Roman. Each of these made its peculiar contribution to the world of that day.

The Hebrew Background:

While the story of the Hebrew people might be traced from the time of Abraham, the period between the Babylonian captivity and the reign of the Herods is especially significant for the purposes of this study. The Diaspora achieved something which had not been realized previously: the dissemination of the knowledge of Jehovah among the nations.

In 63 B.C. Palestine was subdued. Pompey entered Jerusalem and even invaded the Temple, much to the horror of the Jews. Except for a short rule by the Parthians (41-37 B.C.), the eastern enemies of Rome, Jerusalem was constantly under roman dominion until the fall of the

empire. During the years that followed, Palestine was governed by rulers appointed by Rome. The Gospels and Acts tell of the deeds and misdeeds of a number of these men, notably the family of the Herods and Pontius Pilate.

The Greek Background:

Over three hundred years before the birth of Christ a son was born to Philip, king of Macedon. This boy, Alexander, was destined to be the greatest military figure the ancient world had seen. Before he had reached the age of twenty, Alexander, called the Great, set out to conquer the world. And conquer he did! From Macedon in the West to the Indus River in the East the young monarch laid claim to the wealth of lands and the minds of men alike. The Book of Daniel speaks of a he-goat who came from the west compassing the whole earth, and as he went did not touch the ground (8:5). This is a fitting description of the lightning-like movements of Alexander.

His contributions to the world were principally two: the Greek culture and the Greek language. One by one the nations fell before him;

the armies of Persia, Phoenicia and Egypt tasted defeat at his hands. He established Greek cultural centers as he went. Many cities named “Alexandria” appeared in the wake of his conquests. The Greek way of life was adopted by people everywhere. The Greek language gradually became the language of the world and provided an ideal instrument for sounding the “Good News” which was yet to come.

The influence of Alexander produced the culture denoted as Hellenism, a name given to the Greco-Oriental way of life which was characterized by finesse, temperance and notable achievements in such fields as art, science, politics, and philosophy.

The Roman Background:

A new world power asserted itself in the Mediterranean world in the second century B.C.—Rome. Her military steam roller first flattened Carthage, then Greece, then moved on over Asia Minor. By the time Christ was born Augustus Caesar controlled the entire Mediterranean Basin. The historical relationship existing between Roman officialdom

and the Jews of Palestine are best depicted in the New Testament by Luke in the Third Gospel.

While Roman rule was outstanding in many respects, two features were particularly significant for the rise of Christianity: the law and the order of the empire (Pax Romana), and the system of roads which made travel more easily possible, safer than ever before. As Christian missionaries of the first century went out, beginning at Jerusalem, the relatively peaceful conditions and the excellent roads were clearly aids to progress. It is further noteworthy that the Roman attitude toward Christianity, thought to be a part of Judaism, was one of friendliness or at the worst indifference (cf. Acts 18, Gallia) throughout the first generation of the history of the Church as depicted in the Book of Acts.

New Testament Objectives:

1. This is a Survey Course and therefore it is an overview of each Book or letter in the New Testament. You will learn who wrote the 27 Books, time and place and theme.
2. You will learn the women in the life of the Messiah showing God's grace.
3. You will learn about the Sermon on the Mount.
4. You will about the Pauline Epistles and who they were written to and the purpose.
5. You will learn about the Apostle Paul's three missionary journeys.
6. You will learn about the spirited gifts in Romans Chapter 12.
7. You will learn about the Letters Paul wrote while in prison in Rome.
8. You will learn about the General Epistles, James, I-II Peter, I-II-II John, and Jude.
9. You will learn about the Book of Revelation. Sevens.
10. You will learn the History at the time these letters were written.

The Book of Matthew

The purpose of Matthew is to prove that Jesus is the Messiah, the eternal King of the Jews. It was written by Matthew, also called Levi. Matthew wrote this book especially to the Jews. It was written probably between A.D. 60-65. Matthew was a Jewish tax collector who became one of Jesus' disciples. This Gospel forms the connecting link between the Old and New Testaments because of its emphasis on the fulfillment of prophecy. A key verse in this book is "Don't misunderstand why I have come—it isn't to cancel the laws of Moses and the warnings of the prophets. No, I came to fulfill them." (5:17). This book's key people are Jesus, Mary, Joseph, John the Baptist, the disciples, the religious leaders, Caiaphas, Pilate, and Mary Magdalene. The women in the line of the Messiah are Tamar, Rahab, Bathsheba, Virgin Mary, and Ruth. Key places are Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Capernaum, Galilee, and Judea. Matthew is filled with messianic language ("Son of David" is used throughout) and Old Testament references (53 quotes and 76 other references). This Gospel is not written as a chronological account; its

The people of Israel were waiting for the Messiah, their king.

Matthew begins his book by showing how Jesus Christ was a descendant of David. But Matthew goes on to show that God did not send Jesus to be an earthly king, but a heavenly king. Jesus did not come to reign over peoples land but to rule in people's lives. His Kingdom would be much greater than David's, because it would never end. Even at his birth, many recognized Jesus as a king. Herod, the ruler, as well as Satan, was afraid of Jesus' kingship and tried to stop him, but others worshiped him and brought royal gifts. We must be willing to recognize Jesus for who he really is and worship him as king of our lives.

Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount, direction for living in his kingdom. He also told many parables about the difference between his Kingdom and the kingdoms of earth. Forgiveness, peace, and putting others first are some of the characteristics that make one great in the future Kingdom of God. And to be great in God's Kingdom, we must live by God's standards right now. Jesus came to show us how to live as faithful subjects in his Kingdom.

Jesus was formally presented to the nation of Israel, but rejected. How strange for the king to be accused, arrested, and crucified. But Jesus demonstrated his power even over death through his resurrection, gained access for us into his Kingdom. With all this evidence that Jesus is God's Son, we, too, should accept him as our Lord.

The Book of Mark

The purpose of the Book of Mark is to present the person, work, and teachings of Jesus. It was written by John mark. He was not one of the twelve disciples but he accompanied Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:13). It was written to the Christians in Rome, where he wrote the Gospel. It was written between A.D. 55 and 65. The Roman Empire under Tiberius Caesar is where this book takes place. The Empire, with its common language and excellent transportation and communication systems, was ripe to hear Jesus' message, which spread quickly from nation to nation. "For even I, the Messiah, am not here to be served, but to help others, and to give my life as a ransom for many"

(10:45). Key people in this book are Jesus, the twelve disciples, Pilate, the Jewish religious leaders. Key places in this chapter are Capernaum, Nazareth, Caesarea, Philippi, Jericho, Bethany, Mount of Olives, Jerusalem, and Golgotha. Mark was the first Gospel written. The other Gospels quote all but 31 verses of Mark. Mark records more miracles than does any other Gospel.

Jesus did not arrive unannounced or unexpected. The Old Testament Prophets had clearly predicted the coming of a great One, sent by God himself, who would offer salvation and eternal peace to Israel and the entire world. Then came John the Baptist, who announced that the long-awaited Messiah had finally come, and would soon be among the people. In God's work in the world today, Jesus does not come unannounced, or unexpected. Yet many still reject him. We have the witness of the Bible to show the way, but some choose to ignore it as they ignored John the Baptist in his day.

Jesus had all the power of almighty God—he raised the dead, gave sight to the blind, restored deformed bodies, and quieted storm seas. But with all this power, Jesus came to mankind as a servant. We can use his

life as a pattern for how to live today. As Jesus served God and others, so should we.

Jesus came as a servant, so many did not recognize or acknowledge him as the Messiah. We, too, must be careful we don't reject God or his will because it doesn't quite fit our image of how God should be.

The Book of Luke

The purpose of the Book of Luke is to present an accurate account of the life of Christ and to present Christ as the perfect man and Savior. The author of the book is Luke—a doctor (Colossians 4:14), a Greek and Gentile Christian. He is the only known Gentile author in the New Testament. He was a close friend and companion of Paul. He also wrote Acts, and the two books go together. This book was written for Theophilus (“lover of God”), Gentiles, and people everywhere. It was written about A.D. 60. Luke wrote from Caesarea or from Rome. “Jesus told him, ‘This shows the salvation has come to this home today. This man was one of the lost sons of Abraham, and I, the Messiah, have come

to search for and to save such souls as his'" (19:9, 10). Key people are Jesus, Elizabeth, Zacharias, John the Baptist, Mary, the disciples, Herod the Great, Pilate, and Mary Magdalene. Key places are Bethlehem, Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem. This is the most comprehensive Gospel. The general vocabulary and diction show that the author was educated. He makes frequent references to illnesses and diagnoses. Luke stresses Jesus' relationship with people; emphasizes prayer, miracles, angels; records inspired hymns of praise; and gives a prominent place to women. Most of 9:51-18:35 is not found in any other gospel.

From an infant who could do nothing on his own, Jesus grew to become completely able to fulfill his mission on earth. He became fully human, developing in all ways like us. Yet he remained fully God. He took no short-cuts and was not isolated from the pressures and temptations of life. There are no short-cuts for us either, as we prepare for a life of service to God.

Jesus taught great crowds of people, especially through parables, which are stories with great truths. But only those with ears to hear will understand. We should pray that God's Spirit would help us understand

the implication of these truths for our lives so we can become more and more like Jesus.

The Savior of the world was arrested and executed. But death could not destroy him, and Jesus came to life again and ascended to heaven. In Luke's careful, historical account, we receive the facts about Jesus' resurrection. We must not only believe the facts about Jesus' resurrection. We must not only believe that these facts are true, but must also trust Christ as our Savior. It shortsighted to neglect the facts, but how sad to accept the facts and neglect the forgiveness that Jesus offers to each of us.

The Book of John

The purpose of this book is to prove conclusively that Jesus is the Son of God and that all who believe in him will have eternal life. The author is John, the apostle, son of Zebedee, brother of James, called a "Son of Thunder." This book is written to New Christians and searching non-Christians. Written probably A.D. 85-90. Written after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and before John's exile to the island

of Patmos. “Jesus’ Disciples saw him do many other miracles besides the ones told about in this book, but these are recorded so that you will believe that he is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing in him you will have life” (20:30, 31). Key people in this book are Jesus, John the Baptist, the disciples, Mary, Martha, Lazarus, Jesus’ mother, Pilate, Mary Magdalene. Key places are Judean countryside, Samaria, Galilee, Bethany, and Jerusalem. Of the eight miracles recorded, six are unique (among the Gospels) to John, as is the “Upper Room Discourse” (chapters 14-17). Over 90% of Joh is unique to his Gospel-John does not contain a genealogy or any record of Jesus’ birth, childhood, temptation, transfiguration, appointment of the disciples, and no parables, ascension, or Great Commission.

John makes it clear that Jesus is not just a man; he is the eternal Son of God. He is the light of the world because he offers this gift of eternal life to all mankind. How blind and foolish to call Jesus nothing more than an unusually good man or moral teacher. Yet we sometimes act as if this were true when we casually toss around his words and go

about living our own way. If Jesus is the eternal Son of God, we should pay attention to his divine identity and life-giving message.

Jesus meets with individuals, preaches to great crowds, trains his disciples, and debates with the religious leaders. The message, that he is the Son of God, receives a mixed reaction. Some worship him, some are puzzled, some shrink back, and some move to silence him. We see the same varied reactions today. Times have changed, but people's hearts remain hard. May we see ourselves in the encounters Jesus had with people, and may our response be to worship and follow him.

Jesus carefully instructed the disciples how to continue to believe even after his death, yet they could not take it in. After he died and the first reports came back that Jesus was live, the disciples could not believe it. Thomas is especially remembered as one who refused to believe even when he heard the eyewitness accounts from other disciples. May we not be like Thomas, demanding a physical face-to-face encounter, but may we accept the eyewitness of the disciples that John has recorded in his Gospel.

The Book of Acts

The purpose of this book is to give an accurate account of the birth and growth of the Christian church. This book was written by Luke. It was written to Theophilus. Written between A.D. 63 and 70. Acts is the connecting link between Christ's life and the life of the church, between the Gospels and the Epistles. "But when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, you will receive power to testify about me with great effect, to the people in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth..." (1:8). Key people in this book are Peter, John, James, Stephen, Philip, Paul, Barnabas, Cornelius, James (Jesus' brother), Timothy, Lydia, Silas, Titus, Apollos, Agabus, Ananias, Felix, Festus, Agrippa, and Luke. Key places are Jerusalem, Samaria, Lydda, Joppa, Antioch, Cyprus, Antioch in Pisidia, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus, Caesarea, Malta, and Rome. Acts is a sequel to the Gospel of Luke. Because it ends so abruptly, Luke may have planned to write a third book, continuing the story.

After the resurrection of Jesus Christ, Peter preached boldly and performed many miracles. This demonstrates vividly the source and effects of Christian power. Because of the Holy Spirit, God's people were empowered so they could accomplish their tasks. The Holy Spirit is still available to empower believers today. We should turn to the Holy Spirit to give us the strength, courage, and insight to accomplish our work for God.

Paul's missionary adventures show us the progress of Christianity. The gospel could not be confined to one corner of the world. This was a faith that offered hope to all mankind. We too should venture forth and share in this heroic task to witness for Christ in all the world.

The Letter of Romans

The purpose of this book is to introduce Paul to the Romans and to give a sample of his message before he arrives in Rome. It was written by Paul to the Christians in Rome and believers everywhere. It was written in about A.D. 57, from Corinth, as Paul was preparing for his visit to Jerusalem. Apparently Paul had finished his work in the east, and

he planned to visit Rome on his way to Spain after first bringing a collection to Jerusalem for the poor Christians there (15:22-28). The Roman church was mostly Jewish but also contained a great number of Gentiles. “So now, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith in his promises, we can have real peace with him because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us” (5:1). Key people in this book are Paul and Phoebe. The key place in this book is Rome. Paul writes Romans as an organized and careful presented statement of his faith—it does not have the form of a typical letter. He does, however, spend considerable time greeting people in Rome at the end of the letter.

Paul clearly sets forth the foundations of the Christian faith. All men are sinful; Christ died to forgive sin; we are made right with God through faith; this begins a new life with a new relationship with God. Like a sports team that constantly reviews the basics, we will be greatly helped in our faith by keeping close to these foundation. If we study Romans carefully, we will never be at a loss to know what to believe.

Paul gives clear, practical guidelines for the believers in Rome. The Christian life is no abstract theology unconnected with life, but has

practical implications which will affect how we choose to behave each day. It is not enough merely to know the gospel, we must let it transform our lives and let God impact every aspect of our lives.

The Letter of 1 Corinthians

The purpose of this book is to identify problems in the Corinthian church, to offer solutions, and to teach the believers how to live for Christ in a corrupt society. The author was Paul and he wrote to the church in Corinth. It was written in about A.D. 55 near the end of Paul's three-year ministry in Ephesus during his third missionary journey. This book takes place in Corinth. Corinth was a major cosmopolitan city, a seaport and major trade center—the most important city in Achaia. It was also filled with idolatry and immorality. The church was largely made up of Gentiles. Paul had established this church on his second missionary journey. “But, dear brothers, I beg you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to stop arguing among yourselves. Let there be real harmony so there won't be splits in the church. I plead with you to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose” (1:10). Key people in this

book are Paul, Timothy, members of Chloe's household. Key places are worship meetings in Corinth. This is a strong, straightforward letter.

Without Paul's presence, the Corinthians church had fallen into divisiveness and disorder. This resulted in many problems which Paul addressed squarely. We must be concerned for unity and order in our local churches, but we should not mistake inactivity for order and cordiality for unity. We too must squarely address problems in our churches.

The Corinthians had sent Paul a list of questions, and he answered them in a way to correct abuses in the church and to show how important it is that they live what they believe. Paul gives us a Christian approach to problem-solving. He analyzed the problem thoroughly to uncover the underlying issue, and then highlighted the biblical values that should guide our actions.

The Letter of 2 Corinthians

The purpose of this book is to affirm his own ministry, defend his authority as an apostle, and refute the false teachers in Corinth. Paul

wrote this book to the church in Corinth, and Christians everywhere in about A.D. 55-57, from Macedonia. Paul had already written three letters to the Corinthians (two are now lost). In 1 Corinthians (the second of these letters), he used strong words to correct and teach. Most of the church had responded in the right spirit; there were, however, those who were denying Paul's authority and questioning his motives. "We are Christ's ambassadors. God is using us to speak to you: we beg you, as though Christ himself were here pleading with you, receive the love he offers you—be reconciled to God" (5:20). Key people in this book are Paul, Timothy, Titus, and false teachers. Key places are Corinth and Jerusalem. This is an intensely personal and autobiographical letter.

In responding to the attacks on his character and authority, Paul explains the nature of Christian ministry and, as an example, openly shares about his ministry. This is an important letter for all who wish to be involved in any kind of Christian ministry, because it has much to teach us about how we should handle our ministries today. Like Paul, those involved in ministry should be blameless, sincere, confident, caring, open, and willing to suffer for the sake of Christ.

The Letter of the Galatians

The purpose of this book is to refute the Judaizers (who taught that Gentile believers must obey the Jewish law in order to be saved), and to call Christians to faith and freedom in Christ. Paul wrote this book for the churches in southern Galatia founded on Paul's first missionary journey (including Iconium, Lystra, and Derbe) in about A.D. 49, from Antioch, prior to the Jerusalem council (A.D. 50). The most pressing controversy of the early church was the relationship of new believers, especially gentiles, to the Jewish laws. This was especially a problem for the converts and young churches Paul founded on his first missionary journey. Paul writes to correct this problem. Later, at the council in Jerusalem, the conflict was officially resolved by the church leaders. "So Christ made us free" (5:1). Key people in this book are Paul, Peter, Barnabas, Titus, Abraham, and false teachers. Key places are Galatia and Jerusalem. This letter is not addressed to any specific body of believers and was probably circulated to several churches.

In response to attacks from false teachers, Paul wrote to defend his apostleship and to defend the authority of the gospel. The Galatians were beginning to turn from faith to legalism. The struggle between the gospel and legalism is still a crisis. Many today would have us return to trying to earn God's favor through following rituals, or obeying a set of rules. As Christians, we are not boxed in, but set free. To preserve our freedom, we must stay close to Christ and resist any who promote subtle ways of trying to earn our salvation.

The Letter of the Ephesians

The purpose of this book is to strengthen the believers in Ephesus in their Christian faith by explaining the nature and purpose of the church, the body of Christ. It was written by Paul to the church at Ephesus, and all believers everywhere in about A.D. 60, from Rome during Paul's imprisonment there. The letter was not written to confront any heresy or problem in the churches. It was sent with Tychicus to strengthen and encourage the churches in the area. Paul spent over three years with the Ephesian church. As a result, Paul was very close to this

church. Paul met with the elders of the Ephesian church for the last time at Miletus (Acts 20:17-38)—a meeting that was filled with great sadness because Paul was leaving them for the last time. Because there are no specific references to people or problems in the Ephesian church and because the words “at Ephesus” (1:1) are not present in the earliest manuscripts, Paul may have intended this to be a circular letter—read to all the churches in the area. “We are all parts of one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future” (4:4). Key people in this book are Paul and Tychicus. Several pictures of the church are presented: body, temple, mystery, new man, bride, and soldier. This epistle became a circular letter distributed to many of the early churches.

In this letter, Paul explains the wonderful things that we have received through Christ and refers to the church as a body, a temple, a bride, and a soldier. These all illustrate unity of purpose and show how each individual member is a part which must work together with all the other parts. In our own lives. We should work to eradicate all backbiting,

gossip, criticism, jealousy, anger, and bitterness, because these are barriers to unity in the church.

The Letter of the Philippians

The purpose of this book is to thank the Philippians of the gift they had sent him and to strengthen these believers by showing them that true joy comes from Jesus Christ alone. Written by Paul to all the Christians at Philippi and all believers everywhere in about A.D. 61, from Rome during Paul's imprisonment there. Paul and his companions founded the church at Philippi on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:11-40). This was the first church established on the European continent. The Philippian church had sent a gift with Epaphroditus (One of their members) to be delivered to Paul (4:18). Paul was in a Roman prison at the time. He writes this letter to thank them for their gift and encourage them in their faith. "Always be full of joy in the Lord; I say it again, rejoice!" (4:4). Key people in this book are Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Eudias and Syntyche. The key place is Philippi.

Although Paul was writing from prison, joy is a dominant theme in this letter. The secret of his joy is grounded in his relationship with Christ. People today desperately want to be happy but are tossed and turned by daily successes, failures, and inconveniences. Christians are to be joyful in every circumstance, even when things are going badly, even when we feel like complaining, even when no one else is joyful. Christ still reigns and we still know him, so we can rejoice at all times.

The Letter of the Colossians

The purpose of this book was to combat errors in the church and to show that believers have everything they need in Christ. Paul wrote this book to the church at Colosse, a city in Asia Minor, and all believers everywhere in about A.D. 60, during Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Paul had never visited Colosse—evidently the church had been founded by Epaphras and other converts from Paul's missionary travels. The church however, had been infiltrated by religious relativism with some believers attempting to combine elements of paganism and the secular philosophy with Christian doctrine. Paul confronts these false teachings and affirms

the sufficiency of Christ. “For in Christ there is all of God in human body; so you have everything when you have Christ, and you are filled with God through your union with Christ. He is the highest Ruler, with authority over every other power” (2:9-10). Key people in this book are Paul, Timothy, Tychicus, Onesimus, Aristarchus, Mark, and Epaphras. They key places in this book are Colosse and Laodicea (4:15, 16). Christ is presented as having absolute supremacy and sole sufficiency.

Colossians had similarities to Ephesians, probably because it was written at about the same time, but it had a different emphasis.

In this letter Paul clearly teaches that Christ has paid for sin that Christ has reconciled us to God, and that Christ gives us the pattern and the power to grow spiritually. Since Christ is the exact likeness of God, when we learn what he is like, we see what we need to become. Since Christ is Lord over all creation, we should crown him Lord over our lives. Since Christ is the Head of the body, his church, we should nurture our vital connection to him.

The Letter of 1 Thessalonians

The purpose of this book is to strengthen the Thessalonian Christians in their faith and give them the assurance of Christ's return. Paul wrote this to the church at Thessalonica and all believers everywhere in about A.D. 51 from Corinth; one of Paul's earliest letters. The church at Thessalonica was very young, having been established only two or three years before this letter was written. The Thessalonian Christians needed to mature in their faith. In addition, there was a misunderstanding concerning Christ's Second Coming—some thought he would return immediately, others wondered whether those who had already died would experience a bodily resurrection at his Second Coming. "For since we believe that Jesus died and then came back to life again, we can also believe that when Jesus returns, God will bring back with him all the Christians who have died" (4:14). Key people in this book are Paul, Timothy, and Silas. A key place is Thessalonica. Paul received from Timothy a favorable report about the Thessalonians.

However, he wrote this letter to correct their misconceptions about the resurrection and the Second Coming of Christ.

Paul and his companions were faithful to bring the gospel to the Thessalonians in the midst of persecution. The Thessalonians had only recently become Christians and yet remained faithful to the Lord, despite the fact that the apostles were not with them. Others have been faithful in bringing God's Word to us. We must remain faithful and live with the expectation that Christ will return at any time.

The Letter of 2 Thessalonians

The purpose of this book is to clear up the confusion about the Second Coming of Christ. Paul wrote this letter to the church at Thessalonica and all believers everywhere in about A.D. 51 or 52, a few months after 1 Thessalonians, from Corinth. Many in the church were confused about the timing of Christ's return. Because of mounting persecution, they thought the day of the Lord must be imminent, and they interpreted Paul's first letter to say that the Second Coming would be at any moment. In light of this misunderstanding many persisted in

being lazy and disorderly with the excuse of waiting for Christ's return.

“May the Lord bring you into an even deeper understanding of the love of God and of the patience that comes from Christ” (3:5). Key people in this book are Paul, Silas, and Timothy. The key place is Thessalonica.

This is a follow-up letter to 1 Thessalonians. In this epistle, Paul indicates various events that must precede the Second Coming of Christ.

Paul wrote to encourage those who were facing persecution and to correct a misunderstanding about the timing of Christ's return. The teaching about the Lord's return promoted idleness in this young church. The imminent coming of Christ should never make us lazy; we should be even more busy—living purely, using out time well, and working for his Kingdom. We must work not only during easy times when it is convenient, but also during difficult times. Christians must patiently wait, watch, and work for Christ's return.

The Letter of 1 Timothy

The purpose of this book was to give encouragement and instruction to Timothy, a young leader. Written by Paul to Timothy,

young church leaders, and all believers everywhere in about A.D. 64, from Rome or Macedonia (possibly Philippi), probably just prior to Paul's final imprisonment in Rome. Timothy was one of Paul's closest companions. Paul had sent Timothy to the church at Ephesus to counter the false teaching which had arisen there (1 Timothy 1:3, 4). Timothy probably served for a time as a leader in the church at Ephesus. Paul hoped to visit Timothy (3:14, 15; 4:13), but in the meantime, he wrote this letter to give Timothy practical advice for the ministry. "Don't let anyone think little of you because you are young. Be their ideal; let them follow the way you teach and live; be a pattern for them in your love, your faith, and your clean thoughts" (4:12). Key people were Paul and Timothy. Key place was Ephesus. First Timothy is a personal letter and a handbook of church administration and discipline.

Paul advised Timothy on such practical topics as qualifications for church leaders, public worship, confronting false teaching, and how to treat various groups of people within the church. Right belief and right behavior are critical for anyone who desires to lead or serve effectively

in the church. We should all believe rightly, participate in church actively, and minister to one another lovingly.

The Letter of 2 Timothy

The purpose of this book is to give final instructions and encouragement to Timothy, an elder of the church at Ephesus. Paul wrote this letter to Timothy in about A.D. 66 or 67 from prison in Rome. After a year or two of freedom, Paul was arrested again and executed under Emperor Nero. Paul is virtually alone in prison; only Luke is with him. He writes this letter to pass the torch to the new generation of church leaders. He also asks for visits from his friends, for his books, and especially the parchments—possibly parts of the Old Testament, the Gospels, and other biblical manuscripts. “Work hard so God can say to you, ‘Well done.’ Be a good workman, one who does not need to be ashamed when God examines your work. Know what his Word says and means.” (2:15). Key people in this book are Paul, Timothy, Luke, Mark, and others. Key places are Rome and Ephesus. Because this is Paul’s

last letter, it reveals his heart and his priorities—sound doctrine, steadfast faith, confident endurance, and enduring love.

Paul gives helpful advice to Timothy to email solidly grounded in Christian service and endure suffering during the difficult days to come. It is easy for us to serve Christ for the wrong reasons: because it is exciting, rewarding, or personally enriching. Without a proper foundation, however, we will find it easy to quit during difficult times. All believers need a strong foundation for their service, because Christian service does not get easier as we grow older, and it will become no easier as we near the last days.

The Letter of Titus

The purpose of this book was to advise Titus in his responsibility of supervising the churches on the island of Crete. Paul wrote this to Titus, a Greek Convert, who had become Paul's special representative to the island of Crete in about A.D. 64, around the same time 1 Timothy was written; probably from Macedonia when Paul traveled in between his Roman imprisonment. Paul sent Titus to organize and oversee the

churches on Crete. This letter tells him how to do this job. “I left you there on the island of Crete so that you could do whatever was needed to help strengthen each of its churches, and I ask you to appoint pastors [elders] in every city who would follow the instructions I gave you” (1:5). Key people in this book are Paul and Titus. Key places are Crete and Nicopolis. Titus is very similar to 1 Timothy with its instructions to pastors (elders).

Paul calls for church order and right living in an island known for laziness, gluttony, lying and evil. The Christians are to be disciplined as individuals and orderly as a church. We need to obey this message in our day when discipline is not respected or rewarded by our society.

Although others may not regard our efforts, we must live upright lives, obey the government, and control our speech. We should live together peacefully in the church and be living examples of our faith in society.

The Letter of Philemon

The purpose of this book was to convince Philemon to forgive his runaway slave, Onesimus, and to accept him as a brother in the faith.

Paul wrote this letter to Philemon, who was probably a wealthy member of the Colossian church in about A.D. 60, during Paul's first imprisonment in Rome, at about the same time Ephesians and Colossians were written. Slavery was very common in the Roman Empire, and evidently some Christians had slaves. Paul does not condemn the institution in his writings, but he makes a radical statement by calling this slave Philemon's brother in Christ. "Perhaps you could think of it this way: that he ran away from you for a little while so that now he can be yours forever, no longer a slave, but something much better—a beloved brother, especially to me..." (1:15, 16). Key people in this book are Paul, Philemon, and Onesimus. Key places are Colosse and Rome.

Philemon was Paul's friend and Onesimus' owner. Paul asked him not to punish Onesimus, but to forgive and restore him as a new Christian brother. Christian relationships must be full of forgiveness and acceptance. Can you forgive those who have wronged you? Slavery was widespread in the Roman Empire, but no one is beyond God's love. Slavery was a barrier between people, but Christian love and fellowship

are to overcome such barriers. In Christ we are one family. No walls of race, economic status, or political differences should separate believers. Let Christ work through you to remove barriers between Christian brothers and sisters. Paul was a friend of both Philemon and Onesimus. He had the authority as an apostle to tell Philemon what to do. Yet Paul chose to appeal to his friend in Christian love rather than to order him. Tactful persuasion accomplishes a great deal more than commands, when dealing with people. Remember to exhibit courtesy and respect in dealing with people.

The Letter of Hebrews

The purpose of this book is to present the sufficiency and superiority of Christ. Paul, Luke, Barnabas, Apollos, Silas, Philip, Priscilla, and others have been suggested because the name of the author is not given in the biblical text itself. Whoever it was speaks of Timothy as “Brother” (13:23). Written to Hebrew Christians who may have been considering a return to Judaism, perhaps because of immaturity, due to their lack of understanding of biblical truths. They seem to be “second

generation” Christians (2:3). Probably written before the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, since the religious sacrifices and ceremonies are referred to in the book, but no mention is made of the Temple’s destruction. These Jewish Christians were probably undergoing fierce persecution, socially and physically, both from Jews and from Romans. Christ had not returned to establish his Kingdom, and the people needed to be reassured that Christianity was true and that Jesus was indeed the Messiah. “God’s Son shines out with God’s glory, and all that God’s Son is and does marks him as God. He regulates the inverse by the mighty power of his command. He is the one who died to cleanse us and clear our record of all sin, and then sat down in highest honor beside the great God of heave” (1:3). Key people in this book are Old Testament men and women of faith (chapter 11). Although Hebrews is called a “letter” (13:22), it has the form and the content of a sermon.

The superiority of Christ over everyone and everything is clearly demonstrated by the author. Christianity supersedes all other religions and can never be surpassed. Where can one find anything better than

Christ? Living in Christ is having the best there is in life. All competing religions are deceptions or cheap imitations.

Jews who had become Christians in the first century were tempted to fall back into Judaism because of uncertainty, the security of customs, and persecution. Today believers are also tempted to fall back into legalism, fulfilling minimum religious requirements, rather than pressing on in genuine faith. We must strive to live by faith each day.

The Letter of James

The purpose of this book is to expose unethical practices and to teach right Christian behavior. James, Jesus' brother, a leader in the Jerusalem church wrote this book to first century Jewish Christians residing in Gentile communities outside of Palestine and to all Christians everywhere in probably A.D. 49, prior to the Jerusalem council held in A.D. 50. This letter expresses James' concern for persecuted Christians who were once part of the Jerusalem church. "...You say the way to God is by faith alone, plus nothing; well I say that good works are

important too, for without good works you can't prove whether you have faith or not..." (2:18).

James wants believers not only to hear the truth, but also to do it. He contrasts empty faith ("claims without conduct") with faith that works. Commitment to love and to serve is evidence of true faith. Living faith makes a difference. Make sure your faith is more than just a statement—it should also result in action. Be alert to ways of putting your faith to work. In the Christian life there are trials and temptations. Successfully overcoming these adversities produces maturity and strong character. Don't resent troubles when they come. Pray for wisdom; God will supply all that you will need to face persecution or adversity. He will give your patience and keep you strong in times of trial. We are saved by God's gracious mercy not by keeping the law. But Christ gave us a special command, "love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 19:19). We are to love and serve those around us. Keeping the law shows that our faith is vital and real. To show love to others, we must root out our own selfishness. Wisdom shows itself in speech. We are responsible for the destructive results of our talk. The wisdom of God

that helps control the tongue can help control all our actions. Accepting God's wisdom will affect your speech because your words will reveal their Godly source. Think before you speak and allow God to give you self-control. James taught Christians not to compromise with world attitudes about wealth. Because the glory of wealth fades, Christians should store up God's treasures through sincere service. Christians must not show partiality to the wealthy, nor be prejudiced against the poor. All of us are accountable for how we use what we have. We should not hoard wealth, but be generous towards others. In addition, we should not be impressed by the wealthy nor look down on those who are poor.

The Letter of 1 Peter

The purpose of this letter is to offer encouragement to suffering Christians. It was written to Jewish Christians who had been driven out of Jerusalem and scattered throughout Asia Minor, and to all believers everywhere. The letter was written about A.D. 62-64 from Rome. Peter was probably in Rome when the great persecution under Emperor Nero began. (Peter was eventually executed during this persecution.)

Throughout the Roman Empire, Christians were being tortured and killed for their faith, and the church in Jerusalem was being scattered through the Mediterranean world. A key verse in these letters- “These trials are only to test your faith, to see whether or not it is strong and pure...” (1:7). Key people include Peter, Silvanus, and Mark. The key places are Jerusalem, Rome, and the regions of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia Minor, and Bithynia.

Peter used several images that were very special to him because Jesus had used them when He revealed certain truths to Peter. Peter’s name (which means “stone”) had been given to him by Jesus. Peter’s conception of the church- a spiritual house composed of living stones built upon Christ as the foundation- came from Christ. Jesus encouraged Peter to care for the church as a shepherd tending the flock. Thus, it is not surprising to see Peter using living stones (2:5-9) and shepherds and sheep (2:25; 5:2, 4) to describe the church.

Peter wrote to Jewish Christians who were experiencing persecution for their faith. He wrote to comfort them with the hope of eternal life and to challenge them to continue living holy lives. Those

who suffer for being Christians become partners with Christ in His suffering. As we suffer, we must remember that Christ is both our hope in the midst of suffering and our example of how to endure suffering faithfully.

The Letter of 2 Peter

The purpose of this letter is to warn Christians about false teachers and to exhort them to grow in their faith and knowledge of Christ. The letter was written by Peter to the church at large during about A.D. 67, three years after 1 Peter was written, possibly in Rome. Peter knows that his time on earth is limited (1:13. 14), so he is writing about what is on his heart, warning believers of what will happen when he is gone—especially about false teachers. He reminds them of the unchanging truth of the gospel. “For as you know Him better, He will give you, through His great power, everything you need for living a truly good life; He even shares His own glory and His own goodness with us!” (1:3). Key people in this letter include Peter and Paul. The date and destination are uncertain, and the authorship has been disputed. Because of this, 2 Peter

was the last book admitted to the canon of the New Testament Scripture.

Also, there are similarities between 2 Peter and Jude.

While Peter wrote his first letter to teach about handling persecution (trials from without), he wrote this letter to teach about handling heresy (trials from within). False teachers are often subtly deceitful. Believers today must still be vigilant against falling into false doctrines, heresy, and cults. This letter gives us clues to help detect false teaching.

The Letter of 1 John

The purpose of this letter is to reassure Christians in their faith and to counter false teaching. They are written by the apostle John. The letter is untitled and was written to no particular church. It was sent as a pastoral letter to several Gentile congregations. It was also written to all believers everywhere. The letter is estimated to be written between A.D. 85 and 90 from Ephesus. John was an older man and perhaps the only surviving apostle at the time. He had not yet been banished to the island of Patmos where he would live in exile. As an eyewitness of Christ, he

wrote authoritatively to give this new generation of believers assurance and confidence in God and in their faith. "I have written this to you who believe in the Son of God so that you may know you have eternal life" (5:13). Key people in this letter include John and Jesus. John is the apostle of love, and love is mentioned throughout this letter. There are a number of similarities between this letter and John's Gospel- in vocabulary, style, and main ideas. John uses brief statements and simple words, and he features sharp contrasts- light and darkness, truth and error, God and Satan, life and death, love and hate.

John wrote about the most vital aspects of faith so readers would know Christian truth from error. He emphasizes the basics of faith so we can be confident in our faith. In our dark world, God is light. In our cold world, God brings the warmth of love. In our dying world, God brings life. When we feel a lack of confidence, these truths brings us certainty.

The Letter of 2 John

The purpose of this letter is to emphasize the basics of following Christ- truth and love- and to warn against false teachers. It was written

by the apostle John to a woman called “Cyria” or “the elect lady” and her household- some think that the greeting refers instead to a local church. It was written around the same time as 1 John, about A.D. 90, from Ephesus. Evidently this woman and her family were involved in one of the churches which John was overseeing- they had developed a strong friendship. John was warning her of the false teachers which were becoming prevalent in some of the churches. “If we love God, we will do what he tells us to. And he has told us from the very first to love each other” (1:6). Key people in this letter include John, Cyria, and her children.

False teachers were a dangerous problem for the church to which John was writing. His warning against giving hospitality to false teachers may sound harsh and unloving to many today. Yet these men were teaching heresy that could seriously harm many believers- for eternity.

The Letter of 3 John

This letter is to commend Gaius for his hospitality and to encourage him in his Christian life. It was written by the apostle John to Gaius, a prominent Christian in one of the churches known to John. This letter was written in about A.D. 90, from Ephesus. Church leaders traveled from town to town helping to establish new congregations. They depended on the hospitality of fellow believers. Gaius was one who welcomed them into his home. “Dear friend, you are doing a good work for God in taking care of the traveling teachers and missionaries who are passing through” (1:5). Key people of this letter are John, Gaius, Diotrephes, and Demetrius.

John wrote to commend Gaius who was taking care of traveling teachers and missionaries and to warn against people like Diotrephes, who are proud and refuse to listen to spiritual leaders in authority. If we are to live in the truth of the gospel, we must look for ways to support pastors, Christian workers, and missionaries today. All Christians should

work together to support God's work, both at home and around the world.

The Letter of Jude

The purpose of this letter is to remind the church of the need for constant vigilance- to keep strong in the faith and to defend it against heresy. The letter of Jude was written by Jude, James' brother and Jesus' half-brother, to Jewish Christians and all believers everywhere in about A.D. 65. From the first century on, the church has been threatened by heresy and false teaching- we must always keep our guard. "Dearly loved friends, I had been planning to write you some thoughts about the salvation God has given us, but now I find I must write of something else instead, urging you to stoutly defend the truth which God gave, once for all, to His people to keep without change through the years" (1:3). Key people in this letter include Jude, James, and Jesus.

We must stoutly defend Christian truth. Make sure that you avoid leaders and teachers who change the Bible to suit their own purposes. Genuine servants of God will faithfully portray Christ in their words and

conduct. Those who do not seek to know the truth in God's Word are susceptible to apostasy. Christians must guard against any false teachings that would distract them from the truth preached by the apostles and written in God's Word.

The Letter of the Revelation

This letter was written to reveal the full identity of Christ and to give warning and hope to believers. It was written by the apostle John to the seven churches in Asia and all believers everywhere in about A.D. 95, from Patmos. Most scholars believe that the seven churches of Asia to whom John writes were experiencing the persecution which took place under Emperor Domitian (A.D. 90-95). It seems that the Roman authorities had exiled John to the island of Patmos (off the coast of Asia). John who had been an eyewitness of the incarnate Christ, has a vision of the glorified Christ. God also reveals to him what is to take place in the future- judgment and the ultimate triumph of God over evil. "If you read this prophecy aloud to the church, you will receive and special blessing from the Lord. Those who listen to it being read and do

what it says will also be blessed. For the time is near when these things will all come true” (1:3). Key people include John and Jesus, and the key places are Patmos, the seven churches, and the new Jerusalem.

Revelation is written in “apocalyptic” form- a type of Jewish literature which uses symbolic imagery to communicate hope (the ultimate triumph of God) to those in the midst of persecution. The events are ordered according to literary, rather than strictly chronological patterns.

The vision John received opens with instructions for him to write to seven churches. He both commends them for their strength and warns them about their flaws. Each letter was directed to a church then in existence, but also represents the conditions in the church throughout history. Both in the church and in our individual lives, we must constantly fight against the temptation to become loveless, immoral, lenient, compromising, lifeless, or casual about our faith. The letters make it clear how our Lord feels about the qualities.

This revelation is both a warning to Christians who have grown apathetic and an encouragement to those who are faithfully enduring the

struggles in this world. It reassures us that good will triumph over evil, gives us hope in difficult times, and direction when we are wavering in our faith. Christ's message to the church is a message of hope for all believers in every generation.

Exit Outcome Competencies
for
New Testament Survey

- 1. Write a one-page paper on who wrote the Gospels and the Book of Acts. What was the theme of each book?**

- 2. Write a one-page paper on the women in the line of the Messiah.**

- 3. Write a two-page paper on the miracles of Jesus from the Gospel accounts.**

- 4. Write a one-page paper on your favorite book in the New Testament. Why and how has it affected you?**

New Testament Test

1. The New Testament begins with 4 Gospels.
TRUE FALSE
2. Luke presents Jesus King of the Jews.
TRUE FALSE
3. Jesus “Yeshua” means Savior.
TRUE FALSE
4. Christ means the Anointed Judge.
TRUE FALSE
5. The northern region of Israel in the New Testament Times was called Samaria.
TRUE FALSE
6. Jesus’ public ministry started with His baptism
TRUE FALSE
7. Pilate was a Jewish ruler to whom Jesus said “you must be born again.”
TRUE FALSE
8. The woman at the well in John 4 was from Syria.
TRUE FALSE
9. Paul was a tax collector before he became a disciple.
TRUE FALSE
10. Jesus said no one can serve two prophets.
TRUE FALSE